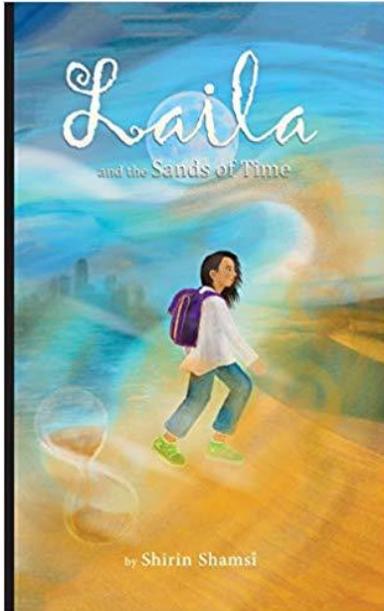


A Curriculum Guide for Educators & Readers

Aligned to the Common Core Grades 4-6



Discussion points, activities, and writing prompts to help educators use *Laila and the Sands of Time* as a classroom read aloud or as a selection for independent reading. Great for book clubs, too!

About the Author

Shirin Shamsi was born and raised in the UK, and now makes her home in the Chicago suburbs. *Laila and the Sands of Time* is her debut middle-grade novel. Shirin has raised six children—three human and three cats—all of whom have provided much inspiration for her stories. When she is not writing, Shirin enjoys reading, oil painting, and spending time with her family.



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About the Book

Thirteen-year-old Laila, still grieving over her father's death, goes on their planned pilgrimage with her aunt and uncle. When she is transported back in time to 7th century Arabia, she faces the dangers of the desert, takes on a disguise, and saves a baby's life. But will she ever return to her own time?

Common Core Aligned for Grades 4-6

5th grade: ELA. RI.5.1,2,3,4,6, 7, 8, 9; W.5.3a-e,4; SL.5.4,5; L.5.1,2,3,4

6th grade: ELA. RI.6.1,2,3,4,5,6,9; W.6.3a-e,4; SL.6.1a,3,4,5; L.6.1,2,3,4a,c,d

7th grade: ELA. RI.7.1,2,3,4,5,6,9; W.7.3a-e,4; SL.7.4,5; L.7.1,2,3

8th grade: ELA. RI.8.1,2,3,4,6,9; W.8.3a-e,4; SL.8.1a,3,5; L.8.1,2,3,4a,c,d; RH.6-8.1,2,4,6; WSH.6-8.7,8,9

9th grade: ELA. RI.9-10.1,2,4,5,6,8,9; W.9-10.3a-e,4; SL.9-10.1,4,5; L.9-10.1,2,4a,c,d; RH.9-10.1,2,4; WSH.9-10.7,8,9

Before You Read...

1. Take a close look at the front cover illustration of *Laila and the Sands of Time*. Describe what you see. Can you make any predictions of the time period or setting of the novel? Can you predict what this book might be about? What from the illustration and title of the book supports your prediction?
2. Read the text on the back cover. What do you learn about the book from this blurb?
3. Read the Prologue. What do you learn about the book from the Prologue?
4. List at least five questions that you have about this novel after looking at the front cover, as well as reading the text on the back cover and the Prologue.
5. Look closely at the design of the book: the colors, text, any illustrations, word choice. How would you describe the design of the book?
6. Who do you think is the intended audience of this book? If you saw this book on a shelf, would you want to read it? Why or why not?

Write one paragraph describing your thoughts about the book and include one question you have that you hope to learn the answer to when you read. Share your paragraph with the class.

Vocabulary

Laila and the Sands of Time contains many words which may be new for students. Some of these words are specific to Laila's culture.

Prior to reading, it might be beneficial to have students acquaint themselves with a few of the more difficult or unfamiliar words.

- Using the vocabulary list at the back of the book, have students investigate the definitions.
- As a class, create a Master Vocabulary List of the words with their definitions for easy reference while they read *Laila and the Sands of Time*.
- Once the Master Vocabulary List is created, review the words and definitions.
- Can the class make predictions about the kind of story or any incidents that might occur in the story based solely on this vocabulary list?
- What kind of story would they tell if they were to use all of these words?

Additional Vocabulary Exploration:

While the students read *Laila and the Sands of Time*, ask them to look carefully for additional words they do not know. As soon as they come across a new vocabulary word, they should jot it down on the Master Vocabulary List.

- Look up the unknown word in the dictionary.
- Come up with a way to remember what the word means. Using Total Physical Response, students can create an action that symbolizes the word and helps them remember it.
- Encourage students to use context clues from the text to infer the meaning.

Chapters 1-4

1. *Laila and the Sands of Time* opens with Laila packing. Where is she going and with who?
 - a. How did Laila's father's death impact this trip?
 - b. How does Laila feel about going?
2. Make a list of details that you learn about Laila's father, Baba, in these first few chapters.
3. How would you describe Laila's relationship with the following characters? Use evidence from the chapters to support your answers.
 - a. Baba (her father)
 - b. Her mother
 - c. Raisa (her stepmom)
 - d. Naila (the baby)
 - e. Beth
4. Draw Laila's family tree.
5. What exciting project does Mrs. Mullings tell Laila's class about?
6. What is "Miqat" and what action does Laila take to prepare?
7. Describe Laila's relationship to her religion in your own words, using evidence from chapters 1-4 as evidence.
8. Aunt Balqees tells Laila that "Pilgrimage will give your heart solace." What do you think she means by this?
 - a. Why does Uncle Farid become upset at Aunt Balqees when she says this?
 - b. Laila's prayer at the Kaaba is "Help make the pain go away." Explain why you think Laila prays this in your own words.

Who is Laila?

Draw an outline of a human figure, which will represent Laila, on a large piece of paper.

Using Chapters 1-4 as evidence, write any known details about Laila inside the outline.

Outside the outline, discuss and write any questions about Laila that the class might have.

Making Connections:

Laila travels with her aunt and uncle on a Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca.

As a class, locate Mecca on a map and or/globe. Then, conduct research of Mecca on the Internet.

Information of interest can include:

- History
- Culture
- Music and dance
- Diet
- Shelter
- Climate
- Geography
- Economy

Gather photographs of Mecca and Umrah Pilgrimage on the Internet.

Then, plan a week-long fictitious trip to Mecca. Be sure to plan transportation to and within Saudi Arabia, food, what to pack, what to do and see. Detail your trip in a daily itinerary. Include a budget, taking into account local economy and the US dollar.

Chapters 5-7

1. What is the first indication that Laila may have traveled back in time?
2. Why does Zaynab assume that Laila is a stranger to that area?
3. Why does Zaynab ask Laila to stay quiet regarding the man and the donkey? Explain how Zaynab says girls and women are treated in your own words.

Who is Zaynab?

Draw an outline of a human figure, which will represent Zaynab, on a large piece of paper.

Using Chapters 5-7 as evidence, write any known details about Zaynab inside the outline.

Outside the outline, discuss and write any questions about Zaynab that the class might have.

4. Omie had a premonition. Describe the premonition in your own words.
 - a. Do you believe that Laila is the girl spoken of in the premonition?
 - b. Why do Omie and Zaynab think Laila can help them? What do they want her to help them do?
 - c. If you were Laila, what would you do?
5. Why do Omie and Zaynab want to get the baby to Yathrib?
6. Why does Laila decide to cut her hair?

Chapters 8-13

1. Why do Zaynab and Laila seek out Khalil? What do they ask of him?
2. When introduced to Khalil, Laila reminds herself that “in life-threatening danger, it is okay to bend the rules.” Explain this phrase in light of her current situation.

Who is Khalil?

Draw an outline of a human figure, which will represent Khalil, on a large piece of paper.

Using Chapters 8-12 as evidence, write any known details about Khalil inside the outline.

Outside the outline, discuss and write any questions about Khalil that the class might have.

3. Abi and Khalil agree to let Omie, Zaynab, and Laila (as Layth) join their caravan. As you read chapters 8-12, take notes on Laila’s experience with the caravan. Be sure to include:

- All of the characters in the caravan
- Thoughts and experiences Laila has with the caravan
- Descriptions using the five senses.

Then, write a diary entry as if you were Laila and include as many of your notes as possible.

4. What are some of the threats facing the caravan? Why do they travel by night?
5. What do you think Laila’s recurring dream about the crying baby means? Why do you think the baby ends up being Naila?
6. How does Laila save Khalil from the marauders?
 - a. How does Khalil react to Laila’s action?
 - b. How does Omie react to Laila’s action?
7. Why did Laila want Abi and Khalil to change their plan of going to Syria?
8. In what two ways does Omie thank Laila?
9. What does Khalil discover at the end of chapter 12? Do you think he will tell anyone? Explain your prediction.

10. Rewrite the scene between Khalil and Laila from Khalil's point of view. How do you think he feels about Laila's disguise? Why does he make the choices he makes?
11. Why does Abi decide the caravan should arrive in daylight? How is the caravan welcomed at Yathrib?

Making Connections:

Khalil believes that "we are prisoners of our destiny" and "we must make what we can of it."

Laila believes "we are all free to make choices—good or bad."

Which do you agree with? Write a 500 word essay in support of your opinion. Use evidence from your own life and this book when able.

Chapters 14-19

1. Why do you think Laila was transported back to present time right as the caravan was entering Yathrib?
2. Imagine that you are Beth and Laila has told you about her experience on pilgrimage. Write a diary entry about what your best friend has told you. How do you feel about it? Do you believe her? Fully? Or do you have some doubts?
3. What is Laila's plan with the baby's hair? What does she hope she will discover?
4. Explain DNA and the work that is done at the Field Museum in your own words.
5. Why do you think Laila is being accused of theft?
6. Raisa stands up for Laila in the principal's office. She even calls Laila "my daughter." Why does this mean so much to Laila?
 - a. How have Laila's thoughts toward Raisa and Naila changed? Why?
7. Miss Levin tells Laila that her report was on an interesting choice of an emancipator of women. Who do you think Laila wrote about? Explain your answer.
8. What is Laila's plan to clear her name? What risks does she run?
 - a. Would you go along with Laila's plan? Why or why not?

Making Connections:

Laila has not always appreciated Raisa and Naila, her stepmom and half-sister. But with her mother and father both gone, Laila's family and her idea of what a family is, is changing.

What does "home" and "family" mean to you? Create a collage poster of your own definition of home and family.

Chapters 20-24

1. While Beth is in the bathroom, Laila wanders into an exhibit on the Muslim Pilgrimage. Who does she meet there? What does she learn?
2. The girls eventually find Dr. Waldron who explains the results of the DNA testing of the hair sample and why Laila was accused of stealing. Explain what the girls learn from Dr. Waldron in your own words.
3. What does Laila find in the box of Baba's books?
 - a. What does the letter say?
 - b. Do you think the letter changes how Laila feels about Raisa and Naila? Explain your answer.
4. Raisa's pendant appears to be the same one that Omie wore around her neck. What does Laila learn about the pendant and Raisa's ancestors? Do you think this is the same pendant? Why or why not?
5. When Naila is in the hospital, Laila turns to her faith for comfort and strength, just like her father did when her mother passed away. Describe, in your own words, how Laila turns to her faith tradition at this time.

After You Read...

Below are a few final project ideas for the conclusion of *Laila and the Sands of Time*.

1. Using the information in the book, including the Afterword, and the Internet, research the Muslim Pilgrimage. Then in groups of 3-4, create your own exhibit, like in the Field Museum. Use both words and visuals.
2. Shirin Shamsi is proud of her Muslim heritage and therefore wrote *Laila and the Sands of Time* in order to bring that heritage to life and share with others.

If you were to write a historical novel based on your own heritage, where would you set it?

- Research a country or area that some of your ancestors are from and pick a significant historical event that happened in that country.
 - For example, maybe your family is Irish and you decide to set your story during the Irish Potato Famine of 1845-1852. Or maybe your ancestors are from California during the time of the Gold Rush.
 - Research the historical event in the library or on the Internet.
 - Once you have the historical facts, set yourself in that story and build the fiction.
 - Create a 500 word synopsis of the historical fiction story based on your own heritage.
3. Several themes run through *Laila and the Sands of Time*.

Family	Faith	Women's Rights
DNA and Scientific Discovery	Time/Time Travel	Heritage

Choose one of these themes on which to base a 500-word essay. What can readers take away from *Laila and the Sands of Time* in relation to this theme?

4. Study Laila and explore how she has changed from the beginning to the end. Use the italicized flashbacks in each chapter to piece together Laila's life and her journey.
5. Create your own book trailer to encourage others to read *Laila and the Sands of Time*.