

Summer Reading & Writing Packet

Rising 4th Grade

The Boy in the Back of the Class by Onjali Q. Raúf

Name: _____

Welcome to your summer reading packet! During the first 8 weeks of school, the fourth grade focuses on identity. We define identity as “what makes you, you.”

As you read the novel, *The Boy in Back of the Class* by Onjali Q Rauf, pay attention to the identities of the characters in the story.

Within this packet, there are two writing prompts for each chapter. Please choose one writing prompt to answer for each chapter in the story. At the end of the packet, there is a final writing prompt. This final writing prompt will be graded by your fourth grade teacher at the start of the year!

ADVICE: there are 26 chapters, answer the questions as you read!

Chapter 1: The Empty Chair

Prompt 1: Describe how the narrator and their friends react to Ahmet's sudden arrival. Why do you think a newly filled "empty chair" can spark so much immediate curiosity in a classroom?

Prompt 2: If a new student who didn't speak your language joined your class tomorrow, what is one welcoming action you could take on day one to show them they are safe?

Chapter 2: The Boy with the Lion Eyes

Prompt 1: The narrator gives Ahmet a private nickname based on his "lion eyes". Why do you think visual first impressions are so strong, and what did his eyes hint about his internal strength?

Prompt 2: Why do children (and adults) often invent rumors or gossipy stories when they encounter someone they don't understand? How can these rumors be harmful?

Chapter 3: Forty Winks

Prompt 1: Make a prediction: why is Ahmet so often not with the class?

Prompt 2: How might it feel to sit in a busy classroom but constantly be pulled away by adults, unable to play or talk casually with peers?

Chapter 4: What Mr Brown and Mrs Grimsby Said

Prompt 1: The narrator tries to uncover the truth by paying attention to reliable clues rather than playground gossip. Why is searching for the truth better than going along with rumors?

Prompt 2: How does hearing adults talk about a child's serious life situation change the way a student looks at their classmate?

Chapter 5: The Refugee Kid

Prompt 1: Think about the definition of a "refugee" provided by the narrator's mother. How does truly understanding this word explain Ahmet's silence and behavior?

Prompt 2: How does learning the challenges someone has lived through give us the tools to be a more empathetic friend?

Chapter 6: The Woman in the Silver Scarf

Prompt 1: Why is the arrival of Ms. Hemsî a turning point for Ahmet's experience in the school? How does a language barrier create invisible walls?

Prompt 2: Imagine being in a foreign country where you cannot understand or speak a word of the language. What emotions would you experience?

Chapter 7: Mr Irons' Nose

Prompt 1: Contrast the behavior of Mrs. Khan or Ms. Hemsî with that of Mr. Irons. How does an adult's attitude impact whether a child feels safe or rejected?

Prompt 2: Why do you think some people respond differently to strictness or anger rather than kindness?

Chapter 8: The Unexpected Adventure

Prompt 1: Why are shared adventures or activities outside of school so helpful at helping kids become friends?

Prompt 2: What does the willingness of the narrator's friend group to change their daily routines say about their want to be friends with Ahmet?

Chapter 9: The Big Fight

Prompt 1: Why do bullies like Brendan often target individuals who are seen as quiet, different, or vulnerable?

Prompt 2: If you witness someone being picked on for being different, what is the safest and best way to stand up for them?

Chapter 10: War and Missing Pieces

Prompt 1: Ahmet tells his story through pictures rather than spoken language. Why can art be a more powerful tool for challenges and storytelling than words?

Prompt 2: How does learning about the "missing pieces" of Ahmet's family change the emotional stakes of the novel for the narrator?

Chapter 11: The Game of Scrabble

Prompt 1: Explain what the connection the narrator learned about her own family and refugees.

Prompt 2: Words are powerful tools. Select a single word that you think represents the growing bond between Ahmet and the narrator's group, and explain why.

Chapter 12: Syrah and the Sea

Prompt 1: The sea represents a terrifying obstacle from Ahmet's past. How is this different from how most children view a trip to the beach or the ocean?

Prompt 2: How does the story handle the tragic loss of Syrah, Ahmet's sister, while still showing hope through the eyes of nine-year-olds?

Chapter 13: The Something That Changed Everything

Prompt 1: The border closure introduces a race against time. How does the closing of the border affect Ahmet and his friends at school?

Prompt 2: Opinion: should kids be asked their opinion on really serious topics that affect a lot of people?

Chapter 14: The Three Plans

Prompt 1: Evaluate: What are “The Three Plans” and what makes their ideas uniquely childlike, yet incredibly passionate?

Prompt 2: When faced with a massive problem, why is brainstorming and collaborating with friends better than trying to solve the problem alone?

Chapter 15: The Greatest Idea in the World

Prompt 1: Why does the group see the Queen as the ultimate authority figure who can override the country's border laws?

Prompt 2: "The Greatest Idea in the World" requires immense bravery. Would you have the courage to break rules if it meant saving a friend's family? Why or why not?

Chapter 16: The Royal Letter

Prompt 1: If you were writing a paragraph in that letter to the Queen, what core argument would you make to convince her to help Ahmet?

Prompt 2: Why can the honest words of a child sometimes be more convincing than the complex arguments of adults?

Chapter 17: The Emergency Plan

Prompt 1: How does the detailed mapping of "The Emergency Plan" show the determination of the group?

Prompt 2: How do the friends manage their fear of getting into major trouble with their parents and teachers?

Chapter 18: Stan the Taxi Man

Prompt 1: Give an example of kindness by an adult to the group of kids from this chapter. Why was their kindness important?

Prompt 2: How does Stan the Taxi Man's reaction to the kids change the mood of their journey?

Chapter 19: The Queen's Palace

Prompt 1: Contrast: What are the differences between the grand palace gates and the kids' familiar, small school environment?

Prompt 2: Standing before such a giant monument, how do the children fight off the feeling that they are too small to be heard?

Chapter 20: The Cold Stream Guards

Prompt 1: Explain the help the kids get outside of the Queen's palace.

Prompt 2: Describe the tension of this climax. How does the narrator's desperation peak in this moment?

Chapter 21: The Neighbours and the News

Prompt 1: Compare: How do the different reactions of the neighbors show that the neighborhood is deeply divided on how to treat refugees?

Prompt 2: Opinion: If you were the narrator's parent, would you be proud of your child's compassion or angrier that they snuck away to London? Explain.

Chapter 22: World Wide Whispers

Prompt 1: How can modern media and "worldwide whispers" turn a small, private act of friendship into a global conversation?

Prompt 2: What are the dangers and benefits of Ahmet' story blasted across international news?

Chapter 23: Brendan-the-Bully and the Breaking News

Prompt 1: How does the news story and reporters wanting to talk to the kids change how bullying behavior is managed by the teachers?

Prompt 2: Why is fighting never the answer even if you had a good reason?

Chapter 24: The Interview

Prompt 1: During the interview, what message do the children emphasize above all else? Why is it important that they spoke for themselves?

Prompt 2: How does seeing kids speak with such passion about a topic affect the perspectives of the adults watching?

Chapter 25: The Queen's Message

Prompt 1: How does the Queen's official message validate the idea that no one is ever too small or insignificant to alter history?

Prompt 2: Why do you think the Queen's message could give hope to other refugee children?

Chapter 26: The Present

Prompt 1: How does the title of the final chapter, "The Present," give a double meaning for both a gift and the idea of time?

Prompt 2: Reflecting on the entire novel, how did a simple empty chair in Chapter 1 permanently change the hearts of an entire community?

NAME: _____

FINAL WRITING PROMPT

Directions: Using your best cursive handwriting, answer the following writing prompt. Be sure to write in complete sentences using proper punctuation and capitalization. **This assignment will be graded by your fourth grade teacher.**

Writing Prompt: The novel, *The Boy in the Back of the Class*, tells the story of Ahmet and his three classmates who help him in a time of need. Tell about an experience when you helped someone in need. Be specific in your retelling of the story.

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