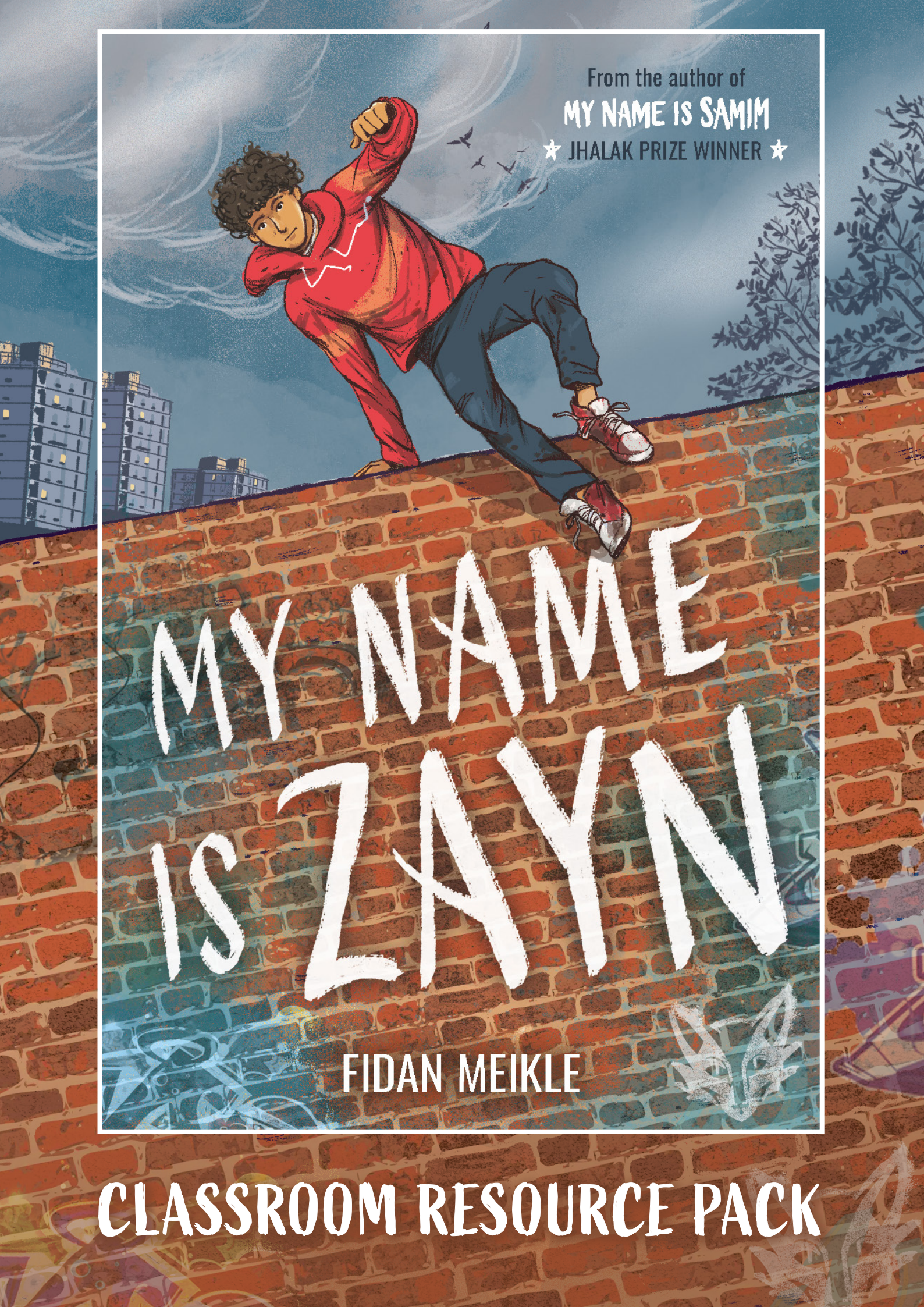




From the author of
MY NAME IS SAMIM

★ JHALAK PRIZE WINNER ★

MY NAME IS ZAYN

FIDAN MEIKLE

CLASSROOM RESOURCE PACK

— Contents —

Using this resource pack_____	p.3
About the Book_____	p.5
Pre-reading activities_____	p.6

Close Reading & Language Analysis

Part 1: Waking in the Dark _____	p.7
Chapter 1_____	p.7
Chapter 3_____	p.8
Chapter 4_____	p.9
Part 2: The Hotel and the Search _____	p.10
Chapter 8_____	p.10
Chapter 11_____	p.11
Chapter 12_____	p.12
Chapter 14,15_____	p.13
Chapter 25_____	p.14
Part 3: Shadows Reckonings _____	p.15
Chapter 27_____	p.15
Chapter 28,29_____	p.16
Chapter 35,37_____	p.17
Chapter 42_____	p.18
Chapter 45,46_____	p.19
Part 4: Finding Home _____	p.20
Chapter 49_____	p.20
Chapter 51_____	p.21
Epilogue_____	p.22

Interactive Classroom Activities

<i>Zayn's Trauma and Courage Scale</i> _____	p.23
<i>What Would You Do?</i> _____	p.25
<i>The Things We Don't Say</i> _____	p.27
<i>The Jackal: Monster or Metaphor?</i> _____	p.28
<i>Zayn's Grandmother's Wisdom</i> _____	p.29
<i>The Objects That Carry Stories</i> _____	p.30
<i>Label vs Person</i> _____	p.31
<i>A Character's Turning Point</i> _____	p.32
<i>Rewrite the Headline</i> _____	p.33
<i>The Universal Language</i> _____	p.34
<i>Be You, Not them</i> _____	p.35
<i>Spot the Pressure</i> _____	p.36
<i>The Right to Childhood</i> _____	p.37
<i>What Does It Mean to Be Home?</i> _____	p.39
<i>The Humanity Test</i> _____	p.40
<i>Hope</i> _____	p.41
<i>Refugee</i> _____	p.42
<i>Final Creative Challenge</i> _____	p.43

Cross-curricular links

<i>Geography</i> _____	p.44
<i>PSHE and Citizenship</i> _____	p.45
<i>Art and Design</i> _____	p.46

Using *My Name Is Zayn* by Fidan Meikle in the Classroom

My Name Is Zayn, by Fidan Meikle, is the companion novel to *My Name Is Samim*, following Samim's best friend, Zayn, as he wakes alone in a UK hospital after their dinghy capsizes in the English Channel.

While *My Name Is Samim* follows the boys' perilous journey to safety and Samim's determination to survive, adapt and become a voice for those he met along the way, *My Name Is Zayn* takes readers into the reality of life for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the UK. It explores the dangers they face in asylum hotels, including child criminal exploitation and gangs, alongside the often-unseen battles with trauma, loss, grief, survivor's guilt and the search for belonging.

This teaching resource has been created to support educators in bringing *My Name Is Zayn* into the classroom. The novel offers rich opportunities for discussion and encourages young readers to build empathy and understanding around the following key themes:

- **Identity & Names:** What our names carry, how we hold on to the memories of those we have lost, and what it means to reclaim your sense of self.
- **Asylum Seeking & Displacement:** The experience of seeking safety, living with uncertainty, and searching for a place to call home.
- **Child Exploitation & Safe Spaces:** The ways vulnerable children can be targeted for exploitation, and the importance of protection and safe spaces.
- **Friendship & Brotherhood:** Loyalty, trust and the power of friendship to help us survive, find courage and begin to heal.
- **Humour as Defiance:** How wit and humour can become tools for resilience, connection and survival.
- **Survivor's Guilt & Trauma:** How fear, grief and memory can live in the body, represented through 'the knot' and 'the rocks' in Zayn's chest, and the recurring presence of the Jackal.
- **Unity Over Division:** The idea that solidarity and compassion can cross borders, backgrounds and differences, and that we are stronger when we choose to stand together rather than turn against one another.
- **Hope:** The possibility of finding light after profound loss. How friendship, kindness, memory and courage can keep hope alive when everything seems lost.

Through carefully selected extracts and thoughtful discussion prompts, this resource helps students engage more deeply with the text. These prompts are designed to spark reflection, encourage dialogue, and support written responses.

You'll also find a range of adaptable classroom activities, cross-curricular links, and ideas for extension work. This pack is suitable for students in Upper Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.

We hope this thought-provoking story will spark meaningful conversations and inspire compassion, awareness, and empathy in your classroom.

A Note for Teachers

This resource pack contains occasional references to the events of the previous novel *My Name is Samim*. While *My Name is Zayn* can be read on its own, pupils will gain the fullest appreciation of the story (and of the discussions prompted in this resource) if they have read both books.

My Name is Zayn explores displacement, near-death experiences, gang exploitation and coercion, trauma, and bereavement. While written sensitively, the story may be emotionally challenging for some students, especially if they have experienced loss or displacement. Please read ahead and approach discussions with care. You know your class best. There are also moments of warmth, humour and hope, which make space for powerful, empathetic conversations.

About the book

My name is Zayn.

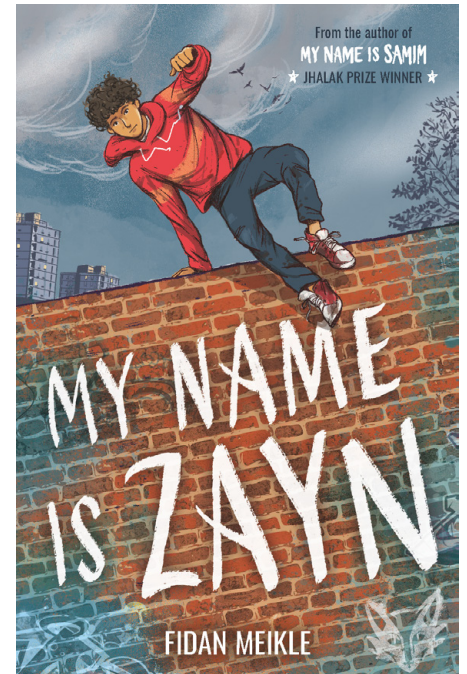
I'm thirteen, I'm obsessed with football – and I'm a refugee.

After surviving the dangerous journey from Afghanistan to the UK, I swore I'd stay out of trouble. But my best friend Samim has vanished, and now my roommate is missing too.

I won't stop until I find them. Even if it means walking straight into the jaws of trouble.

This is my story. Are you ready for it?

My Name Is Zayn is the heartfelt, wry and evocative follow-up to the multi-award-winning *My Name is Samim*. A journey of resilience and friendship, it is inspired by the real-life stories of hundreds of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and allows older middle-grade readers to see through the eyes of this often-invisible minority.



About the author



Fidan Meikle is a multi-award-winning Azerbaijani-British writer, linguist and translator. Her debut middle-grade novel, *My Name Is Samim*, won the Jhalak Children's & YA Prize, the Federation of Children's Book Groups Children's Book Award, several regional awards and was included in the 2026 Read for Empathy Collection. When she's away from her keyboard, Fidan enjoys cooking her favourite Azerbaijani dishes or exploring the stunning Scottish Highlands with her husband, kids, and their cockapoo.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Dual Perspectives & Predictions

Discussion:

- In *My Name Is Samim*, we heard how Samim experienced the journey from Afghanistan to the UK. If you have read *My Name is Samim*, what do you remember about Zayn from that story?
- How might Zayn's personality (outspoken, brave, witty) shape how he copes compared to Samim (quiet, logical, chess player)?

Activity 2: Understanding Unaccompanied Minors

Read and discuss this context together:

An Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child (UASC) is a child under 18 who has arrived in a country seeking safety without parents or guardians. They are placed in the care of local authorities, living in foster homes, children's homes, or supported accommodation while their asylum claims are processed.

Discussion:

- How do you think you'd feel arriving in a completely new country with no family and unable to speak the language?
- Who are the adults around these children (caseworkers, interpreters, social workers, key workers), and what responsibilities do they carry?

CLOSE READING AND LANGUAGE ANALYSIS

Part 1: Waking in the Dark

Chapter 1: The Star Map & Memory

Discussion: Sensory Anchors and Awakening

Zayn describes waking up after nearly drowning with no memory, until an interpreter hands him a water-warped star map.

Extract (p. 6–7):

“The memories hit me all at once. First like little taps on the door, then banging, then bursting in. Memories of Iran. Turkey. Greece. Italy. France. And finally, the English Channel. Each place from my long journey sent shivers through me. My throat closed up, and I clutched my head like it might split open.”

Questions:

- Look at Zayn’s reaction when Auntie Farida speaks Dari. Why does hearing his home language make him cry “like a baby”?
- What effect is the writer trying to convey by using personification and active verbs (“taps”, “banging”, “bursting in”)?
- Why do you think the star map is such a powerful symbol for both Zayn and Samim? What could it represent besides constellations?

Part 1 – Waking in the Dark

Chapter 3: “In Heaven or Hell”

Discussion: Sacrificial Love & Humour Under Pressure

When their dinghy deflates, Zayn realises Samim’s life jacket is broken and forces Samim to take his.

Extract (p. 16–17):

“I flapped my arms and kicked my legs, trying to stay afloat, but my limbs felt wooden, heavy and slow, as if I was swimming through glue... ‘Are we going to die, Zayn?’ I wanted to crack another joke... but I didn’t want my last words to my brother to be a lie, so I told him the truth. ‘P-probably.’ Samim’s bottom lip trembled... ‘Find me on the other side?’ Our eyes locked. I took a deep breath and forced my words to be strong: ‘In heaven or hell.’”

Questions:

- How does the simile “swimming through glue” communicate Zayn’s physical exhaustion?
- Why does Zayn make jokes about pizza in Italy even while freezing in the Channel? What purpose does humour serve in terrifying situations?
- When the boat sinks, Zayn promises Samim: “In heaven or hell, I’ll find you.” What do you think this promise means to both boys?

Part 1 – Waking in the Dark**Chapter 4: The Beast from the Dark****Language Analysis: The Metaphor of the Jackal**

In the water and in his recurring nightmares, Zayn is stalked by a monstrous, predatory jackal.

The Jackal as a Symbol

What does this creature embody? (Survivor's guilt, unresolved grief for his family, trauma from losing Darya, the instinctual fear of danger).

Sensory Details

Look at how the jackal is described throughout the book (“burning orange eyes”, “ash scattered over sand”, “hungry and watching”). Why did the author choose a jackal rather than an imaginary monster?

Part 2: The Hotel & The Search

Chapter 8: The Grasshopper Boy & Identity

Discussion: Coping Mechanisms

Zayn meets his roommate Musa, who eats food in alphabetical order and wears an old Spider-Man cap and watch.

Extract (p. 41):

“You see, bread starts with B, and so I eat the bread first. Then cheese because it starts with C. Then chicken. Then lettuce. Then tomatoes... You see, I figured since I live in England and follow English rules, it is only fair that I follow the English alphabet, too.”

Questions:

- What does Musa’s alphabetical eating habit tell us about his character and how he is feeling in a confusing new world?
- Why does Zayn call him “Grasshopper”? How does the author show their dynamic shifting from annoyance to affection?

Part 2 – The Hotel and the Search**Chapter 11: The Universal Language of Football****Discussion: Belonging on the Pitch**

At school, Zayn is initially sidelined and called “Afghanistan” by the team captain, Ross, until he gets his chance on the pitch.

Extract (p. 55):

“Ross ran over and ruffled my hair. ‘Let’s go, Afghanistan!’ he yelled, hooking my neck. I ducked out from under his arm. ‘Not Afghanistan,’ I said, panting. ‘My name is Zayn.’ For a second, he just blinked at me. Then he grinned and patted my shoulder. ‘Fair enough. Great goal, Zayn. I’m Ross.’”

Questions:

- Why did Ross call him “Afghanistan” at first? What is the difference between being labelled by your nationality/country and being called by your actual name?
- How does sport act as a bridge between languages and cultures in this chapter?

Part 2 – The Hotel and the Search**Chapter 12: A Fortress of Grief (Uncle Ali)****Discussion: Breaking Through Walls of Pain**

Zayn persistently knocks on the door of Uncle Ali – an elderly, traumatised refugee who howls at night and refuses his medicine.

Extract from later, chapter 19, (p. 95-96):

“When you look at Uncle Ali, you see the man who curses, and I see the man who has a story I don’t know. We are all walking stories, Musa... Until we know each other’s stories, kindness should be the only language we speak.”

Questions:

- Why does Uncle Ali yell for Death to take him? What does this show about the psychological toll of displacement on older people?
- What does Zayn mean by “We are all walking stories”? How does empathy change how we view angry or difficult people?

Part 2 – The Hotel and the Search**Chapters 14 & 15: The Ghost Twins & “Be You, Not Them”****Discussion: Art, Silence, and Standing Tall**

Niko and Luan, twin brothers from Albania, who don't use spoken words to communicate, stand up for Musa when Ross makes fun of his Spider-Man cap.

Extract (p. 76):

“Niko picked up his sketchpad, drew something quickly and slid it across the table to Musa. It was Spider-Man, standing proud on top of a roof. Underneath, Niko wrote: BE YOU, NOT THEM.”

Questions:

- Why do Niko and Luan communicate through drawings and notes rather than speech?
- What does the motto “BE YOU, NOT THEM” mean to Musa? Why does Zayn realise that telling Musa to take off his cap was asking him to “lose himself”?

Part 2 – The Hotel and the Search**Chapter 25: “What’s It Like to Be a Refugee?”****Language Analysis: The Metaphor of the Warm House**

When Orla asks what being a refugee feels like, Zayn searches for the right words.

Extract (p. 128):

“To be refugee feels like this world is a big warm house. With lights on. Fire burning. We can see happy people through windows. But we stand outside. In the cold. We knock and knock, and promise we don’t spill anything... But the door stays shut. And the cold gets colder.”

Guided Analysis:

- **Metaphor Breakdown:** What does the “big warm house” represent? Who are the “happy people through windows”?
- **Emotive Language:** Examine the impact of the phrase: “we promise we don’t spill anything.” What does this reveal about how refugees feel pressured to behave?

Part 3: Shadows & Reckonings

Chapter 27: The Corridor Cup

Discussion: Defiance in the Face of Hate

As anti-refugee protesters surround the hotel, throwing eggs and chanting slurs, Uncle Ali organises the children in a hallway football tournament.

Extract (pp. 144):

“The people outside don’t know us, Zayn. They don’t know our names or our stories. To them, we’re just numbers, headlines, a strange word – refugee. So when they shout, it isn’t really at us... But that anger outside doesn’t belong to you, boy... Keep your name safe, Zayn. Don’t lose your story to their shouting.”

Questions:

- Why does Uncle Ali say the protesters are looking for an “easy target”?
- What does it mean to “keep your name safe”? How does joy, learning, and playing become a form of resistance?
- What do you think asylum seekers, especially children, might be feeling inside the hotel while people are protesting outside?

Part 3 – Shadows and Reckonings

Chapters 28 & 29: £350 Worth of Trouble & Aziz

Discussion: The Mechanics of Grooming & The Stolen Name

Gav lures Musa into exploitation by giving him expensive trainers, then uses the resulting debt to pressure and coerce him into shoplifting. After returning to the hotel, Musa finally reveals the truth about his identity.

Extract (pp. 156–157):

“When the bomb hit our house... A whole ceiling came down on me and my brother. We were eight, Musa and I. Twins... His last words were, ‘Don’t worry. Spider-Man is on the way, I know it.’ ... Then the man touched my shoulder and said, ‘Your parents are gone too, son’... When the man asked my name... and without thinking, I told him Musa... But that was my brother’s name... Because I’d lost everyone, Zayn. And that way, at least I could keep my brother alive...”

Questions:

- How does Gav exploit Musa’s innocence and poverty? Why are unaccompanied minors especially vulnerable to criminal gangs?
- Why did Musa take his twin brother’s name and wear his broken watch frozen at 7:00? How does this redefine everything we knew about his “quirks”?

Part 3 – Shadows and Reckonings**Chapters 35 & 37: Samim is Here****Discussion: Narrative Merging & The Star Map Note**

Mr Baird notices an article in a local paper showing that Samim is alive, leading Zayn on a desperate journey to the hospital.

Extract (p. 191):

“I turned it over and pressed the pen to the stiff paper. The Dari letters flowed in one short sentence: In heaven or hell.”

Questions:

- Revisit Chapter 45 from *My Name Is Samim* (if you have read it), and consider how this scene directly connects to that one. Compare how Samim receives the note with how Zayn writes it.
- Why does Mr Baird agree to drive Zayn despite his usual gruff rules? What shared grief connects Mr Baird and Zayn (p. 192)?

Part 3 – Shadows and Reckonings**Chapter 42: Facing the Jackal****Language Analysis: Courage vs. Fear**

Struggling with intense fear, survivor's guilt over Darya and panic over Musa, Zayn confronts the growing vision of the jackal.

Extract (Auntie Amina's message, p. 220):

"Fear is loud, that's all. It shouts so you think it's powerful. But truth is, fear can only grow as big as you let it. And for as long as I've known you Zayn, your courage has always been bigger."

Questions:

- How does Auntie Amina redefine fear?
- Why does Zayn repeat Darya's words: "My name is Zayn and I'm not afraid of your darkness"? (p.223) How does remembering Darya give him strength instead of shame?

Part 3 – Shadows and Reckonings**Chapters 45 & 46: The Rooftop Leap****Discussion: Choosing Courage Over Fear**

Cornered on a warehouse roof by Gav's gang, Zayn, Musa, Niko, and Luan must leap into the freezing river.

Extract (p. 236):

“Would you jump if Spider-Man asked you to jump?’ Musa peered down, his body shaking... ‘I wouldn’t jump with Spider-Man,’ he said, his voice suddenly strong. ‘But I’ll jump with you.’”

Questions:

- Why is Musa's declaration, that he would jump with Zayn rather than Spider-Man, such a monumental turning point for his character?
- As Zayn sinks into the freezing water, his memories of the Aegean Sea blur with the present. How does saving Musa help heal his guilt over Darya?
- Look at Mr Baird's words on the riverbank: “This was no job for a child, but you did it.” (p.243) Why do you think Mr Baird tells Zayn this was 'no job for a child'?

Part 4: Finding Home

Chapter 49: Keep Your Name Safe

Activity & Reflection: Reclaiming the True Name

Before Zayn leaves for Italy, he runs back to call up to the hospital window.

Extract (pp. 258–259):

“‘You have to tell me your name!’ Grasshopper stilled. ‘Please! What is your real name?’ ‘Aziz!’ Grasshopper’s voice cracked. ‘My name is Aziz!’ I stood under his window, my chest heaving, while this new name sank in. Quiet, precious, finally his. Aziz. ‘Keep your name safe, Aziz...’”

Reflection Task:

Why was it essential for Aziz to speak his real name aloud before moving forward? Write a short reflection on what your own name means to you, your family, and your identity.

Part 4 – Finding Home**Chapter 51: Brothers Reunited****Discussion: The Reunion**

Zayn and Samim meet in a café before Zayn boards his flight to Rome.

Extract (p. 272):

“I’d give you my life jacket in every sea, in every life, Samim. Without a second thought. And you owe me nothing for that.’ ... ‘Listen to me. You don’t have to choose me for me to know we’re brothers. We are. Always. Even if we end up on different planets.”

Questions:

- How do both boys transform their trauma into care for others?
- Compare Samim’s explanation of his detention (p. 270-271) with Zayn’s stay in the hotel. How did both boys experience the UK immigration system differently?

Part 4 – Finding Home

Epilogue: Is Your Heart Happy?

Discussion: Rising Above the Darkness

Four years later (Summer 2026), Zayn is in Italy trialling for a professional football team when Samim surprises him in the stands holding a sign quoting his “sweet grandmother.”

Extract (pp. 284–288):

“And when I run now, with the ball at my feet and a teammate calling my name, I don’t move like someone left behind. I move like I am meant to be here...”

“Some people, bachim, are greater than death.”

Questions:

- At the beginning of the book, Zayn and Samim jokingly exchange the greetings “Are your meals plentiful? Is your sleep peaceful? Is your heart happy?” Zayn reflects that, as happy children, they didn’t understand the meaning their mothers had put into those words. After everything they have experienced, why do these simple greetings take on a much deeper meaning?
- When Samim and Zayn are finally reunited, why do you think Samim chooses these particular questions to ask Zayn? What does he really want to know when he asks whether his friend’s heart is happy?
- Why is Zayn’s answer, “It is now,” such a powerful moment of closure? How has the meaning of “a happy heart” changed for them?
- Why do you think people sometimes only understand the value of ordinary things – a safe sleep, enough food, family, friendship – after they have lost them?

INTERACTIVE CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

The following activities can be used alongside the close-reading sections or as standalone lessons. They are designed to encourage discussion, critical thinking, creativity and reflection while keeping students connected to the characters and events of *My Name Is Zayn*.

ZAYN'S TRAUMA & COURAGE SCALE

Throughout the novel, Zayn describes his inner state using metaphors: the “Rocks in the Chest”, the “Tightening Knot”, and the “Growing Jackal.” These images help us understand feelings that can be difficult to put into words.

Student Worksheet Task 1

1. Choose a moment

Think of a moment in the story when Zayn experiences a strong emotion.

What is happening?

2. Give the feeling a physical form

If Zayn's emotion became something physical, what would it feel like?

- ☐ Heavy
- ☐ Tight
- ☐ Cold
- ☐ Hot
- ☐ Sharp
- ☐ Loud
- ☐ Something else: _____

Now create your own metaphor.

The feeling was...

Interactive Classroom Activities

Student Worksheet Task 2

Zayn's Jackal represents something he cannot simply explain or switch off. Instead of telling the reader exactly what he feels, the novel shows his inner struggle through the creature.

Now create your own metaphorical character for an emotion.

Step 1 — Choose an emotion

Choose one:

- Fear
- Loneliness
- Guilt
- Hope
- Anger
- Jealousy
- Grief
- Excitement

Step 2 — Turn it into something physical

Imagine the emotion is a creature, object, place or force of nature.

- What does it look like?
- What does it sound like?
- How does it move?
- What does it want?

Step 3 — Write the scene

Write a short 150–200 word scene in which your character experiences this emotion
Your challenge: don't name the emotion.

- Don't just write 'I was terrified'.
- Instead, show us: 'The thing in the corner lifted its head. I stopped breathing.'
- Use actions, sensations, sounds and imagery to let the reader work out what the character is feeling.

Extension:

Return to your metaphor at the end of the scene. Has it grown stronger, become smaller, changed shape, or disappeared?

Remember:

You don't need to write about anything from your own life. Your character can be completely fictional.

Interactive Classroom Activities**WHAT WOULD YOU DO?**

Throughout the novel, Zayn and the other children are forced to make difficult choices. Sometimes there is no perfect answer.

Read each scenario and discuss what you would do.

Scenario 1: The Gift

Someone you have recently met gives your friend an expensive pair of trainers.

They say: “Don’t worry. It’s just a gift.”

Your friend is excited, but you don’t trust the person who gave them.

What would you do?

- ☐ Say nothing – it’s your friend’s business.
- ☐ Ask your friend where the trainers came from.
- ☐ Tell a trusted adult that you’re worried.
- ☐ Encourage your friend to return them.
- ☐ Something else: _____

Discussion:

- When does a gift stop feeling like a gift?
- Why might someone use gifts or favours to gain another person’s trust?
- Why might it be particularly difficult for someone who feels lonely or isolated to recognise this kind of pressure?
- Is helping a friend always the same as keeping their secret?

Interactive Classroom Activities

Scenario 2: The Secret

Your friend tells you they have done something wrong.

They are frightened that they will get into serious trouble if anyone finds out.

They ask you: “Promise you won’t tell anyone.”

What would you do? Why?

Discussion:

- When might keeping a secret be kind?
- When might keeping a secret put someone in danger?
- Who could you speak to if you were worried about a friend?

Big question:

Can breaking someone’s confidence sometimes be the kindest thing you can do?

Scenario 3: The Name

A new pupil joins your class.

Someone keeps calling them by the name of their country instead of their actual name.

They say: “It’s only a joke.”

What would you do?

Discussion:

- Why might the pupil find this upsetting?
- Does intention matter if the other person is hurt?
- What is the difference between knowing someone’s background and reducing them to it?
- How does this connect to Zayn’s response when Ross calls him “Afghanistan”?

Interactive Classroom Activities**THE THINGS WE DON'T SAY**

Sometimes the most important things in a dialogue are the things characters **don't** say.

Look at the statements below:

What a character might say:

"I'm fine."

"It's only a joke."

"I don't need help."

"I'm not scared."

"It doesn't matter."

"Leave me alone."

What they might really mean:

Discussion

- Why might someone hide what they are really feeling?
- Can you always tell when someone is struggling?
- How can we show someone we are there for them without forcing them to talk?
- Which characters in the novel communicate without saying very much, and how do they make themselves understood?

Interactive Classroom Activities**THE JACKAL: MONSTER OR METAPHOR?**

The Jackal follows Zayn throughout the novel. But what exactly is it?

Your teacher will read a series of statements. Raise your hand if you AGREE with them.

- The Jackal is a real creature.
- The Jackal represents Zayn's trauma.
- The Jackal represents survivor's guilt.
- The Jackal represents Zayn's fear.
- The Jackal represents more than one thing.
- The Jackal is real to Zayn.

Explain your choices.

Interactive Classroom Activities**ZAYN'S GRANDMOTHER'S WISDOM**

Zayn carries his grandmother's words with him.

Her proverbs are more than funny sayings. They become reminders of home, love, identity and resilience.

Choose one of Zayn's grandmother's proverbs.

Complete the section below:

Literally, it means:

But really, it means:

Zayn remembers it because:

It makes him feel:

Create your own

Imagine you are Zayn's grandmother. Write a new proverb that sounds as though she might have said it.

It should be:

- wise
- memorable
- slightly funny

Then explain what it means.

Challenge:

Write a proverb that could help someone who is frightened.

Interactive Classroom Activities**THE OBJECTS THAT CARRY STORIES**

Objects in *My Name Is Zayn* often carry memories and emotions.

Examples include:

- the star map
- Musa/Aziz's Spider-Man cap and watch
- Samim's chess trophy
- the slime ball
- the Spider-Man drawing with "Be You, Not Them" written on it

Object activity

- Choose one object
- Draw it
- Then complete the following statements

This object belongs to:

It represents:

It reminds the character of:

If this object could speak, it would say:

Interactive Classroom Activities

LABEL VS PERSON

Throughout the novel, characters are sometimes reduced to labels:

- Refugee
- Afghanistan
- Asylum seeker
- Immigrant

But a label can never tell us an entire person's story.

Character activity

Choose one character.

Draw a line down the centre of your page, like this:

<u>THE LABEL</u> On this side of the line, write down what someone who doesn't know this character might assume about them?	<u>THE PERSON</u> On this side, write down what we actually learn about them. <i>You may include:</i> • <i>their name</i> • <i>their relationships</i> • <i>their interests</i> • <i>their fears</i> • <i>their humour</i> • <i>their memories</i> • <i>their hopes</i> • <i>their strengths</i> • <i>their vulnerabilities</i>
--	---

Big question

What is lost when we see a person only through a label?

Interactive Classroom Activities**A CHARACTER'S TURNING POINT**

Characters don't always change in one dramatic moment. Sometimes change happens through a series of small experiences.

Choose five important moments from Zayn's story.

For each moment, complete:

BEFORE: Who was Zayn?
WHAT HAPPENED: What changed?
AFTER: What did Zayn understand, realise or feel differently?

Discussion

Which moment changed Zayn the most?

Then consider this:

Does Zayn become brave during the story, or does he discover that he has been brave all along?

Use evidence from the novel to support your answer.

Interactive Classroom Activities**REWRITE THE HEADLINE**

The novel explores the difference between a headline about people and a story about people.

Imagine a newspaper headline reads:

HOTEL CHAOS AS REFUGEE CHILDREN PLAY FOOTBALL IN CORRIDORS

Now imagine you are Zayn.

- Rewrite the headline from the children's perspective.
- Then answer: What information was missing from the original headline?

Complete the four boxes:

HEADLINE

What does the headline above tell us?

ASSUMPTION

What might a reader assume?

MISSING INFORMATION

What don't we know?

HUMAN STORY

What would we understand if we knew the people involved?

Interactive Classroom Activities

Discussion

- Why can headlines influence the way we think about people?
- What happens when people become numbers or statistics?
- Why does Uncle Ali tell Zayn to “keep your name safe”?
- How can storytelling challenge stereotypes?

THE UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE

Football becomes an important way for Zayn to connect with other people.

Quick challenge

Without speaking, communicate one of these things to a partner:

- I’m happy
- I’m angry
- I don’t understand
- Come with me
- Stop
- I’m frightened

You can use only:

- gestures
- facial expressions
- movement

Discuss

- How much can we communicate without words?
- Why can sport sometimes bring people together when language divides us?
- How do Niko and Luan communicate differently from the other characters?
- What does the novel suggest about the different ways people communicate?

Interactive Classroom Activities**“BE YOU, NOT THEM”**

Niko’s message to Musa/Aziz is simple: BE YOU, NOT THEM.

Discuss

- What does this mean?
- Why is this message particularly important to Musa/Aziz?

Think about:

- his name
- his brother
- his Spider-Man cap
- his memories
- his relationship with Zayn
- the identity he has created to survive

Create

Design a BE YOU, NOT THEM poster campaign for your school.

Your poster could celebrate:

- individuality
- culture
- language
- interests
- talents
- different ways of thinking
- different ways of communicating
- friendship
- inclusion

Create an original slogan for your poster.

Interactive Classroom Activities**SPOT THE PRESSURE**

Gav does not begin by openly threatening Musa. He begins with attention, gifts and friendship. This makes the situation particularly dangerous.

Task

Create a STAY SAFE guide for young people.

Include 3 signs someone may be trying to pressure or manipulate you

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Include 3 things you could do if you feel uncomfortable or unsafe

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Include 3 trusted people you could talk to

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Think deeper

Why might someone who is lonely, frightened or isolated be particularly vulnerable to someone offering friendship or gifts?

Remember: You never owe someone something because they gave you a gift, money, attention or a favour. If someone is making you feel pressured or unsafe, speak to a trusted adult. Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Interactive Classroom Activities**THE RIGHT TO CHILDHOOD**

Mr Baird tells Zayn: “This was no job for a child, but you did it.”

This raises an important question: what should childhood look like?

Create two columns.

<u>WHAT CHILDREN SHOULD HAVE</u>	<u>WHAT CHILDREN IN THE NOVEL DON'T HAVE</u>

Fill in each column. Think about:

- safety
- education
- friendship
- play
- family
- responsibility
- fear
- grief
- survival
- uncertainty
- home

Interactive Classroom Activities

Writing Task

Write a short speech titled: “Children Should Not Have to Be Heroes.”

Your speech should:

- explain what an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child is
- describe some of the challenges these children may face
- use at least one rhetorical question
- explain why all children need protection and safe spaces
- end with a strong message

Challenge: Include a quotation from the novel.

Interactive Classroom Activities**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HOME?**

Throughout the novel, “home” means different things to different characters.

Complete the sentence:

Home is not always a place. Sometimes home is...

Choose three things that represent home in the novel.

For example:

a person

a memory

a language

a smell

a food

a place

a friendship

a name

Discussion

- Why can someone feel at home somewhere they have never lived before?
- Can a person carry home with them? How?
- Can you lose a home without losing your sense of belonging?
- Where does Zayn find moments of “home” during the novel?

Interactive Classroom Activities**THE HUMANITY TEST**

At the end of the novel, ask:

What does *My Name Is Zayn* suggest makes us human?

Choose your top three:

- ☐ Our names
- ☐ Our memories
- ☐ Our relationships
- ☐ Our choices
- ☐ Our mistakes
- ☐ Our hopes
- ☐ Our ability to forgive
- ☐ Our willingness to help others
- ☐ Our ability to love
- ☐ Our ability to connect with people
- ☐ Our empathy

Now choose one.**Write:**

I think the novel suggests that what makes us human is _____ because...

Use an example from the story.

Interactive Classroom Activities**HOPE**

Hope is one of the most important themes in *My Name Is Zayn*.

But the novel does not present hope as pretending that everything is going to be fine.

Instead, hope can be found in:

- friendship
- kindness
- memory
- courage
- humour
- human connection
- the possibility of belonging
- choosing to keep going

Discussion

- Can hope exist alongside grief?
- Can someone be frightened and hopeful at the same time?
- Is hope something that happens to us, or something we choose?

Interactive Classroom Activities

REFUGEE

A story cannot tell us everything about another person's life.

But it can do something powerful: it can make a person who once seemed like a stranger feel human.

Discussion:

How did reading Zayn's story change the way you think about the word "refugee"?

Complete the following sentences:

At the beginning, I thought...

Now I think...

The moment in the novel that made me think differently was...

One thing I understand better now is...

Interactive Classroom Activities

FINAL CREATIVE CHALLENGE

If Zayn Could Speak to the Reader...

Imagine Zayn is standing in front of your class.

He has lived through everything in the novel.

He has lost people.

He has survived.

He has found friendship.

He has faced his fear.

He has reclaimed his name.

And he has begun to hope again.

What would he want readers to understand?

Write a 100–150 word message from Zayn to the reader.

- You could begin: “My name is Zayn, and if there is one thing I want you to remember about me, it is this...”
- Your message should include at least one idea from the novel about: identity, friendship, courage, belonging, hope or humanity.

CROSS-CURRICULAR LINK ACTIVITIES

1. Geography: Mapping the Journey

Task: Create a map showing the journey taken by Zayn and Samim.

Mark each country on the route:

Afghanistan → Iran → Turkey → Greece → Italy → France → UK

Your map should include:

- The flag of each country
- The name of each country
- A line showing the route taken
- A small symbol or drawing showing something about each place

Think about:

Which parts of the journey would involve crossing mountains, borders or seas?

Creative Challenge:

Choose one country from the journey and find out one interesting fact about it. Add it to your map.

Cross-curricular Link Activities**2. PSHE & Citizenship: Safe Communities & Anti-Bullying****Activity 1: The “BE YOU, NOT THEM” Campaign:**

Inspired by Niko’s drawing for Musa/Aziz, design a poster campaign for your school celebrating diversity, neurodiversity, individuality and the things that make each of us unique.

Your poster could include:

- Things people enjoy doing
- Different talents and strengths
- The different ways people think, learn and communicate
- A positive message about friendship, kindness and inclusion
- A slogan that celebrates being yourself

Challenge:

Create a short slogan, such as “Different is brilliant” or “Be you, not them.”

Cross-curricular Link Activities

3. Art & Design: Symbolic Resilience

Project Options:**1. Star Map of Hope**

Draw your own star map using a dark piece of paper and white, silver or gold pens. Connect the stars to create a constellation and add words or short phrases from the story that represent hope, friendship or courage.

2. From Jackal to Eagle

Draw a simple Jackal on one side of the page and an Eagle on the other. Around each animal, add words or small drawings showing how Zayn feels at different points in the story.

Challenge:

Add arrows between the two to show how Zayn changes, heals, and grows.