

# Why Do We Teach RE?

- Knowledge and understanding of own, and others', faiths, practices and beliefs;
- Knowledge and understanding of our own, and others', cultural heritage and how this has been influenced by religious beliefs and practices;
- Development of own ideas, values and identities;
- Respect for self and own and identity and that of others tolerance and acceptance (and celebration!);
- Development of an aptitude for debate provoking challenging questions about meaning and purpose (religious studies as a rigorous academic pursuit in its own right);
- Ability to critically evaluate texts, sources of wisdom, authority etc. –
   "weighing up the value of wisdom from different sources";
- Ability to clearly articulate personal beliefs and values whilst respecting those of others.

## Religious reading of Texts – some approaches

You can use the text in a number of ways:

#### **Text as Sacred:**

Lectio Divina Marginalia

Havruta

Reader response theories -the reader *makes* the text

#### Text as mirrors, windows and doors:

Explicit explanations of protagonist

Read as is.

Reflection

Identity.

Possible themes or lenses through which to approach texts:

Belief

**Empathy** 

Compassion

Golden Rule

Acceptance

Belonging

Betrayal

Commitment

Control

Innocence

Spirituality

Artefacts/Symbols

Forgiveness

Sorrow

Transformation

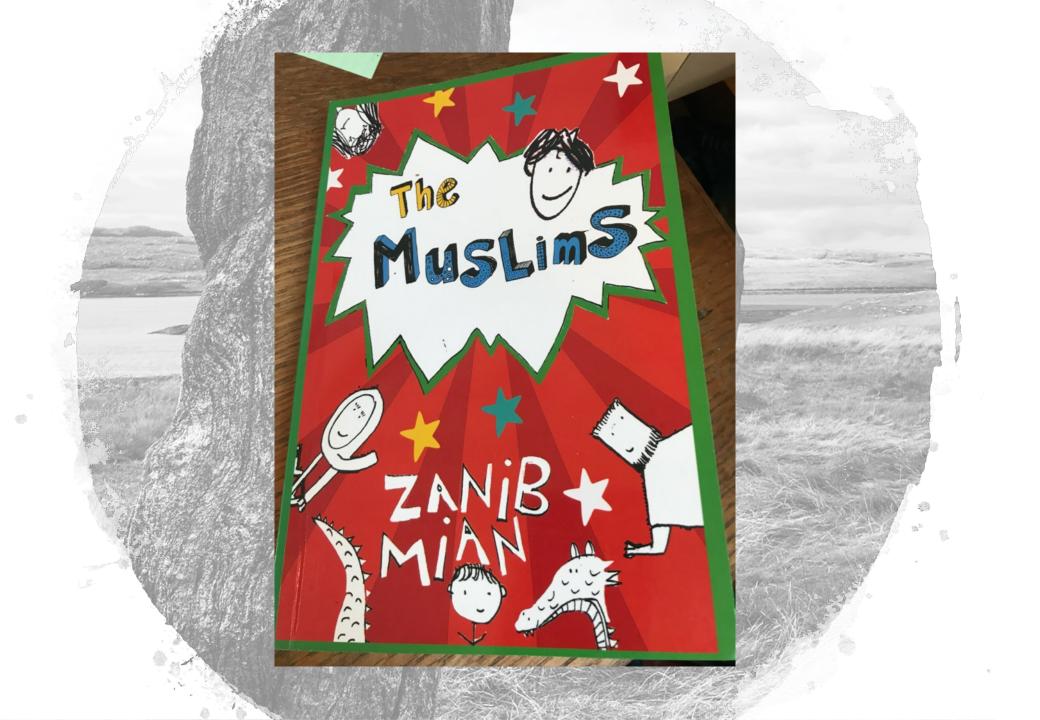
Judgement – and many many

others!



Knowledge and understanding of own, and others', faiths, practices and beliefs:

Books as Mirrors and Books as Knowledge Givers



for a few mornings, as we'd leave for school, my mum would ask me if I had done my



Those are prayers. I did do them, every day.

Especially the one for protection, because

Daniel was highly likely to punch my head in any day. We have duas for EVERTHING:

Eating,

SLEEPING, WAKING UP.

KNOWLEDGE.

Presently most protection,

LEAVING THE HOUSE,

COMING BACK INTO THE HOUSE.

ANYTHING YOU CAN THINK OF.

IF YOU EVER SEE A
MUSLIM'S LIPS MOVING

DON'T WORRY!

THEY ARE NOT TALKING TO THEMSELVES, OR SECRETLY PUTTING A SPELL ON YOU. THEY ARE JUST DOING ONE OF THEIR DUAS.

for the record, even if a Muslim woman is

for the record, even if a Muslim woman is

wearing her long black cape-type dress thingy.

She still isn't a witch doing spells on you. Just

## to clorify, HERE IS THE DIFFERENCE:



Eats kids for dinner	Would never harm a kid
Poisonous wart on nose	Wart, if at all present, is not poisonous
Has no hair under wig	Definitely has lots of hair under scarf
Scowls	Smiles
Ugly, due to horrid thoughts	Beautiful, due to lovely thoughts



Knowledge and understanding of our own, and others', cultural heritage and how this has been influenced by religious beliefs and practices:

Stories as situated in their cultures, and as cultural capital givers



The call to prayer comes once again, and this time tips Fatima fully into the land of the living... Fatima slips out of the charpai and pulls on a shalwar under the tunic she usually sleeps in. She moves swiftly out of the bedroom and into the bathroom where she performs wudu in front of the shaky but clean sink. Her ablutions complete, she leaves the apartment with a dupatta on her head, a lamp in her hand, and a prayer mat under her arm for the open rooftop of the building in which she lives.

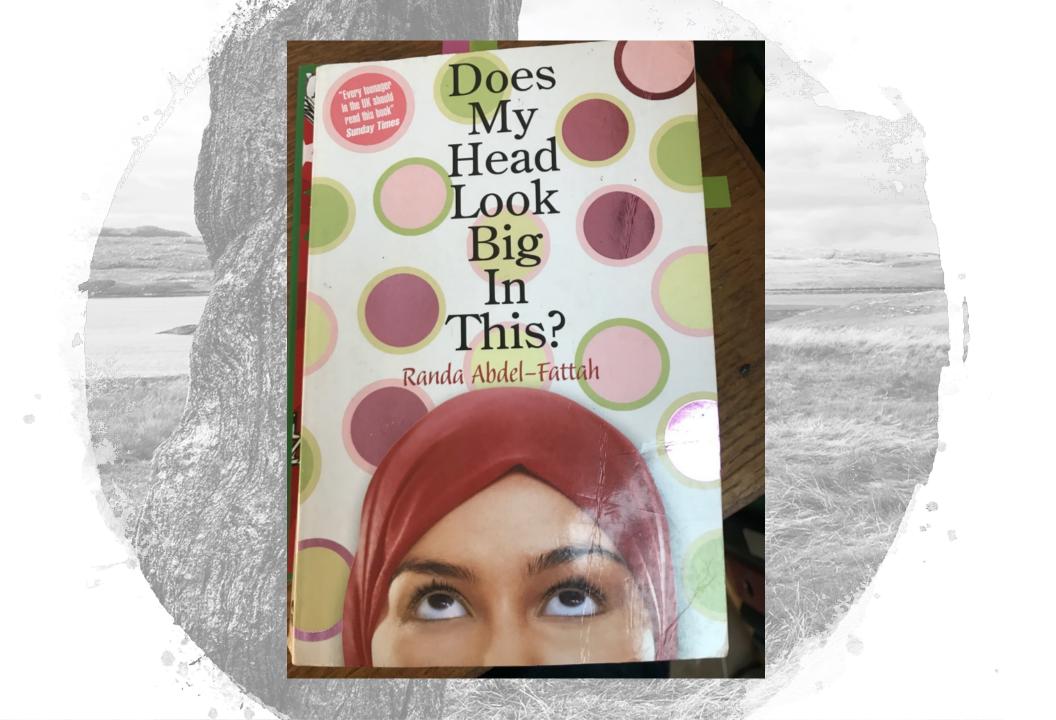
The rooftop is deserted, as it usually is at this time of the morning. Other faithful Muslims in the building she lives in prefer to pray in the comfort of their own homes .Fatima places the lamp on the mid-level wall that runs around the rooftop and gazes out at the expanse of the desert. Northern Taaj Gul, so called because the buildings in this area are built of rosy pink stone, is right next to the wall that surrounds the entire city of Noor... Fatima spreads her prayer mat, pointing it north toward the Kaba. The time before dawn is precious, as the air has a delicious chill to it that the sun doesn't allow during the day. Jama Masjid is lit up like a beacon; from her vantage point on the rooftop, Fatima can see groups of boys and men making their way to it for the Fajr prayer. Turning her back to the city, she, too, prays the four rakats of Fajr, bowing down with her hands on her knees for the ruqu before touching her forehead to the ground in a sajdah. After the prayer, which culminates in a dua, she gathers her belongings and returns to the apartment, where Sunaina is still sleeping. Briefly, Fatima considers returning to bed but shakes her head and stifles her yawns. She has an errand to run.

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Development of own ideas, values and identities:

Windows for gazing upon the lived religious experiences of the protagonists – how do they do it?



# 2

I'm terrified. But at the same time I feel like my passion and conviction in Islam are bursting inside me and I want to prove to myself that I'm strong enough to wear a badge of my faith. I believe it will make me feel so close to God. Because it's damn hard to walk around with people staring at your "nappy head" and not feel kind of pleased with yourself – if you manage to get through the stares and comments with your head held high. That's when this warm feeling buzzes through you and you smile to yourself, knowing God's watching you, knowing that He knows you're trying to be strong to please Him. Like you're both in on a private joke and something special and warm and extraordinary is happening and nobody in the world knows

about it because it's your own experience, your own personal friendship with your Creator. I guess when I'm not out of that special bond.

I'm ready for the party

I'm ready for the next step, I'm sure of that. But I'm still scaring me off.

But why should I be scared? As I do my all-time best out as follows:

- 1. The Religious/Scriptures/Sacred stuff: I believe in Allah/God's commandments contained in the Koran. God says men and women should act and dress modestly. The way I see it, I'd rather follow God's fashion dictates than some ugly solariumtanned old fart in Milan who's getting by on a pretty self-serving theory of less is more when it comes to female dress.
- 2. OK, cool, I've got modesty covered.
- 3. Now the next thing, and it's really very simple, is that while I'm not going to abandon my fashion sense you'd better believe I'd never give up my Portmans and Sportsgirl shopping sprees I'm sick of obsessing about my body, what guys are going to think about my cleavage and calves and shoulder to hip ratio. And for the love of everything that is good and holy I am really sick of worrying what

people are going to think if I put on a kilo or have a pimple. I mean, home room on Monday morning can be such a stress attack. There's one girl, Tia Tamos, the resident Year Eleven bitch, who has a field day if you have a pimple. You might as well call a funeral parlour because she makes it seem like you'd be better off dead than walk around with a zit. And some of the guys have this disgusting Monday morning habit of talking about the pornos they watched on the weekend loud enough so us girls can hear. They're the biggest bloody stirrers. According to them, fat chicks should be deported, girls should starve and implants should be a civic duty. Then we all get into this massive fight about respecting girls for their minds not their bra sizes. Well that basically has them sharing around an asthma pump because they lose their breath laughing.

 At this point, I should say that this is no longer a list, and that I am well and truly writing an essay.

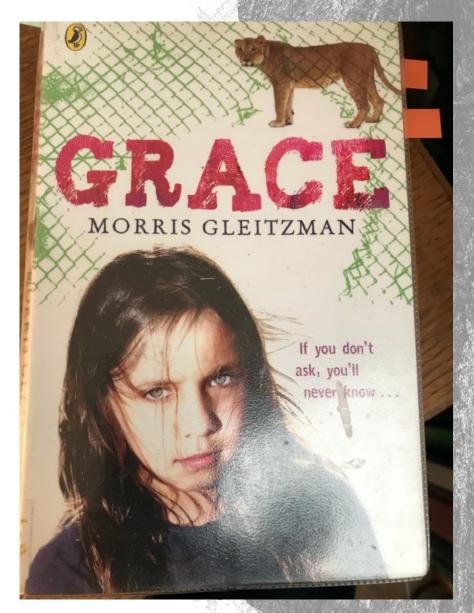
I can't imagine what my class will say if I walk in with the hijab on. Oh boy, does this give the walking-into-class-naked dream another dimension. Except in my case, I'm not walking in naked. I'm walking in fully covered and yet I'm still breaking out into a sweat.

Come to think of it, though, it's not like I'm not used to being the odd one out. I attended a Catholic primary school



Respect for self and own and identity and that of others – tolerance and acceptance (and celebration!):

Doors to open and experience others' beliefs in context





On my first day in the new house I needed some advice, so I had a word with God.

I told him I was very grateful to have my own bedroom, even though I was finding being locked in it doing Bible solitary since breakfast a bit frustrating.

"Please don't take that personally," I said.

I asked God to forgive Grandpop and the other church elders for punishing Dad by hiding us in a secret house.

"I don't think they realise how mean they're being," I said. "And pig-headed."

Finally I asked God a question.

"When you're locked in an upstairs room, "I said, "and you can't see any street signs out the window and you couldn't see any last night when you arrived because it was dark, and you couldn't memorise the route from your old house because you didn't recognise any landmarks after the Breezy Whale carwash, how can you find out the address of the new house so Dad knows where to come when he's ready to be meek and obedient?

It was a difficult question, but I knew God was used to those.

I thanked God for listening. Almost immediately He gave me an idea and I got busy. For I remembered what Dad had taught me. Don't sit back and wait for God to do it all. Ask for His advice, but be prepared to do the hard yards yourself.

Which I was.

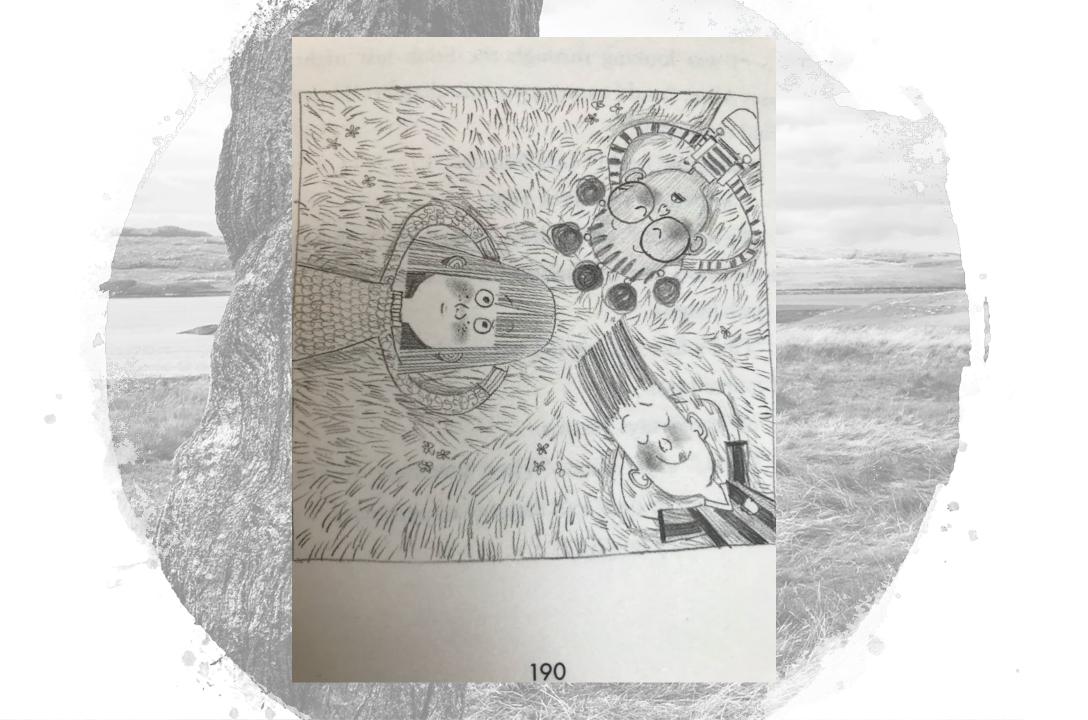
I turned to page one of the Bible. Dad reckoned the Bible was more a book of advice than a book of rules, and I was pretty sure that somewhere in it I'd find the clue I needed.



Development of an aptitude for debate – provoking challenging questions about meaning and purpose (religious studies as a rigorous academic pursuit in its own right):

Children's Literature as vehicle for asking the difficult questions

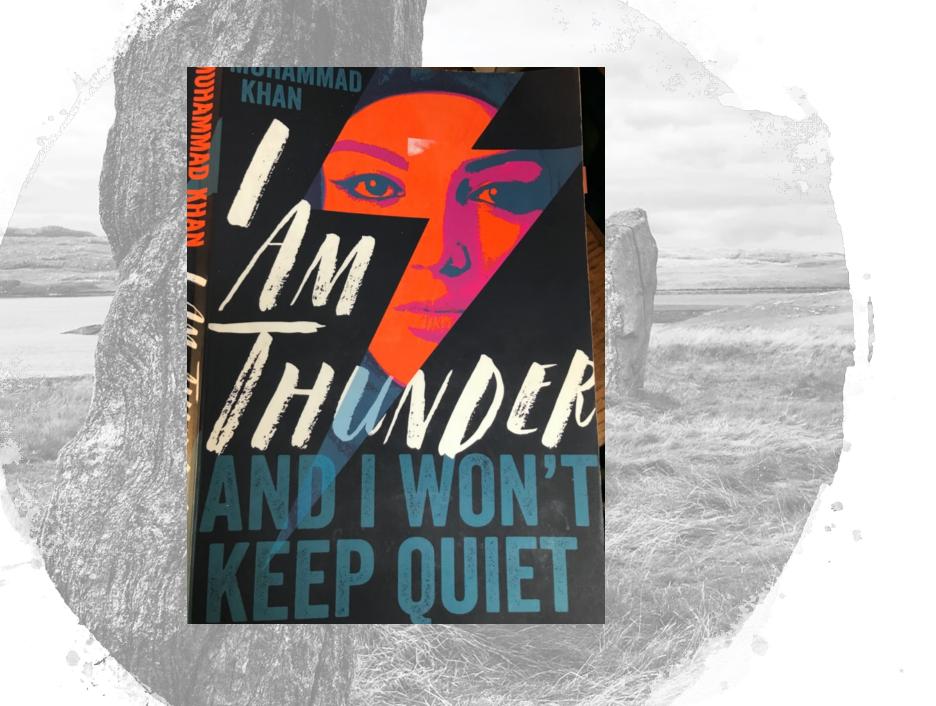






Ability to critically evaluate texts, sources of wisdom, authority etc. – "weighing up the value of wisdom from different sources":

Children's literature as a vehicle for the development of Critical Literacy skills – context, authorial intent, reader response theory.



About five minutes later he said, 'You did well to wear hijab, sister. But really, you should aim to wear it twenty-four seven.' 'Even to bed?' Arif asked, with a cheeky grin.

Jameel asked Allah for strength to 'tolerate such foolish brothers'. Arif turned round and winked at me.

'My parents won't let me . . .' I told him honestly.

'It is good that you show your parents respect by following their wishes. But know this: there is no obedience in disobedience.' Jameel paused, gauging if I'd got it. 'Tell her what it means, Arif. And if one more foolish utterance escapes your lips, by Allah I will stop the car and kick you out. Then you can find your own way to the mosque.'

'Sorry!' Arif said, blushing. 'OK, so what big bro here is saying is this: if Allah has commanded you to do something, and your parents are like "no way", you still have to do it, innit? Cos Allah's the Big Boss of the Universe.'

'OK,' I said quietly.

My parents freaking out wasn't the only factor here. I didn't fancy becoming a hijabi either after all the news stories I'd read about Muslim women getting their scarves ripped off or being spat at. One Muslim woman in a burkini had even been forced to take off extra layers of clothing by police, and with the whole world watching, just because she wanted to cover up on a beach. Why would anyone want to put themselves through that?

Jameel shoehorned into a gap between a BMW and a Fiat in a side street close to the mosque. A subtle change came over him as he turned off the engine. His eyes were more alert; his movements sharper.

'Do you wish to become a true Muslima?' he asked, turning to

'But I am—'

'I'm not talking about only visiting the mosque at Eid, or

praying to Allah as if he were Santa,' he replied, shaking his head, 'I mean true Islam, without addition or subtraction. That which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.

Truth be told, my parents' version of the faith had always bugged me. Yes, we were Muslims, but sometimes I wondered if Dad didn't just make up the rules as he went along. Like, one time he said it was OK to buy burgers from McDonald's, speak Allah's name over them, and - hey presto! - they became halal. Then Mickey-D's raised their prices, and the trick mysteriously stopped

'I want to be a proper Muslim,' I said solemnly.

He gave a thin smile. 'Then may Allah accept it of you. You are going to hear many things today. Perhaps you will be a little shocked, since the West has conditioned you in how to think. I pray your heart and mind are opened. I pray for you, as I pray for my brother.'

'Thank you,' I said meekly, glancing across at Arif. His large eyes looked sad for a second, but then he blinked, and gave me the cutest smile.

'Follow me,' Jameel said, exiting the car.

He led us through a side gate to a small building beside the mosque. Jameel rang the doorbell. After a moment, a crack appeared, and a single eyeball glared out at us. Then the door was thrown open, and a man in a flowing white gown and a biker jacket hugged Jameel. The guy wore a large white turban on his head, from which coils of oily dark hair escaped.

He invited us into a darkened hallway, leading us forward to a small front room. Several sheets had been spread across the floor. Twelve men sat on them, patiently waiting for the talk to begin. A settee had been pulled away from the far wall, which was functioning as a screen. Behind it sat three women in full-length gowns. One peered out at me from the letterbox slit in her niqab.



### A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

In February 2015 news broke of three British schoolgirls who flew out to Syria to join the self-proclaimed 'Islamic State'. As a Muslim and a high-school teacher, I found this shocking on many levels. The girls, by all accounts, were academically gifted with caring families and friends. So what prompted their disastrous decision — one that would cost them their lives?

For someone who has lost a relative to religious extremism, the incident reopened old wounds. So in April 2015, over the two-week Easter break from teaching, I sat down and wrote the first draft of the book you now hold in your hands. Writing it was painful, but I needed to understand what might lead someone to make those choices.

Once I began writing, I realized it was going to be harder than I thought. Why? Because being a Muslim — even a British one — means different things to different people. Muzna's daily life is the very real experience of some, but not all of my Muslim students. But her teenage experience is something each and every one of us can relate to, whatever our background.

I wrote Muzna's story for you. Muslim or non-Muslim? It doesn't matter to me. It shouldn't matter to you.

You are thunder. Don't keep quiet.

Muhammad Khan



Ability to clearly articulate personal beliefs and values whilst respecting those of others:

The beauty of story in expressing awe, wonder and spiritual enlightenment

Then suddenly the Mole felt a great Awe fall upon him, an awe that turned his muscles to water, bowed his head, and rooted his feet to the ground. It was no panic terror - indeed he felt wonderfully at peace and happy - but it was an awe that smote and held him and, without seeing, he knew it could only mean that some august Presence was very, very near. With difficulty he turned to look for his friend, and saw him at his side cowed, stricken, and trembling violently. And still there was utter silence in the populous bird-haunted branches around them; and still the light grew and grew.

Perhaps he would never have dared to raise his eyes, but that, though the piping was now hushed, the call and the summons seemed still dominant and imperious. He might not refuse, were Death himself waiting to strike him instantly, once he had looked with mortal eye on things rightly kept hidden. Trembling he obeyed, and raised his humble head; and then, in that utter clearness of the imminent dawn, while Nature, flushed with fullness of incredible colour, seemed to hold her breath for the event, he looked in the very eyes of the Friend and Helper; saw the backward sweep of the curved horns, gleaming in the growing daylight; saw the stern, hooked nose between the kindly eyes that were looking down on them humourously (sic), while the bearded mouth broke into a half-smile at the corners; saw the rippling muscles on the arm that lay across the broad chest, the long supply hand still holding the pan-pipes only just fallen away from the parted lips; saw the splendid curves of the shaggy limbs disposed in majestic ease on the sward; saw, last of all, nestling between his very hooves, sleeping soundly in entire peace and contentment, the little, round, podgy, childish form of the baby otter. All this he saw, for one moment breathless and intense, vivid on the morning sky; and still, as he looked he lived; and still, as he lived, he wondered.





