Title, Author, Illustrator:

Title: A Garland of Henna
Author: Varsha Bajaj
Illustrated by Archana Sreenivasan

Ideas for enjoying the book at home

Created by: Natomas Unified School District Early Learning

About the Book:

Nikita comes from a family of talented henna artists. Her mother and grandmother create beautiful designs, and Nikita is excited to learn this special family tradition. Her grandmother shares a treasured notebook of henna designs that she brought with her from India. But when Nikita tries creating her own designs, things don't go as planned, and she becomes frustrated. With encouragement from her family and a little practice, Nikita learns that developing a new skill takes patience, persistence, and confidence. This heartwarming story celebrates family traditions, cultural heritage, and the joy of learning something new.



Before Reading:

- What do you notice about the cover?
- What do you think about the title?
- What do you think we will discover in this book?



While Reading:

- What do you notice in the picture?
- What do you think about what we just read?
- What are you curious about now?



After Reading:

- What did you think about the book?
- How did it make you feel?
- What was your favorite part?

Jump into Joyful Reading!

Invite your child to share their thinking and ask questions as you enjoy the book together. The main thing is to have fun and enjoy one another's company as you read together. Here are some things you can say and do to create a joyful reading experience for your child.

Turn the page over for creative expression ideas!

Created by Pam Spycher, REL West at WestEd, 2021

Creative Expression Activities

After you read the book, unleash your imagination and creativity! Use the ideas below to choose your own adventure. What other ideas did the book inspire your amazing mind to think of?

Creative Writing

TK–2: My Special Tradition
Think about something special your family enjoys doing together. Draw a picture and write a few sentences describing the tradition, who participates, and why it is meaningful to your family.

Grades 3–5: A Tradition Worth Sharing
Imagine you are sharing a special family or cultural tradition with someone who has never experienced it. Write a short story describing the tradition, how it began, and why you hope it continues.

Visual and Digital Arts

TK–2: Create a Henna-Inspired Design
Look at the beautiful patterns in the book. Using paper and crayons or markers, create your own design inspired by flowers, leaves, vines, and shapes. Decorate a paper hand outline with your artwork!

Grades 3–5: Design a Henna Pattern
Explore the repeating patterns and shapes found in henna art. Create your own symmetrical design using flowers, leaves, swirls, and geometric shapes. Display your design on a paper hand or bookmark.

Kindness and Community

TK–2: Teach Me Something!
Nikita learns by watching her mother and grandmother. Ask a family member to teach you something they know how to do. It could be cooking, drawing, gardening, or another special skill. Thank them for sharing their knowledge with you!

Grades 3–5: Family Knowledge Exchange
Choose something you know how to do and teach it to a family member. Then ask them to teach you something new. Talk about how sharing our knowledge helps families and communities grow stronger.

Mindfulness and Self-Awareness

TK–2: Keep Trying!
Remember how Nikita felt when her first design didn't turn out the way she wanted. Think about something that was difficult for you to learn. Draw a picture of yourself trying again and finish this sentence: "I can keep trying because..."

Grades 3–5: My Practice Garden
Draw a garden with several flowers. On each flower, write or draw something you are learning to do. Think about how practice, patience, and encouragement can help you grow, just like Nikita.

Music and Movement

Grades TK-2: Create a Garden Dance
Choose a favorite instrumental song and create a short dance inspired by the flowers, leaves, and swirling patterns of henna art. Use your arms, hands, and body to create movements that represent a garden growing and blooming.

Grades 3-5: Patterns in Motion
Create a movement sequence inspired by the repeating patterns found in henna designs. Use different movements to represent lines, circles, spirals, and flowers. Perform your sequence for your family and explain how your movements connect to the artwork.

Dramatic Play

TK–2: The Family Art Studio
Pretend you are an artist like Nikita's mother and grandmother! Set up an art studio at home using paper, crayons, and markers. Invite family members to visit your studio and let them choose a special design for their paper hand.

Grades 3–5: Teach Me Your Art!
Pretend you are Nikita teaching someone how to create henna-inspired designs. Use paper and markers to demonstrate how to draw simple patterns. Explain each step and encourage your student to keep practicing.

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