

Teachers' Notes
by Amra Pajalic

**Coming of Age: Growing up
Muslim in Australia**

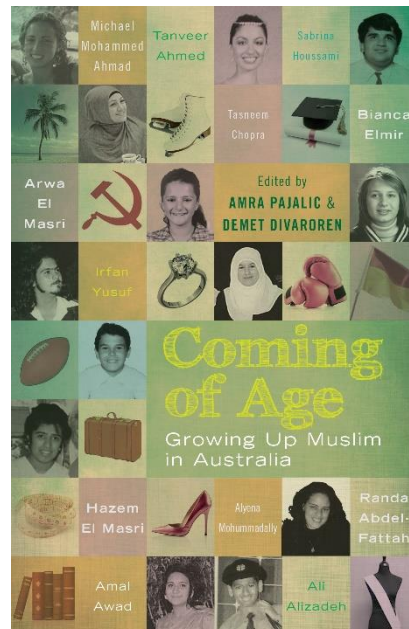
**Edited by Amra Pajalic and
Demet Divaroren**

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Recommended for ages 14-18 years

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INTRODUCTION

“In their different ways, the stories in this collection delve beyond stereotypes to explore religion, identity and belonging. They highlight the various ways that people practise Islam and connect with Australia. They demonstrate that coming of age, always riddled with anxieties, holds particular dilemmas for young Muslims.”

—Introduction in *Coming of Age: Growing up Muslim in Australia* (p 7)

We are constantly bombarded by media stories feeding us negative stereotypes of Muslim people. Being Muslim in Australia before and after 9/11 are different experiences. As Maria Vamvakinou, politician, once said ‘Muslims went to sleep as migrants and woke up as Muslims.’

Amra Pajalic and Demet Divaroren, the editors of *Coming of Age*, identified the need for a publication that gives Muslims who grew up in Australia a platform to tell their stories in their own voices for a mainstream readership. Published in 2014 this anthology features stories from 12 well known and not so well known Muslims and shows how identity is influenced by culture, family and gender.

This collection illustrates that a Muslim person can be a beauty queen, kick boxer, lawyer, Rugby League star, activist, writer, lesbian, atheist. It shows the complexity of the Muslim identity and encourages readers to challenge their own misconceptions and preconceived notions of what a Muslim person looks like, how they behave and what they do.

These varied stories make the collection an important educational resource to develop cross-cultural education and to discuss issues of identity, belonging and collective national identity.

SUMMARY OF THE STORIES IN *COMING OF AGE*

On Being Michael and Mohammed: **Michael Mohammed Ahmad** describes his experience as an Alawite Muslim amongst the Sunni majority in Lakemba.

The Fighting Spirit: **Bianca "Bam Bam" Elmir** explores how training and fighting gave her an avenue to channel her frustrations about the constraints placed on her as a young Muslim woman.

The Other Side: **Hazem El Masri** writes of the challenges of being a devout Muslim professional sportsman.

The Road to Self-Acceptance is Paved with Tim Tams: **Randa Abdel-Fattah** recounts her dreams and fantasies as an overweight teenager hiding inside her hijab, and her decision to no longer wear it.

Leaving God: **Ali Alizadeh** describes how as a precocious ten-year-old in Iran he renounced his religion, but how in Australia people assume he is Muslim and the difficulties this causes.

Muslim Footprint: **Arwa El Masri** describes her arrival in Australia as a child migrant from Saudi Arabia where her Palestinian background prevented her from gaining citizenship and her struggle to find her place.

People Like Me?: **Alyena Mohummadally** writes about her discovery of same-sex attraction in adolescence and her difficulty in reconciling her spirituality with her sexual identity.

ABCD: **Irfan Yusuf** reflects on the end of a deep friendship that taught him a painful lesson about tradition and belief.

Mishmash Muslim: **Sabrina Houssami** writes about reconciling her culturally and religiously diverse background and explores Muslim femininity beyond the Muslim stereotype.

The Five-minute Engagement: **Amal Awad** piece is a humorous and heartfelt account of Muslim romance, the technicalities of courtship, the romantic expectations of the Western world and the realities of her Arab heritage.

The Art of Bargaining: **Dr Tanveer Ahmad** explores his father's love of haggling and reflects on the father-son relationship.

How I Happened: **Tasneem Chopra** writes about growing up Muslim and Indian-Kenyan in country Victoria.

STRUCTURE OF THE TEACHERS NOTES

The teaching notes are divided by theme and give teachers the ability to set stories for reading that explore issues of relevance to their students. The themes are: religion, friendship, romance, stereotypes, identity, education, culture, media, hijab, and migration.

Each theme has:

- an *exploration activity* for students to develop questions and prior knowledge. This activity can be illustrated via a Venn diagram, collage, poster, digital presentation, etc.
- references to related sections of the book to help develop students' understanding, foster discussion and provide evidence for the subsequent...
- ...*Essay/Debate topic* that asks students to discuss a quote from the book and show whether they agree or disagree. They can refer to the exploration activity and discussion for examples to structure their argument.

A table that maps themes to the individual stories can be found in [Appendix 1](#) of these notes.

There is a further reading section that lists other texts dealing with Muslim characters/topics in all genres, and resources to support teachers for research activities.

[Appendix 2](#) contains handouts from a workshop in writing memoirs conducted by Amra Pajalik for the Victorian Association of Teachers of English in 2016. Print some or all of these on A3 paper.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

TITLE

Divide the students into three groups to explore a different aspect of the title: coming of age, growing up in Australia, being Muslim. Students to create a Venn diagram, collage, poster, digital presentation listing all the things that they know for each of these. Students to share their ideas and discuss their findings.

COVER

Students to examine the cover. What do you notice about the photos of the contributors? What do you think the images suggest? Students to try and guess themes that might be explored.

AMRA PAJALIC AND DEMET DIVAROREN'S INTRODUCTION

The introduction gives students background information to Islam and Muslims in Australia.

THEMES

RELIGION

Even though all the contributors in the anthology are born to the Muslim faith, they all have different ways of practicing their religious beliefs and expressing their spirituality.

- Students can list religions and belief systems that they know of. List what they know about each of these religions. Discuss the difference between a religion and a belief system.

On Being Michael and Mohammed

As a teenager Michael finds a group of friends, but struggles with their different value systems (p 20).

- How do Michael Mohammed's friends teach him to be a Muslim and an Aussie at the same time? Are Michael's friends being good Muslims and/or good Australians?

Fighting Spirit

For Bianca religion is a source of conflict and she feels like it is a never-ending list of can't do's (p 32).

- Looking at the list of religions you created at the beginning, list the restrictions that this would create for its adherents. Should people experience discomfort for their faith?

The Other Side

Hazem writes about how fasting for Ramadan, eating halal food and not drinking alcohol affects his role as a Rugby League Player (p 50).

- What other religions have food restrictions?

Leaving God

Ali is born in the Muslim faith, but as a child he becomes an atheist. In his piece he explores how people still assume he is Muslim, and the difficulty this causes (p 73).

- What is an atheist and what do they believe? What is a clitoridectomy? Is a clitoridectomy a Muslim practice? What is the difference between a cultural practice and a religious practice?

Muslim Footprint

When Arwa goes to school she is surprised that students and teachers don't know many things about Islam or even where Palestine is from (p 83) and faces punishment from teachers when she prays in a classroom (p 89).

- Write a letter to Arwa's teacher.

Mishmash Muslim

Sabrina explores the way that she has learnt to mediate her Muslim identity and that she is a mishmash Muslim (p127).

- How does Sabrina's family practice religion?

Essay/Debate:

"...rituals and language of religion are useful to cement a shared experience and help grease the bonds of community, but shouldn't be taken too seriously." (Tanveer Ahmad, p 166)

FRIENDSHIP

Friendships were very important to the contributors' experiences of growing up and coming of age.

- Students to list three categories: values, background, qualities. Identify the similarities and differences that they have with their friends. Discuss what they look for in a friend and what is most important in friendship.

On Being Michael and Mohammed

Michael struggles finding friends with Australians because of his Muslim background and with other Sunni Muslims because of his Alawite beliefs. When his best friend Omar finds out he is Alawite, Michael tells Omar to ask his parents what this means (p 16).

- Write a scene about what happened between Omar and his parents.

Michael states that he had low status in the group (p 23).

- What sort of friendship roles are there?

Fighting Spirit

For Bianca friendships are a source of trouble and temptation (p 34).

- What do you think Bianca means by the statement that she didn't always make the right decisions because of her friends?

Muslim Footprint

Arwa makes friends with other Arab girls, but then finds out that they are very different (p 85).

- Write a scene from the point of view of one of Arwa's Arab friends.

In the end Arwa finds a true friend in Abbey and in their shared interests (p 89).

- Why do you think she could be friends with Abbey and not with the Arab girls?

ABCD

Irfan and his friend Azmat have many similarities, but also great differences which become a source of conflict (p 119).

- Write a scene from Azmat's point of view.

Mishmash Muslim

Sabrina only makes friends with other ethnic students and states that she hasn't had a 'white' friend since she was five years old (p 131).

- Write a letter to young Sabrina.

How I Happened

Tasneem makes friends for life at Muslim camps with others who were second-generation ethnics like herself (p 179).

- Should you be friends only with people who are like you?

Essay/Debate:

"The best primordial friends are those who teach you major life lessons." (Irfan Yusuf, p 124)

ROMANCE

The contributors explore the different ideas of romance and courtship that exist for Muslim people.

- Students to list romantic rituals and expectations for Western society and for the different cultures that they know of. Discuss the differences and similarities of romance between different cultures.

The Road to Self-Acceptance is Paved with Tim Tams

For Randa faith was very important in her pursuit of romance (p 56).

- What is Randa's idea of romance and marriage? Write a scene from the point of view of Mr Crush.

People Like Me?

Alyena realises that she is same sex attracted from a young age and chooses to reject her faith for her first love (p 99).

- Should love mean changing yourself?

ABCD

For Irfan romance means meeting cultural expectations of courtship approved by family in an arranged marriage (p 112).

- How do his parent's expectations of romance impact on Irfan's life?

Mishmash Muslim

Sabrina struggles finding a balance between her values and Western expectations of romance (p 128).

- How does Sabrina reconcile her value system with romance?

The Five-minute Engagement

Amal participates in an Arab engagement where courting would be more *Gone with the Wind* and *Pride and Prejudice* than *Sweet Valley High* (p 147).

- What is the difference between romance in the books *Gone with the Wind* and *Sweet Valley High*?

How I Happened

Tasneem experiences a special type of romance while at camp called 'halal romance' (p 180).

- What similarities or differences are there between a Western romance and a 'halal romance'?

Essay:

"...we would, naturally, live contentedly ever after. And, of course, he would be Arab and Muslim, just like me." (Amal Awad, 147)

Can you only have a happy marriage if you marry someone like you?

STEREOTYPES

Many of the contributors explore stereotypes that exist in society around notions of gender, race, and religion.

- Students to list groups that they belong to. List the stereotypes linked to those groups. Discuss whether each of those stereotypes apply to you.

On Being Michael and Mohammed/Fighting Spirit

Michael Mohammed examines stereotypes of masculinity when he describes seeing his father cry (p 17), while Bianca searches for mentors who achieve because of excellence and not looks (p 37).

- Using a Venn diagram look at what are the stereotypes of men and of women. Discuss similarities and differences. Are these stereotypes true?

Michael states that he feels people are labelling him a terrorist or drug dealer (p 20).

- Why did Michael Mohammed feel that people were stereotyping him this way? Research the events that led to these stereotypes.

Fighting Spirit

Bianca examines expectations of women and how her mother defied the stereotypes of single mothers (p 31)

- What are the stereotypes of single mothers? Think about single mothers you know and whether these stereotypes are correct. Write a scene from Bianca's mother's point of view.

Bianca states that religion doesn't matter in the ring, only skill and hard work. (p 37)

- Using a Venn diagram look at what are the stereotypes of women and of Muslim women. Discuss similarities and differences.

The Art of Bargaining

Tanveer's father always had the feeling that the Australian 'lackadaisical Australian approach to life was not how the real world worked' (p 161)

- What does lackadaisical mean? Do you agree with this stereotype of Australians?

How I Happened

Tasneem explores the image she has of Muslims and Anglo's when she meets her camp roommate (p 178) and the ways that she is categorised because of how she looks (p 181).

- What are the stereotypes of how a Muslim/Christian person looks? Can you come up with examples that defy each of these stereotypes?
- Why would people have the presumptions that she can't speak English or that she is oppressed?

Essay/Debate:

"Stereotypes are true."

IDENTITY

Most contributors grapple with their sense of identity. There is their dual identity of being Australian and Muslim, as well as their cultural, family and social identity.

- Students to list four categories: family identity, cultural identity, social identity and quality. List all the identities that they belong to and what quality defines the way they inhabit that identity. Discuss the way that they amend their identity to belong in certain situations.

On Being Michael and Mohammed

Michael Mohammed states that he has an identity crisis and wonders which category he belongs to (p 10).

- How does Michael Mohammed negotiate his sense of identity in different settings? Write a scene where Michael Mohammed introduces himself in different settings and what he would say.

Fighting Spirit

Bianca faces difficulty in mediating her identity because she doesn't look conventionally Muslim (p 33).

- Why does Bianca find it difficult to answer the question 'Where are you from?' Imagine that you get asked this question and write how you would answer this.

Muslim Footprint

Arwa finds it alienating being a student in school as she finds no mention of Muslim people in the curriculum (p 87).

- Why was it important for Arwa to find something about Muslims in the curriculum?

People Like Me?

When Alyena discovers early on in life that she is same sex attracted, sexuality and identity go hand in hand and she searches for a place where she can be herself (p 97).

- Why was it important for Alyena to be able to have a fluid identity?

ABCD

Irfan struggles with his ancestral culture and finds he is more comfortable with his Aussie friends (p 109).

- Why does Irfan find it difficult to interact with his culture?

Leaving God/On Being Michael and Mohammed

Post September 11 Ali finds it difficult that people identify him as Muslim even though he as an atheist and wonders if he should change his name (p 77), while Michael Mohammed uses his dual names to mediate his two identities as a Muslim and an Australian (p 15).

- Do you think that Ali should have changed his name? Do you agree with Michael Mohammed's decision to use different names? How much of our identity is our name?

How I Happened

Tasneem states that she was more conscious of her 'Indian-ness' than her 'Muslim-ness' (p 174).

- What is the difference between Tasneem's ethnic and religious identity? Which identity is more important?

Essay:

"I carry a Muslim identity that is simultaneously Aussie, Indian, Kenyan, inquisitive, optimistic, defiant and frequently fallible." (Tasneem Chopra, p 182) Do we define our identity or do we define ourselves by how others perceive us?

EDUCATION

Young people spend most of their time at school and the concept of education has a lot of connotations depending on family and cultural expectations.

- Students list four areas: society, family, culture, me. Under each of the headings students are to list what education means for each of these areas. Discuss what the differences and similarities for each of these.

On Being Michael and Mohammed

For Michael Mohammed education gives him the tools to succeed and rise above his upbringing and friendship group (p 25).

- Why does Michael Mohammed make the decision to leave his friends behind? Write a scene from Yusef's point of view.

The Fighting Spirit

For Bianca education gives her options and will set her free (p 38).

- How do her mother's experiences influence Bianca's pursuit of education? What will education set her free from? How is education power?

Muslim Footprint

Because of Arwa's difficulties with English learning is a source of anxiety and shame (p. 86).

- What is Arwa's experience of education in Saudi Arabia and in Australia?

ABCD

Irfan faces great pressure from his parents and community to achieve at school and is found wanting despite his achievements (p 114).

- What does education mean in Irfan's family? What does it mean to achieve in the Desi culture?

Essay/Debate:

"The social utility of what you did mattered little. You had to become and stay middle-class." (Irfan Yusuf, p 115)

CULTURE

The contributors often find themselves in conflict with their cultural traditions and Australian expectations.

- Students to list ethnic cultural traditions that they know of and Australian expectations. Discuss the differences/similarities between the two.

On Being Michael and Mohammed

Michael Mohammed states that his ability to be a storyteller and orator stem from his Arabic and Islamic inheritance (p 19).

- Do you agree that Aussies are shy and awkward? Who is Patrick White and why is he mentioned?

The Other Side

Hazem talks about the differences between young people in Lebanon and those in Australia and that young people don't respect their elders in Australia (p 45).

- Do you agree with Hazem that the strong discipline of his culture creates a strong work ethic? Should we respect our elders or should respect be earned?

ABCD

Irfan describes an incident when his female friend Azmat embraced him in a restaurant frequented by his community and how he had to rebuff her (p 123).

- Should Irfan have put his friend's feelings above the opinions of his community? Write this scene from Azmat's point of view.

Leaving God

Ali's parents left Iran in order for their family to have access to greater freedom, but his parents were angry at him for neglecting his cultural heritage (p 72).

- Write a scene from his parent's point of view.

The Five-minute Engagement

Amal's beau is guilt-stricken when he crosses a cultural boundary by sending her a text message and converses with her without parental knowledge and supervision (p 151)

- Do we only do the right thing because we're afraid someone will find out?

When Hany comes to meet Amal, her mother warns her that he's not taking his courtship seriously because he's not wearing nice shoes (p 154).

- Do you think that we should judge people by the way they dress?

Essay/Debate:

"At times, I wish I could be a part of that sub-culture, protected and accepted." (Bianca Elmir, p 33)

MEDIA

Some contributors explore the way that the media reporting of events featuring Muslim people has negatively impacted on their lives. The media is supposed to exercise impartiality, accuracy and balance when reporting however many scholars have identified a bias toward racial profiling by media outlets.

- Students to examine newspapers The Australian, The Age and The Guardian. Is there a bias toward certain political views or toward certain races? Who owns these outlets and how does this influence reporting?

On Being Michael and Mohammed

Michael Mohammed faces discrimination as a Lebanese Muslim because of the way crimes featuring Lebanese youth is reported by the media (p 20).

- Examine newspaper articles about crime. When is the perpetrator's ethnic or religious identity mentioned?

The Other Side

As a Rugby League star Hazem feels a heavy responsibility to be a role model for the Muslim community by not being seen as an exception (p 50).

- If Hazem is a Muslim exception, what does that mean to the rest of the Muslim community?

Hazem found this important as there were a series of events that set back Muslim life in Australia i.e. organised crime gangs made up of Middle Eastern men; a series of gang rapes that included taunting victims with religious insults; the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York; the Bali bombings; and the Cronulla riots (p 50).

- Research each of these events. Examine how they were reported in the media. Contrast the Muslim perspective presented in the media to the anthology stories.

On 11 September 2001 Hazem went to footy training and was questioned about September 11 (p 51).

- What does Jihad mean? Are Muslim people the only people who commit terrorist acts?

Mishmash Muslim

While Sabrina was in the media during her Miss World Australia competition she finds that the media is only interested in her religious identity (p 134).

- What does Sabrina mean by the term mishmash Muslim? What does fundamentalist mean? Are there fundamentalist Christians and/or mishmash Christians?

She found that even though she was the Mensan Beauty Queen, her being Muslim was more reported (p 135)

- Research the Mensa society and its members. Is Sabrina's achievement in becoming a member newsworthy?

Sabrina was on the front page of a newspaper with the headline that she received death threats from the Islamic community (p 136).

- What are the media ethics about reporting events? Write a letter to the editor.

Essay/Debate:

Michael Mohammed talks about the front cover of the book *Evil in the Suburbs* as "a frightening image that seemed to encourage hate and fear of Sydney's infamous 'other' – someone both foreign and suburban." (p 21).

HIJAB

One of the most recognisable and most misunderstood identifiers of Muslim identity is women wearing a hijab.

- Students to list all the religions that they know of and which religions display their faith in the way that they dress. Discuss the difference between the hijab and the burka.

The Road to Self-Acceptance is Paved with Tim Tams

For Randa the veil becomes a way of dealing with her body image issues (p 59).

- What is the difference between a veil and hijab? Why does Randa put the veil on and then remove it?

Randa didn't continue playing sport after primary school because the basketball club wouldn't allow her to participate wearing a hijab and track pants (p 61)

- Write a letter to the basketball club.

Muslim Footprint

When Arwa's family migrates to Australia her mother decides that she and Arwa's sisters would not to wear the hijab (p 83).

- Do you agree with her decision?

Arwa talks about walking through the shops in Liverpool with her friend Abbey who receives dirty looks because she wears the hijab (p 88).

- Write a scene from Abbey's point of view.

How I Happened

For Tasneem the hijab has had many roles from an accessory when she's a teenager to a way of showing her devotion when she is older (p 179).

- How do people perceive her because of the way she dresses?

Essay:

"Because we looked different, it was easy to label us." (Arwa El Masri, p 85)

Should people wear what they want or should they try to blend in with the crowd?

MIGRATION

The parents of all of the contributors made the tough decision to migrate to Australia for a better life, but they found this dream came at a cost.

- Students to list countries that people have emigrated from to Australia in a timeline and the reasons why. Discuss their findings.

The Other Side

Hazem describes the suburb of Lakemba as having a comforting sense of familiarity because of three cycles of Lebanese migration to Australia (p 41).

- The media has been known to identify areas where certain populations settle as ethnic ghettos. Should migrants stick with their own or should they assimilate?

Hazem's family were a relatively comfortable middle-class family in Lebanon, but in Australia are a poor family (p 42)

- Why does Hazem's family become poor? Do you think that his family benefitted from migration?

Muslim Footprint

Arwa was born in Saudi Arabia and is a third generation Palestinian who had never seen Palestine (p 82). Her parents migrate to Australia because they wanted their children to have a place to call home (p 81) and she states that she was a child of many worlds who didn't feel quite right in any.

- Imagine Arwa grew up in Palestine or Saudi Arabia and write about what her life would have been like.

The Art of Bargaining

During their visits to Bangladesh Tanveer's father revelled in the attention and status that he received from relatives and townfolk (p 164) and when his grandfather died his father couldn't attend the funeral (p 165).

- Write a scene from his father's point of view.

When Tanveer's family go to buy a television it is to be a marker of their migration success (p 166)

- How do you define migration success?

Essay/Debate:

"It was amazing to me seeing all these different cultures from all around the world. In Lebanon we didn't have so many different cultures living in the same place . . . and getting along." (Hazem El Masri, p 43) Do Australians always get along?

FURTHER READING & VIEWING

YOUNG ADULT

Abdel-Fattah, Randa (2005) *Does my head look big in this?*, Pan Macmillan. A sixteen-year-old Muslim girl in Australia decides to wear the hijab, a religious veil, full-time.

Abdel-Fattah, Randa (2008) *Where the streets had a name*, Pan Macmillan. About a 13 year old girl in Palestine who sets out to retrieve a handful soil from her grandmother's ancestral home in Jerusalem to save her beloved grandmother's life.

Alexander, Goldie (2011) *The Youngest Cameleer*, Five Senses Education. YA historical fiction about the discovery of Uluru

Ellis, Deborah (2001) *Parvana*. Allen & Unwin. When Parvana's father is arrested by the Taliban, she must transform herself into a boy so her family can survive. Also: *Parvana's journey* (2002) and *Shauzia* (2003)

Gleeson, Libby (2008) *Mahtab's Story*, Allen and Unwin. Mahtab's family are suffering under the Taliban and set out on a dangerous journey to Australia where they end up in a detention centre, until they are finally reunited with her father.

Heffernan, John (2000) *More than gold*. Margaret Hamilton Books. Raiko is a Bosnian refugee who lives in a small Australian country town and dreams of being an Olympic runner.

Heffernan, John and Andrew McLean (2001) *My dog*. Margaret Hamilton Books. *My dog* is the sad and moving story of a young boy fleeing his home in Kosovo. (picture book)

Jamal, Nadia & Chandab, Taghred (2005) *The Glory Garage*, Allen and Unwin. A collection of candid real-life stories about growing up Lebanese and Muslim in Australia.

Pajalic, Amra (2009) *The Good Daughter*, Text Publishing. About fifteen year old Sabiha who is in conflict with her Australian and Bosnian Muslim identity.

Pajalic, Amra (2014) *Amir: Friend on Loan*, Garratt Publishing. Twelve year old Amir has been best friends with Dragan since kinder. Their friendship is in question after the Balkan War breaks out overseas.

MEMOIRS

El Masri, Arwa (2011) *Tea with Arwa : one woman's story of faith, family and finding a home in Australia*, Hachette

Woods, Bill (2007) *El magic: the life of Hazem El Masri*, Harper Collins Publishers

Ahmed, Tanveer (2011) *The exotic rissole*, New South Books

Yusuf, Irfan (2009) *Once were radicals : my years as a teenage Islamo-fascist*, Allen & Unwin

Alizadeh, Ali (2010) *Iran: my grandfather*, Transit Lounge

NON FICTION

Aly, Waleed (2007) *People like us: how arrogance is dividing Islam and the West*, Pan Macmillan Australia. Examines the cultural chasm between Islam and the West by confronting the issues at the heart of the misunderstanding

Deen, Hanifa, (2011) *Ali Abdul v. The King: Muslim stories from the dark days of white Australia*, UWA Publishing. The author examines her personal family history and the stories of other Cameleers in early Australian history.

Stephenson, Peta, (2010) *Islam dreaming: Indigenous Muslims in Australia*, UNSW Press. Interviews with more than 50 contemporary Indigenous Muslims charting the life stories of Muslim pioneers and their descendants as they formed bonds with the indigenous people of Australia.

FICTION

Awad, Amal (2012) *Courting Samira*, Amazon Digital Services, Inc. About a young, single Muslim woman living in Sydney and her blossoming romance (all very proper), Muslim courtship rituals (so Jane Austen), struggle with career and, of course, Arab Guilt.

MOVIES:

A Mighty Heart (2007) Based on the memoir of Mariane Pearl – whose husband, Daniel, an American journalist, was killed by Pakistanis – the film offers a balanced portrayal of Muslims.

Aladdin (1992) animated musical fantasy film based on a story of medieval Arabian origin

Ali (2001) a biographical film about the boxer Muhammad Ali.

Arranged (2007) movie about an Orthodox Jewish woman and her friendship with a young Muslim woman

East is East (1999) is a British comedy-drama about a mixed-ethnicity British household headed by a Pakistani father and an English mother.

Kingdom of Heaven (2005) is an epic action film set during the Crusades of the 12th century.

Lawrence of Arabia (1962) is an epic adventure drama film based on the life of T. E. Lawrence and depicts Lawrence's experiences in Arabia during World War I.

Lion of the Desert (1981) about Omar Mukhtar, who led the guerrilla struggle against the Italian fascist occupation of Libya.

New Muslim Cool (2009) A documentary, that follows Hamza Perez, a drug dealer turned rapper and community activist living in Pittsburgh.

Paradise Now (2005) is a poignant film about two Palestinian men preparing for a suicide attack in Israel.

Promises (2001) a documentary about Palestinian and Israeli children who answer the question, "what do children think of war?"

Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves (1991) Muslim character Azeem, is a dedicated and loyal friend to Robin Hood.

The 13th Warrior (1999) is a historical fiction action film praised for a balanced and sometimes heroic portrayal of Arabs.

The Doorknock Appeal (2013) a short film about suitor visits (available on YouTube).

The Dury's Out (2013) a mockumentary set in a small country town about Muslim and non-Muslim relations.

The Kite Runner (2007) Based on the bestselling novel of the same name it chronicles the friendship of two Afghan boys from different social classes.

The Siege (1998) is about a fictional situation in which terrorist cells have made several attacks on New York City and is criticized for reinforcing negative stereotypes of Muslims.

The Suitors (1998) a dark comedy set in New York it is a tongue-in-cheek look at the stereotypes and prejudices held against Muslims living in the U.S.

The Visitor (2007) an American immigration film about a lonely man in post-9/11 New York City.

Three Kings (1999) Set in Baghdad during the first Gulf War follows a group of American soldiers who come to realise that many Iraqis are murdering innocent civilians.

TV SHOWS:

Lost American television series features Sayid Hassan Jarrah, a Muslim character.

Community is an American television series and features a Muslim character Abed Nader.

East West 101 is an Australian police drama featuring Detective Zane Malik, a Muslim character.

Little Mosque on the Prairie is a Canadian sitcom about a Muslim community in the fictional prairie town of Mercy, Saskatchewan.

Sleeper Cell is an American TV show about Darwyn Al-Sayeed, a 30-year-old Muslim undercover FBI agent, who is assigned to infiltrate a terrorist sleeper cell that is planning an attack in Los Angeles.

The Simpsons episode "Mypods and Broomsticks" (Season 20) Bart becomes good friends with a Jordanian boy while Homer learns a lesson in tolerance towards Muslims/Islam.

Burka Avenger is a Pakistani animated television series that features Jiya, a teacher at a girls school whose alter ego is a burka-wearing super heroine who uses her martial arts skills to fight crime (episodes can be viewed on YouTube with English subtitles).

GRAPHIC NOVELS/COMICS

Persepolis is Marjane Satrapi's memoir of growing up in Iran during the Islamic Revolution.

Ms Marvel featuring a 16-year old Jersey girl who is Muslim.

The 99 is the world's first superheroes comic based on Islamic culture and society.

For a more comprehensive list of Muslim characters in comic books go to these links:

http://marvel.wikia.com/Category:Muslim_Characters

<http://www.comicvine.com/profile/eganthevile1/lists/muslim-characters/13566>

RELATED RESOURCES

Evidence of Australia Media Fuelling Racism against Minorities

http://www.outcastjournalist.com/index_files/australia_media_fueling_racism.htm

Muslims in Australia snapshot, ABS,

http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/multicultural/pdf_doc/Muslims_in_Australia_snapshot.pdf

Muslim Community in Australia, ABS,

<http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/multicultural/grassroots/muslim-community-in-australia.pdf>

Religion in Australia mapped,

<http://www.ozcensusstats.com/2012/12/religion-in-australia-mapped.html>

Racial Hatred Act: a guide for people working in Australian media (1997)

<http://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/racial-hatred-act-guide-people-working-australian-media-1997>

GLOSSARY

Alawite/Alawy religious group who follow a branch of the Twelver school of Shia Islam

Allah hu Akbar God is great

Allah God

Aazan Call to prayer

Alhamdulillah Praise to God

Assalamu alaikum peace be upon you

Apostate those who renounce their religion

Bethlehem a Palestinian city located in the central West Bank, neighbouring south Jerusalem

Bohra shia ultra-conservative shia Muslim sect

Bismillah in the name of god

Burka outer covering worn by Muslim women including a veil that hides the face

Clitoridectomy is the surgical removal of the clitoris

Eid al-Fitr is the start of a feast after the completion of the month-long fast of Ramadan

Eid al-Adha a religious holiday that commemorates Ibrahim's (Abraham) willingness to sacrifice his son to God

Eid festival or holiday

Fatwa Islamic ruling

Halal is a term designating any object or an action which is permissible to use or engage in, according to Islamic law

Haram an Arabic term meaning "sinful". In Islam it is used to refer to any act that displeases or angers God

Hijab a cloth covering hair

Hijabi females who wear hijab

Kaaba the sacred stone that is cherished by all Muslims

Imam an Islamic leadership position, often the worship leader of a mosque and the Muslim community

Kafaar Nonbelievers

Jinn evil spirit

Koran is the central religious text of Islam, which Muslims believe to be the verbatim word of God

Niqab a cloth covering hair, ears, neck and face except for the eyes

Mecca the birthplace of Muhammad and a site of the revelation of the Quran, Mecca is regarded as the holiest city in the religion of Islam

Medina the second holiest city in Islam after Mecca and the burial place of the Islamic Prophet

Muhammad/Mohammed (peace be upon him) believed by Muslims to be a messenger and prophet of God and, by most Muslims, the last prophet sent by God for mankind

Madrasah an educational institution, particularly for Islamic religious instruction

Naseeb destiny

Namaaz prayer

Minarets Mosque tower that prayers are called from

Mohammedans is an obsolete term for a follower of the Islamic prophet

Mullah generally refers to a Muslim man, educated in Islamic theology and sacred law

Salam Alaikum Arabic greeting used by Muslims around the world that means "Peace be upon you"

Shahadat proclamation that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God

Sharia law Sharia is the moral code and religious law of Islam

Shi'ite Adherents of Shia Islam, the largest schismatic sect in Islam, who believe Muhammad's son-in-law and cousin Ali is his successor in the Caliphate.

Sunni is the largest branch of Islam and adherents follow the tradition of Prophet Muhammad, PBUH

Ramadan Holy month of fasting in Islamic Calendar

Quran/Qur'an is the central religious text of Islam, which Muslims believe to be the verbatim word of God

Vazifa prayer formula

Veil another word for hijab

Walaykum salam may peace be upon you too

Wudhu the cleansing process a person undertakes before praying

Ya salaam Arabic term of astonishment

Zakat one of the five pillars of Islam, the act of giving to those who are less fortunate

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Demet Divaroren was born in Adana, Turkey and migrated to Australia with her family when she was six months old. She writes fiction and non-fiction and her writing has appeared in *Island* magazine, *Scribe's New Australian Stories*, *The Age Epicure*, *The Big Issue*, and was commended in the Ada Cambridge Biographical Prose Prize 2013. Her first novel, *Orayt?*, was shortlisted for the Australian/Vogel Literary Award for an unpublished manuscript. Demet is the recipient of an Australia Council Artstart Grant, a Rosebank Residential Writing Fellowship, a Varuna Fellowship for a Writing Retreat and a Glenfern Grace Marion Wilson Fellowship. She is the Artist in Residence at Deer Park Art Spaces and has appeared as a panelist, guest speaker and workshop leader at literary festivals, universities, and schools across Melbourne. She is currently writing her memoir, aided by an Australia Council Jump Mentoring Grant. Her website is www.demetdivaroren.com.

Amra Pajalic is a secondary school teacher and author of Bosnian background. Her debut novel *The Good Daughter* won the 2009 Melbourne Prize for Literature's Civic Choice Award, was a finalist in the 2009 Melbourne Prize for Literature Best Writing Award and was shortlisted in the 2007 Victorian Premier's Awards for Best Unpublished Manuscript. She has also written a novel for children *Amir: Friend on Loan*. Amra's short stories have placed in competitions, and been published in magazines, journals and anthologies. She undertakes author visits and conducts writing workshops, and was funded by Artists in Schools to be an Artist in Residence in 2010, 2011 and 2012 in high schools. Her website is www.amrapajalic.com

Amra and Demet are co-authors of the book *What a Muslim Woman Looks Like*, a government-funded publication.

THEME AND STORY OVERVIEW

Story	Religion	Friendship	Romance	Stereotypes	Identity	Education	Culture	Media	Hijab	Migration
<i>On Being Michael and Mohammed</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
<i>The Fighting Spirit</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓				
<i>The Other Side</i>	✓						✓	✓		✓
<i>The Road to Self-Acceptance is Paved with Tim Tams</i>			✓						✓	
<i>Leaving God</i>	✓				✓		✓			
<i>Muslim Footprint</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓
<i>People Like Me?</i>			✓		✓					
<i>ABCD</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			
<i>Mishmash Muslim</i>	✓	✓	✓					✓		
<i>The Five-minute Engagement</i>			✓				✓			
<i>The Art of Bargaining</i>				✓						✓
<i>How I Happened</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	

[Back to Structure of the teachers notes](#)

MEMOIR WRITING WORKSHOP

Activity 1: Identity

We all have various identities. Looking at the chart below identify what your identity is for each of these.

Career identity <i>(Student, Lawyer, nurse, carpenter, teacher)</i>					
Family identity <i>(daughter, son, older sister, younger brother)</i>					
Skills identity <i>(Athletic, intelligent, leader, listener)</i>					
Cultural identity <i>(fill in which apply to you)</i>	History	Tradition	Religion	Gender	Ethics
Social identity <i>(fill in which apply to you)</i>	Personality type	Stereotype	Club member	In group	Out group

Activity 2: Belonging

We all have various affiliations that give us a sense of belonging. Looking at the chart below identify where you get your sense of belonging for each of the areas listed.

<p>Relationships <i>(Family, friends, partner, teacher, associate, pet)</i></p>					
<p>Environment <i>(Australia, America, Melbourne, Queensland, countryside, metropolitan)</i></p>					

Activity 4: From label to anecdote (template)

For each of your identity and belonging 'labels' brainstorm at least 3 anecdotes from your life that you could write about. The headings below are writing prompts to help you for each area. Write as many fragments as you can.

Career identity

Write about: what education means to you, how your parents/family influenced your experience of education, a time when you struggled at school, when you felt alienated/accepted as a student at school, how cultural expectations affect your pursuit of education, what is your future career and how you will achieve it.

Family identity

Write about: when you learnt something surprising about your parent and what you felt, what it means to be a sibling, a family member who influences/inspires you, a time when you were in conflict with your parent's expectations of how you were supposed to behave and what happened.

Skills identity

Write about: your interests/things that you like doing, what is your passion, about two qualities that best describe you and why, what people have said you are good at.

Cultural identity

Write about: how your family practices religion, a time when you were faced with a situation that conflicted with your cultural/parental expectations and how you dealt with it, about an event in Australia's current or past history when you or your community were made to feel excluded or different, a time when you were asked to explain something about your community.

Social identity

Write about: your friendship group and their roles, when you learnt something surprising about a friend and how you felt, when you made a poor decision because of your friends and what happened, a time when you lost/made a friend and explore what drew you together or pulled you apart.

Relationships

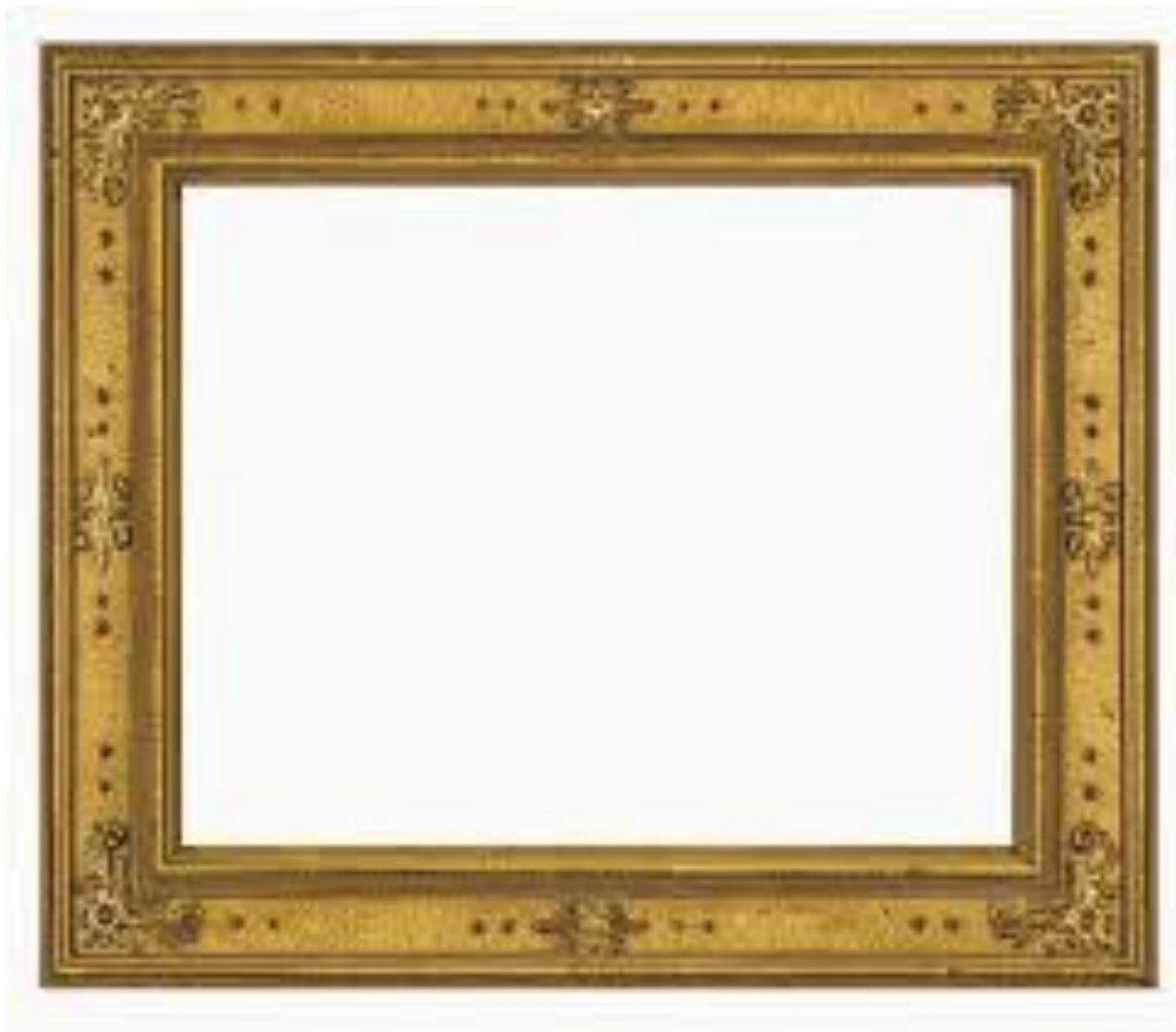
Write about: a measure of success for you personally, to your family or your community; about your pet, your ideas of romance and what influences your views, a time when you changed yourself for a romantic interest.

Environment

Write about: the area where you live and the people that live there, about your family's migration/relationship to parts of Australia, when you didn't feel right in your world, a time when you changed your life and what steps you took to achieve this, when you had to change yourself in some way because of what people thought and how it made you feel, about your fashion sense/physical appearance and how people perceive you because of this.

Activity 5: Finding your story

Jot down three anecdotes that you think should be in your story



Activity 7: Deconstructing 'The Fighting Spirit' structure (sample)

Beginning – straight into an anecdote	Bianca starts the story with her first fight and first win and how she had to hide her trophy from her mother who didn't approve of her fighting
Introductory (linking) sentence	<i>I haven't always kick boxed.</i>
Anecdote	Shares how she always liked sport and the different sports she played
Linking sentence	<i>I come from a long line of fighters.</i>
Anecdote	Her grandparent's migration to Australia and her mother's life growing up in Queensland Her parents' marriage and divorce Her mother kidnapping her and coming to Australia
Linking sentence	<i>Mum did it tough.</i>
Anecdote	Mum's life in Australia as a sole parent and Bianca's life as Muslim being a never- ending list of <i>can't dos.</i>
Linking sentence	<i>Indigenous cultures talk about life being a loop and not a straight line: a loop that links us to our past and our future.</i>
Anecdote	Lack of relationship with her father being a source of pain
Linking sentence	<i>At school it was both a curse and a blessing that I didn't look conventionally 'Muslim' and could quite easily pass as Hispanic, Greek or Italian.</i>
Anecdote	Talks about hating questions about where she comes from and her Lebanese background.
Linking sentence	<i>As I got older there was an uneasy feeling growing in my belly.</i>
Anecdote	Connection with Islam, living in Lebanon as teenager and praying and learning about religion, returning to Australia and finding belonging in school and friends, fighting with Mum and feeling unhappy until she discovered kickboxing at 18.
Linking sentence	<i>The Muslim community in Canberra is small and out of touch with those in the other states in Australia.</i>
Anecdote	The effect of 9/11 on her life when she was a café manager and overheard conversation between customers and had a fight with her friend; what kickboxing means to her.
Linking sentence	<i>I am unconventional and no matter what I do I always will be.</i>
Anecdote	The ways that she is different and how she is still searching for her dream; education is an important part of her search.
Ending	<i>I am still confused about where my life is heading. I wake up changing my mind all the time. On the other hand, there are two things I know will never change, no matter what life throws at me: that I believe in Allah, and that I will be at training every afternoon at 4 p.m.</i>

Activity 8: Structuring your story (template)

<p>Beginning-start with an anecdote. Plunge the reader straight into the action.</p>	
<p>Background info-what information does the reader need to know to understand this anecdote?</p>	
<p>Linking sentence</p>	
<p>Anecdote 1- what will you write about next</p>	
<p>Linking sentence</p>	
<p>Anecdote 2</p>	
<p>Linking sentence</p>	
<p>Anecdote 3</p>	
<p>Ending- something that you know</p>	