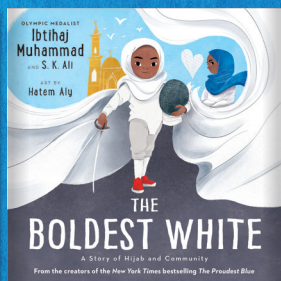


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THE PROUDEST BLUE SERIES

BY Ibtihaj Muhammad
AND S. K. Ali

ART BY Hatem Aly

Teaching Tips



Olympic medalist Ibtihaj Muhammad and author S.K. Ali have written three picture books that follow Faizah, a young Muslim girl, as she explores what it means to wear hijab, the headscarf worn by many Muslim girls and women, and the special place it holds in her family, friendships, and community. Beautifully illustrated by artist Hatem Aly, the series celebrates courage, kindness, and seeing the beauty in difference.

These teaching tips provide educators with meaningful activities to help students engage with themes of identity, belonging, and respect for diversity while building empathy and understanding through inclusive classroom conversations.

Note for Educators: Some activities, especially those that touch on bullying or cultural and religious clothing, may need extra care depending on the age and readiness of your students. Adapt the language and depth of these conversations so they're grade-appropriate, and guide them with sensitivity to ensure every student feels safe, respected, and included.

Book 1: *The Proudest Blue – A Story of Hijab and Family*

Activity 1: Favorite Colors Discussion

Ask students to share their favorite color and explain why they chose it. Invite them to wear their favorite color to class. Lead a conversation about how different colors make them feel.

Activity 2: Self-Portrait Illustration

In *The Proudest Blue*, Faizah draws “two princesses in hijab having a picnic on an island where the ocean meets the sky” (p. 22). Have students draw a picture of themselves with someone special in their life, wearing clothing that makes them feel special. Allow students to share their pictures with classmates if they choose, and display their artwork throughout the classroom.



Activity 3: Cultural and Religious Clothing Exploration

Lead students in exploring the various ways that different religious and cultural communities express their faith through clothing. Incorporate photographs from nonfiction texts and media for visuals. Emphasize that these practices are diverse, personal, and meaningful in different ways for different people.

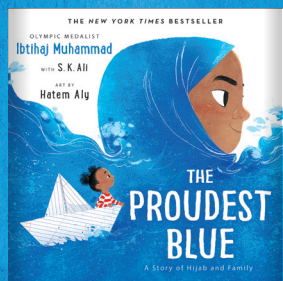
Activity 4: Anti-Bullying Discussion

Discuss the character who says mean things about Asiya's hijab. Explore how it made Faizah feel and how Asiya responded.

Use the text to lead an anti-bullying activity:

- Define bullying and ensure students understand how bullying is handled at school, including the identification of who students can speak to and to whom they can report bullying.
- Discuss assertive techniques to deal with bullying, such as how Faizah walked away from the boy who was yelling insults.

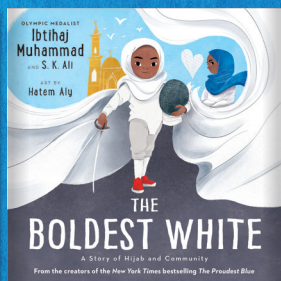




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Book 2: *The Kindest Red* – A Story of Hijab and Friendship

Activity 1: “What Kind of World Do You Want?”

Replicate the activity led by Ms. Ramirez, Faizah’s teacher in *The Kindest Red*. Ask students to describe the world they want. Write out their answers so they can see them, then have each student draw and name their ideal world. Display the pictures under a banner titled “Future World Envisioned by Our Students.”



Activity 2: Practicing Kindness

Encourage students to make their wishes for the world come true, just like Faizah and her friend Sophie, who seek ways to create a kind-powered world.

Getting Started:

Ask students to share a time when someone was kind to them, including details and how the kind acts made them feel.



Kindness Practice Period:

- Challenge students to practice intentional acts of kindness for a set period (such as during recess, throughout the school day, or for an entire week).
- After the practice period, lead a reflection discussion: What kinds of acts did they do? How did it make others feel? What did they notice about themselves and their classroom community?

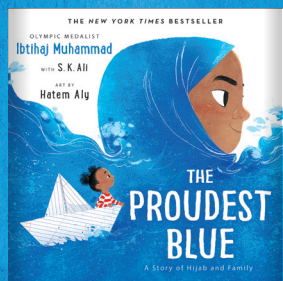
Building a Culture of Kindness: Transform kindness from an activity into a pillar of your classroom community. Some options include:

- A “Kindness Share” where students share one kind act they witnessed or performed
- A “Kindness Challenge” with different themes (helping, including others, compliments, etc.)
- A “Kindness Wall” where students can post notes recognizing classmates’ kind actions

Activity 3: Making and Decorating Picture Frames

In the book’s illustrations, pictures of family adorn the walls. Using craft materials, have students make and decorate a picture frame for someone special to them. Students may choose to illustrate the picture themselves or bring in a printed photo.

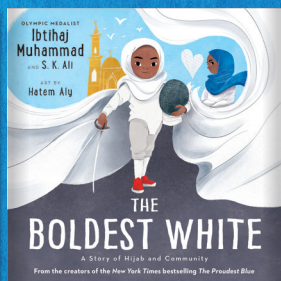




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Teaching Tips



Book 3: *The Boldest White* – A Story of Hijab and Community

Activity 1: Finding Your Community

Discussion Prompts:

- In *The Boldest White*, Faizah loves being part of her Muslim community and her fencing team because they make her “feel right.” Ask students: Where are the places and spaces where you feel like you belong?
- Faizah’s mom tells her, “Bravery grows in your mind. But its roots are in your heart. Water the roots for the right reasons, and bravery will grow. Exactly when you need it to” (p. 24). What does it mean to be brave? When have you felt brave?



Activity 2: Understanding Metaphors Through Plant Growth

Teach students that Faizah’s mother uses the metaphor of a plant to explain bravery. Define that a metaphor is a literary device that uses one thing to represent another. Obtain a plant (or plants) for the class to care for, and extend the conversation about bravery and metaphors as the plant grows. (Alternative activity: show time-lapse videos of plant growth or have students draw plant stages to represent bravery.)

Activity 3: Author-Illustrator Partnership Practice

Have students form partnerships where one or more assumes the role of author and the other the role of illustrator to develop a short story with accompanying pictures. Give them several class periods to work together, then display their completed books.



Tying the Three Books Together:

Summative Activity: Create a Collaborative Classroom Quilt

Explain to students that each student, using paper or fabric, will create a quilt square that reflects their personal story, inspired by the three books. Encourage students to include:

- Something that makes them feel proud (inspired by *The Proudest Blue*)
- An act of kindness they’ve given or received (inspired by *The Kindest Red*)
- A community where they feel they belong (inspired by *The Boldest White*)

Create the quilt:

- Once all squares are complete, arrange them together on a wall or bulletin board
- Emphasize to students how each square is unique, but together they form a beautiful classroom community where they all belong.



These Teaching Tips were created by Mahasin Abuwi Aleem, MLIS

