

Suggested articles and companion books for paired discussion with *Amal Unbound*

- An article about Syeda Ghulam Fatima, a woman who has devoted her life to eradicating the practice of indentured servitude for brick kiln workers in Pakistan: cnn.com/2015/08/19/asia/pakistan-humans-new-york-bonded-labor/index.html
- A powerful visual photo series of Pakistanis with an essential message about how we may perceive those who are different from us: humansofnewyork.com/post/127078073936/a-final-word-on-pakistan-imagine-that-every-time
- IQBAL by Francesco D'Adamo (Aladdin)
- HIDDEN GIRL by Shyima Hall (Simon & Schuster)
- I AM MALALA (Young Reader's Edition) by Malala Yousafzai (Little Brown)



About
Aisha Saeed

Aisha Saeed is the author of the young adult novel *Written in the Stars*. She has been featured on MTV, the *Huffington Post*, NBC, and the BBC, and her writings have appeared in publications including the journal *ALAN* and the *Orlando Sentinel*. As one of the founding members of the much-talked-about We Need Diverse Books campaign, she is helping to change the conversation about diverse books. Aisha lives in Atlanta with her husband and three sons. You can find her on twitter at @aishacs or at her website aishasaeed.com

Praise for

AMAL UNBOUND

A 2018 Global Read Aloud Selection

"A beautiful and moving story about indentured servitude, economic class, family, resistance, and ultimately—freedom.

Amal's story and the many people we meet in it are so thoughtfully and deeply rendered, I remain haunted by their struggles and changed by their journeys."

—JACQUELINE WOODSON,

author of the Newbery Honor-winning *Brown Girl Dreaming*

"This heroic story about a girl's struggle to become educated against overwhelming odds will open readers' eyes and hearts.

A gorgeous and compelling read."

—LAURIE HALSE ANDERSON,

author of the National Book Award Finalist *Chains*

"Amal Unbound...is a book that everyone should purchase for their school or classroom library. Kids need to experience this story."

—COLBY SHARP, educator and co-founder of Nerdy Book Club

★ "Saeed's timely and stirring middle-grade debut is a celebration of resistance and justice."

KIRKUS REVIEWS, starred review

★ "Saeed's eloquent, suspenseful, eye-opening tale offers a window into the contemporary practice of indentured servitude and makes a compelling case for the power of girls' education to transform systemic injustice."

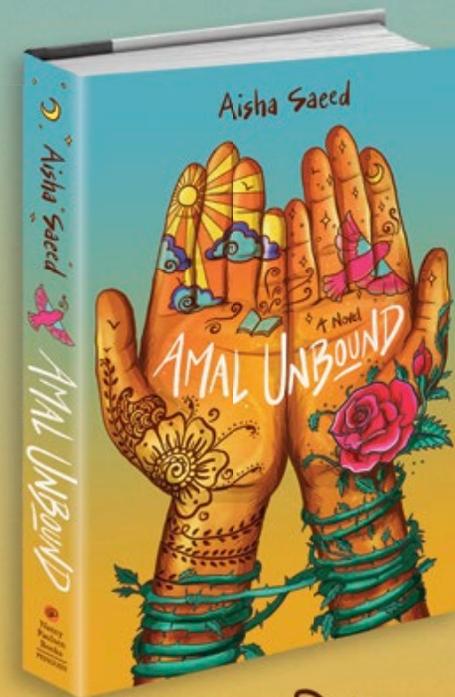
PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, starred review

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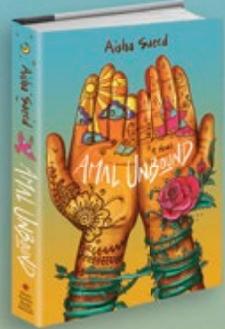
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A Discussion Guide To



If everyone decided
nothing could change,
nothing ever would.



Aisha Saeed's middle-grade debut tells the compelling story of a girl's fight to regain her life and dreams after being forced into indentured servitude.

Life is quiet and ordinary in Amal's Pakistani village, but she has no complaints, and besides, she's busy pursuing her dream of becoming a teacher one day. Her dreams are temporarily dashed when—as the eldest daughter—she must stay home from school to take care of her siblings. Amal is upset, but she doesn't lose hope and finds ways to continue learning. Then the unimaginable happens—after an accidental run-in with the son of her village's corrupt landlord, Amal must work as his family's servant to pay off her own family's debt.

Life at the opulent Khan estate is full of heartbreak and struggle for Amal—especially when she inadvertently makes an enemy of a girl named Nabila. Most troubling, though, is Amal's growing awareness of the Khans' nefarious dealings. When it becomes clear just how far they will go to protect their interests, Amal realizes she will have to find a way to work with others if they are ever to exact change in a cruel status quo, and if Amal is ever to achieve her dreams.

Discussion Questions

1. After reading the first chapter, what stands out to you about Amal and the world she lives in? What is similar to or different from your daily life?
2. From early on in the story, it's clear that education and reading are important to Amal. She says, "Without books, what was there to look forward to?" Why does Amal feel this way?
3. Boys have more opportunities in Amal's society than Amal and the other girls in her village. Is this unique to the world Amal lives in? Why or why not? What are the ways girls and boys are treated differently in her village?
4. Amal says, "If everyone decided nothing could change, nothing ever would." Do you agree? Does this statement apply only to her situation? What other current events could this line of thinking be applied to?
5. As we get older, we often begin to see things differently from our parents. Amal loves her family but she also is discovering she has different desires and goals that may conflict with her parents'. How are her values similar to her parents'? How do your values align with your family's and how do they differ?
6. There is a moment in the book when Amal thinks about how Nasreen Baji and herself have a lot in common. How are they similar to each other and how are they different?
7. For a long time Amal does not think she can do anything to change her circumstances. The Khan family has ruled her village for centuries. What prompts Amal to finally decide it's time to take action?
8. In the end, when it is time to leave the estate, Fatima does not want to leave. Why not? What might she be afraid of?
9. When Jawad Sahib is arrested, Amal is thankful but Nasreen Baji is devastated. Why does Amal feel sorry for her?
10. As mentioned in the author's note, most people who better their communities won't see their names in the headlines. Why is it still important to work toward justice nonetheless?
11. The cover of the book is symbolic of the story's many ideas and themes. What concepts from the book did the illustrator capture with her cover?

Personal Response

1. List and describe 3-5 things you can do to create positive change in your local community.
2. Amal dreams of becoming a teacher when she grows up. What are your dreams? What can you do to make those dreams come true?
3. Amal couldn't have brought down Jawad Sahib by herself. Who are the people you count on in your life? What are ways they can help you achieve your goals and dreams?
4. Have your parents ever placed expectations on you that felt unfair? Describe the situation and how you either worked through it, or how you could work through it in the future.
5. Amal has a great relationship with both of her teachers, Sadia and Asif. Who are some of your favorite teachers and why?
6. Amal loves to read. She especially loves poems. What sort of books do you enjoy reading most and why?
7. Amal is brave. She does something difficult because it is the right thing to do. What are some ways you have been brave in your life?
8. Nabila is very hostile toward Amal at first. What are her reasons for feeling the way she does toward Amal, and how do her feelings ultimately evolve?



Research/Essay Prompts

1. Choose one social justice issue in the United States and research ways experts believe that issue could be positively addressed. Also share how you think the issue could be improved.
2. We live in a beautiful world, with many countries we don't know much about. Choose one country you'd like to learn more about, then research and share five facts.
3. At the end of the story, Amal is walking home and unsure what her future holds. Write a follow-up chapter that tells us what Amal is up to now.
4. There are many supporting characters in *Amal Unbound* who have their own dreams and hopes and worries. Write a chapter or a short story from the point of view of a different character in the story.