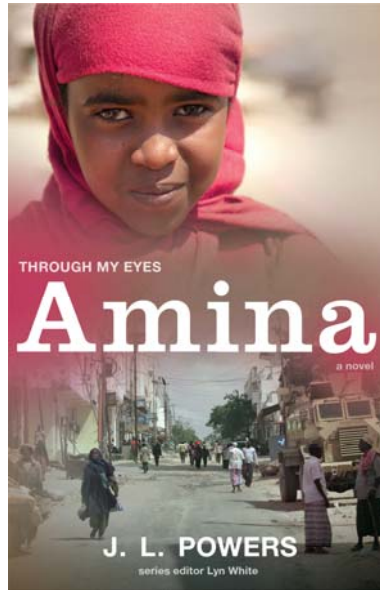


Teaching and Learning Guide

Through My Eyes Book Two



Amina

J.L.Powers

ISBN 9781743312490

Recommended for ages 11-14 years

The style and structure of these Teaching and Learning Guides was created by Lyn White, Series Editor for Through My Eyes.

Lyn White also wrote the specific content of this Amina Guide.

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The Guide contains numerous links to online resources so we recommend wherever possible you view it on screen. A digital copy is available on the Through My Eyes website www.throughmyeyesbooks.com.au

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Advisory note

There are students in our Australian schools for whom the themes and events depicted in *Amina* will be very familiar and all too real. Such students may well have fled similar conflicts and experienced displacement and trauma. It is important that teachers read the text before sharing it with their class, monitor student reactions and respond appropriately.

1. Guide Overview

This teaching and learning guide presents a range of learning experiences for units of work that promote the development of the knowledge, skills and behaviours designed to extend students' understanding of themselves and the human experience, empowering them to become active global citizens.

This comprehensive guide is designed for teachers to use selectively according to their schools' curriculum and student needs. Given the guide's numerous links to online resources, the guide is best used as a digital document.

2. Introduction to *Amina*

Amina is a compelling and engaging text that provides young readers with insight into a rich culture and a prolonged conflict through the eyes of the feisty, artistic Amina. It is an inspiring story with a multiplicity of strong relevant themes and a dynamic heart-rending plot that unfolds in volatile Mogadishu, Somalia – 'the city of sand and ocean and guns'. Although fictitious, *Amina* represents the experiences of many Somali families whose lives have been forever changed by war. Many families have become part of the Somali Diaspora in countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States and Australia.

Young readers will be drawn into Amina's insecure frightening world and be in awe of her commitment to family, country and her own convictions that crave artistic expression in a dangerous, oppressive environment. Amina desperately wants both freedom and safety and risks so much to inspire others to strive for a better future for Mogadishu. *Amina* is a wonderful tribute to children living in contemporary conflict zones celebrating their ability to rise above their circumstances and bring hope and healing to their world.

3. Synopsis

The year is 2011 and fourteen-year-old Amina lives in a bombed-out house with her well-educated parents, grandmother and older brother Roble in war-ravaged Mogadishu, where gunfire has become white noise. The two decades of conflict and famine have left her family poor and vulnerable. Aabbe, her devout Muslim father, once an art professor, is now beholden to his wealthy neighbour Abdullahi Hassan who sells his politically motivated paintings on the black market. Amina's pregnant mother Hooyo and her ailing grandmother Ayeeyo no longer leave their home and rely on Roble to buy scarce provisions. Smart, daring Amina who is very much her father's daughter, defies the gender restrictions afforded by her religion and takes every opportunity to create her own inspirational artwork in the city's abandoned buildings.

The arrest of her father Aabbe by the fundamentalist Islamic group al-Shabaab shatters Amina's world. Suspicion falls on Abdullahi Hassan and jeopardises Amina's romantic interest in his son Keinan, who is Roble's best friend. When rebel forces kidnap Roble, Amina must forgo her education and assume responsibility for the welfare of her traumatised family. Her strained relationship with her mother is made all the more poignant as the three women reach the brink of starvation, and face the real possibility that Hooyo may lose her baby. Amina and her beloved Ayeeyo reluctantly take the dangerous journey to the notorious Bakaara Market to sell her father's paintings in order to buy food. Amina's conflicting feelings towards Keinan are somewhat eased as he appears to afford her protection on the journey. When the art dealer swindles Amina, she is overwhelmed by grief and determines to give up her art.

The unexpected arrival of food parcels for the family and words of encouragement from her best friend Basra give Amina sufficient strength to return to school and to her art. With renewed vigour, she creates pictures of her father, poems about Mogadishu and symbols of beauty on the walls of the city's abandoned buildings. Her secret art, which she signs with a Somali star, becomes a voice of hope for the people of Mogadishu.

The triumph of Amina's successful second journey to Bakaara to sell Aabbe's paintings is soon lost, as Hooyo's pregnancy takes a turn for the worst, threatening the lives of mother and baby. The suspense builds, as Amina must again summon all her courage to make a frantic dash through the dark and dangerous streets to seek help from nurse Rahmo. Keinan, who unbeknown to Amina has remained a loyal friend and supporter of her art, warns her not to return home as conservative Islamists are waiting there to arrest her for creating forbidden art. Despite her fear, Amina bravely confronts her accusers and with the assistance of Keinan convinces the imam of her innocence and her devotion to Allah.

In the concluding chapters, love and hope are celebrated with the birth of Amina's little sister, the healing of the relationship between Amina and Hooyo and the revelation that Keinan has been secretly selling

some of Amina's work, saving the money for her. Amina's decision to continue her artwork and become an architect heralds a brighter future for her family and her country as it begins to experience a real renaissance.

J.L.Powers immerses readers in the Somali culture, making the desperation of the endearing characters palpable. *Amina* is a tribute to the author's extensive understanding and appreciation of this region and the suffering of its gracious people. The novel is rich in material for exploring contemporary issues including war and peace, survival and courage, culture and family, religious extremism and art activism. The story will be remembered as Amina intends: 'I will put some of the good and some of the bad because even the bad is worth remembering. When the country is reborn we will need all of our memories.'

4. Author Information and Motivation

J. L. (Jessica) Powers is the author of two novels for young people, *The Confessional* and *This Thing Called the Future*, listed as Best Fiction for Young Adults 2012 by the American Library Association. She is the editor of a number of books, anthologies and journals, including *That Mad Game: Growing Up in a Warzone: an anthology of essays from around the globe*, a winner of the 2013 International Reading Association's Notable Books for Global Society Award. Jessica is the founder and a regular contributor to [The Pirate Tree](#), a blog on social justice and children's literature.

Jessica first met Somali refugees in Kenya in 1993 whilst working with street children during a summer break from college. This life-changing experience directed her interests towards the continent of Africa. Jessica is a scholar, book reviewer and publisher with two masters degrees in African History from State University of New York at Albany and Stanford. She won a Fulbright-Hayes to study Zulu in South Africa and served as a visiting scholar in Stanford's African Studies Department in 2008 and 2009. She lives with her family in northern California

During the course of writing *Amina* Jessica visited many Somali immigrants in the United States. The Somali community of San Diego, California, welcomed her into their homes and lives with warmth, offering her thought-provoking conversations, delicious Somali food, and friendship. Through Refugee Transitions in San Jose, California Jessica was able to connect with another Somali community, many of them teenagers, currently living in Seattle, Washington. Jessica says: 'Their warmth, laughter, kindness and willingness to share their experiences both inside Somalia and now in the US touched my life in a way that I will never forget.' *Amina* is dedicated to the 'gracious Somalis I met on my journey writing this book and for children growing up in conflict zones in all parts of the world.'

Jessica's website is www.jlpowers.net

An interview with Jessica can be viewed on the website www.throughmyeyesbooks.com.au

5. unicef

A portion of the proceeds (up to \$5000) from sales of this series will be donated to UNICEF.

UNICEF works in over 190 countries to promote and protect the rights of children. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, clean water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and HIV.

All of UNICEF's work is guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The most internationally recognised treaty on the planet, the CRC sets out the basic rights of children and the obligations of governments to fulfil those rights.

UNICEF's mission is to make sure that the rights of children all over the world are protected and that people under the age of 18 are given special care and protection. We draw attention to the duties of governments, families, communities and individuals to respect those rights and support them in doing so. UNICEF's approach is to use low-cost, highly effective solutions that work dramatically to improve children's lives. UNICEF is funded by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.

UNICEF is non-political and provides aid to children on a non-discriminatory basis based on need and has no religious, racial or political affiliations.

UNICEF is active in all of the countries represented in the series and links have been provided in this guide to some of their excellent resources that support the suggested teaching and learning activities.

To learn more about UNICEF's work and school programs go to <http://www.unicef.org.au>

6. Curriculum Use

6.1 Australian Curriculum

This guide is designed for use with upper primary and lower secondary students in years 5 - 8 of the Australian Curriculum. *Amina* is a unique literary text that has:

...personal, cultural, social and aesthetic value...and have potential for enriching the lives of students, expanding the scope of their experience. (Content structure, literature, Australian Curriculum: English)

Amina can be studied as a class text or used as a literary focus for integrated studies units. *Amina* is also extremely suitable for use in Literature circles. The Primary English Teaching Association of Australia (PETAA) provides a useful introduction to this reading strategy at http://issuu.com/petaa/docs/pen_140

Some excellent practical suggestions on strategy implementation are available at:

http://www.abcteach.com/search.php?q=literature+circle_and

<http://www.litcircles.org/Overview/overview.html>.

The primary focus of these teaching and learning activities is engagement with the English learning area with its three interrelated strands:

Language: knowing about the English language

Literature: understand, appreciating, responding to, analysing and creating literature

Literacy: expanding the repertoire of English usage

The selection of teaching and learning activities has been guided by Year level Content descriptions for the following Strands and sub-strands:

Language	Literature	Literacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Language for interaction▪ Text structure and organisation▪ Expressing and developing ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Literature and context▪ Responding to literature▪ Examining literature▪ Creating literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Texts in context▪ Interacting with others▪ Interpreting, analysing and evaluating▪ Creating texts

This guide highlights both receptive and productive modes of English language learning. Students are involved in listening, reading, viewing, speaking, writing and creating oral, print, visual and digital texts.

The unique cultural setting and multiplicity of contemporary global themes presented in *Amina* have strong relevance for the development of the knowledge, skills and behaviours of the following General Capabilities, particularly through the use of Inquiry Learning:

- Intercultural understanding
- Personal and social capability
- Ethical understanding
- Critical and creative thinking
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT) capability

The opportunity to explore country and place, people, identity and culture ensures the relevance of this text for inclusion in the Geography and History learning areas of the Australian Curriculum:

Recognise and explain differing viewpoints about the world, cultures, individual people and concerns represented in texts (ACELT1807)

6.2 Global Education

These teaching and learning activities support exploration of key themes in global education including:

- Identity and cultural diversity
- Social justice and human rights
- Peace building and conflict resolution
- Civics and citizenship
- Values education

For more information on Global Education see: www.globaleducation.edu.au

6.3 International Baccalaureate

Schools adopting the International Baccalaureate will find *Amina* a valuable literary resource for the exploration of the six transdisciplinary themes of global significance, having particular relevance to Human Rights and Peace and Conflict units of study.

7. Background Information for Teachers

7.1 Mogadishu, Somalia

This text is set in Mogadishu, the capital of the Federal Republic of Somalia, the easternmost country in the Horn of Africa. A former colony of Italy and Britain, Somalia gained independence in 1960. In 1969 military rule was established under Major General Mohamed Siad Barre. In 1991 widespread discontent over government corruption, economic hardship and persecution ousted the Barre regime beginning a prolonged period of civil war, as rival clans plunged the country into anarchy. Strong clan loyalty and the abundance of weapons amassed by Barre during the Cold War created a situation in which Somalia was ruled by force by warlords, who continued to destabilise the country.

Kinship ties are deeply embedded in the Somali psyche. Each person is a member of a clan and can trace their paternal ancestry through as many as twenty generations. In *Me Against My Brother*, a harrowing account of war in Somalia, author Scott Peterson explains:

‘Every one knows that their place on this intricate map determines their status, strength, and also the severity of revenge that would be carried out on their behalf. Clan has always been the last refuge...the only proven guarantor of safety when the world falls apart.’(p.8)

Consecutive years of famine and internecine warfare ravaged Somalia as rival clan warlords were responsible for thousands of civilian deaths. In 1992, an estimated 350,000 Somalis died from disease, starvation or civil war. (See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Provide_Relief). Mogadishu, once

known as the ‘pearl of the Indian Ocean’, became a haven for rival militia clans, Islamic extremist groups and thousands of displaced persons. In 1993 fighting in the capital intensified as Somali militia clashed with US troops in the First Battle of Mogadishu, more commonly referred to as ‘Black Hawk Down’.

In 2001 the United Nations appealed for food aid for the half a million people in the drought-stricken southern regions (see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14094503>) Many attempts were made to create a stable government, but continuing violent struggles between feuding warlords and the Transitional Federal Government, established in 2004, rendered them futile. In 2006, Islamist groups loyal to the Union of Islamic Courts defeated Mogadishu warlords, taking control of the capital until Ethiopian troops backing government forces forced them to abandon their stronghold on the city.

In 2007 and 2008 some of the heaviest fighting occurred. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) peacekeeping force, Kenyan and Ethiopian troops intervened as fundamentalist Islamic militant group al-Shabaab, a former member of the Islamic Courts Union, began its assault on southern Somalia. Mogadishu became known unofficially as one of the most dangerous cities in the world (this term was frequently used in the media, for example in this piece on NBC TV: <http://www.nbcnews.com/id/21134540/vp/37313492#37313492> – note this clip is not suitable for student viewing). Homes, shops and buildings crumbled as gunfire rained in the streets. Al-Shabaab, with strong links to al-Qaeda, took control of almost a third of Mogadishu, forcing the Ethiopian troops to retreat. Al-Shabaab’s early promise of security and order gave way to an extreme brutality – strict Sharia law banned art, music, sport, education and severely limited the freedom of women and girls. Young boys were recruited as child soldiers and girls forced into marriage and sexual service.

J.L.Powers has chosen the transitional period of 2011 as the backdrop for *Amina*. During this period the AMISOM began to retake Mogadishu from al-Shabaab as widespread famine, a result of the worst drought in six decades and exasperated when al-Shabaab blocked delivery of much of the international aid, saw millions of Somalis on the edge of starvation. UNICEF treated more than 455,000 acutely malnourished children throughout Somalia, of whom almost 225,000 were severely malnourished – the vast majority in the central and southern regions. Although al-Shabaab ostensibly left the city in August 2011, neighbourhoods such as Amina’s remained unsafe as warlords began to re-establish themselves and food was expensive and in short supply. Families continued to live in fear and uncertainty – so many having lost family members to the conflict, still watchful that the rebel group would rebuild.

Despite ongoing instability and sporadic outbreaks of violence, Mogadishu experienced a real renaissance in 2012 as the country held its first elections since 1967, resulting in the presidential appointment of Hasssan Sheikh Mohumud. African Union and government forces recaptured the key port city Kismayo, the last al-Shabaab stronghold. Peacekeeping troops remain in Mogadishu as al-Shabaab continues to target government officials with suicide bombings and threaten the fragile stability.

The timeline and author's note included in the text provide good summaries of the conflict, famine and al-Shabaab, and additional sources of information include:

Excellent overview of the conflict at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xv72Hh-9Fh0> [not suitable for student viewing]

Somalia in Pictures, Janice Hamilton

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14094503>

www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14094632

<http://www.unicef.org/somalia/>

http://www.unicef.org/somalia/reallives_11415.html

View the retreat of Al-Shabaab from Bakaara in Mogadishu as AMISON troops retake the Bakaara soccer stadium at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-HZRAv5Z9o>

Keeping Hope Alive by Dr Hawa Abdi, founder of a refugee camp that offers hope and healing to Somali women.



Map sourced from: <http://www.un.org/depts/Cartographic/map/profile/africa.pdf>

7.2 Al-Shabaab

Amina's family live in constant fear of al-Shabaab, the fundamentalist Islamic militant group who terrorised Mogadishu for several years. Al-Shabaab took over Mogadishu's sports stadiums to train young Somali recruits. The Bakaara market, where Amina's father's paintings are sold, remained an unsafe area and a major focus for AMISOM troops who regularly uncovered weaponry and evidence of al-Shabaab infiltration. Al-Shabaab's control of the key port Kismayo enabled them to import weapons and charge heavy port fees that financed their operations.

For further background information on al-Shabaab, teachers may like to view:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-15336689>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-17111102>

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/02/21/somalia-warring-parties-put-children-grave-risk>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XxC5XbR0oGI&list=UUoS->

<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/somalia0212ForUpload.pdf>

<http://www.somaliareport.com/index.php/post/819/>

<http://amisom-au.org/2011/09/al-shabaab-weapons-discovered-in-bakara-market/>

<http://teachunicef.org/explore/media/listen/recruitment-child-soldiers-somalia>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/somalia/9453668/Mogadishu-transforms-one-year-on-from-al-Shabaab-exit.html>

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704575304575296732245006348.html>

7.3 Artists in Somalia



This image is part of a *New York Times* slideshow, which may be viewed at

<http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2012/04/03/world/africa/20120405->

[SOMALIA.html?ref=africa&r=0#6](http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2012/04/03/world/africa/20120405-SOMALIA.html?ref=africa&r=0#6)

The freedom of artistic expression is a major theme in the text. Amina's father is representative of many Somali artists who were committed to enacting positive social change through their art. Al-Shabaab deemed all art, particularly the depiction of living form, as un-Islamic and haram (forbidden by Islamic law). Many artists continued to paint in secret or were forced to produce government propaganda. Today, artists in Mogadishu enjoy a new-found freedom creating public art in studios such as the Centre for Research and Dialogue founded by peace activist, Abdulkadir Yhya Ali. For further background information on art activism in Somalia view:

http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2012/04/03/world/africa/20120405-SOMALIA.html?ref=africa&_r=1

8. Student activities

8.1 Examining The Cover & Extra Text Features

- List the elements on the cover that suggest Amina's ethnicity
- Describe Amina's physical appearance and facial expression
- Look at the scene below the title. List the elements of the picture
- Visual grammar: describe how the picture elements and design in this street scene combine to create meaning and context
- Brainstorm ideas about possible countries, settings, vehicle significance and themes
- How does the cover make you feel?
- Read the blurb on the back cover and highlight key words and phrases e.g. Somalia, Mogadishu, civil war, street art

Photographic images on texts are often associated with nonfiction. Have students locate the words on the cover that highlight the narrative nature of the text: fiction, story, a novel.

Amina is an example of the contemporary realistic fiction genre.

Discuss:

- What is realistic fiction?
- What other books of this genre have you read?
- What is their specific appeal?

Although editorial style includes explanation in the text of the Somali words used, students' attention should be drawn to the glossary at the back of the novel.

8.2 Finding Out About Mogadishu and Al-Shabaab

Using Google maps (or Google Earth on a tablet device):

- Locate Somalia and Mogadishu
- View Somalia in relation to Ethiopia, Kenya, African continent, Australia and Canada
- Locate the port city of Kismayo, Bakaara market, Banaadin, Somaliland
- Look at terrain and satellite views to gain a sense of the flat, semi-desert plains and plateaus of the region with Karkaar Mountains in the north and the country's only two rivers Shabeele and Jubba in the south

View <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-17116237> for a sense of daily life in Mogadishu as depicted in Amina.

- Use an enlarged copy of the map in this guide (located in the 'Background Information for Teachers' section) for reference during reading
- Mount a montage of pictures of Mogadishu using sites such as:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/picture_gallery/04/africa_mogadishu_life/html/1.stm
- <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/gallery/2012/jul/20/life-mogadishu-somalia-in-pictures?picture=392882222#/?picture=392882363&index=1>
- <http://matadornetwork.com/trips/24-hours-in-mogadishu-somalia-pics/>

Note: A Google Images search for Mogadishu is not advisable in the classroom, as some images are unsuitable for student viewing.

8.3 Inquiry learning

'The students are both problem posers and problem solvers within inquiry learning. Inquiry Learning encourages learners to examine the complexity of the world and form concepts and generalizations instead of being told simple answers to complex problems.' (Jeni Wilson and Kath Murdoch):

http://resourcebank.sitc.co.uk/Resources/Priority2/2Noumea/NoPr_T006inquiryLearning.pdf

Bright Ideas (<http://slav.global2.vic.edu.au>) provides an excellent guide to developing effective research strategies in the classroom. Teachers and students create age appropriate inquiry questions and trails for group research. Areas of focus and possible questions could include the following:

- **Conflict in Somalia:** Consider quote from the text: 'Amina had never known her city without war' (p.3) How did Mogadishu earn the unofficial title of one of the most dangerous cities in the world?
- Students could refer to:
- <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/387504/Mogadishu> or <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somalia>
- Older students: Somali social structure is based on clans. Somalis 'count ancestors' back one hundred generations. Explore the relationship between clan structure in Somali society and civil war
- **Al-Shabaab:** Older students could research the rise of this Islamic militant group using <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-15336689>. At the peak of their influence, how did al-Shabaab's affect the daily lives of Somalis? What influence do they have today in Somalia and other countries?
- Refer to *The Age* newspaper article 'Somali extremists far from defeated' (6th April, 2013) <http://bit.ly/1cOPtQ1>.
- **Mogadishu today:** In 2013, despite sporadic outbreaks of violence, there are signs that the city is regaining some degree of normality. Students could view: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hjoh8fvKIPs>
- **Bakaara Market:** The main shopping precinct of Mogadishu, centre of militant activity http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bakaara_Market <http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=1563251>

Excellent sites for an overview of all aspects of country and culture for older students and teachers are <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/so.htm> and <http://www.everyculture.com/Sa-Th/Somalia.html#b> (**Important Note:** Female Genital

Mutilation is mentioned in this article). The World Factbook iPad app is also useful.

Somalia in Pictures by Janice Hamilton has a comprehensive section on Somali culture. The following cultural aspects could be investigated:

- **Schools in Somalia:** War, famine and poverty disrupted the education of tens of thousands of Somali children. Many families fled to refugee camps in Mogadishu
- According to UNICEF only 42 per cent of children in Somalia are enrolled in school across the country. UNICEF provides schools for the displaced children in Mogadishu View: http://www.unicef.org/education/somalia_59675.html and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sY2-du2NzTo>
- Why is school so important to these children?
- Amina attends dugsi to learn to memorise the Quran. Students could view: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRNqBjA7YxQ>
- **Religion of Somalia:** Islam is the predominant religion. Amina and her family observe Ramadan. What is Ramadan?

Students could use *Festivals and Faiths: Ramadan and Id-Ui-Fitr* by Rosalind Kerven and <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/religion/islam/ramadan.shtml>.

Students could view the excellent explanation of Ramadan at:

<http://www.abc.net.au/btn/story/s3286388.htm>

- Older students: What role has religion played in the Somali conflict?
- On p. 14 Amina feels she may not be behaving like a proper Muslim girl. How would a proper Muslim girl behave?
- **Somali art:** Artistic expression is very important to the Somalis. Why were artists persecuted by al-Shabaab? Research famous Somali artists and street artists.
<http://allafrica.com/stories/201301170249.html?viewall=1>
- **Food of Somalia:** Amina's family usually ate maraq when food was plentiful. What other dishes do Somali families traditionally eat? Contrast the diet of Somalis living in country areas to those like Amina who dwell in cities and towns
- <http://www.somalikitchen.com/>
- **Status of Girls and women in Somalia:** The novel raises issues about the place of women and girls in Somali society
<http://www.everyculture.com/Sa-Th/Somalia.html#b>
- Older students: read the story of a teenage girl caught between British and Somali cultures in *From Somalia With Love* by Na'ima B. Robert
- Make comparisons with other countries such as Afghanistan where extreme forms of Islam impose severe restrictions on women

Use a range of software, including word processing programs to confidently create, edit and publish written and multimodal texts (ACELY1728)

PowerPoint, Keynote or Prezi (<http://prezi.com>) can be used to create visual texts to share research with a group or class. Scoop.it! is a fun content curation platform that helps students both collect information on their research topic and create an online magazine.
<http://www.scoop.it/t/what-is-scoop-it>

9. Literature

Strategies to enhance reading of the text include:

- Creating written or digital journals, reader's notebooks, video diaries or a class blog that record student reflections and comments. Entries could also be uploaded to a class or school website
- Creating cumulative story maps: Younger students can combine text and visual features

- Stop and Think Aloud and Responding to Questions:
http://www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/worksamples/Year_5_English_Portfolio_Satisfactory.pdf. Students read a text extract, write down personal thoughts and questions to answer and then respond to their questions using text evidence
- Making connections: Give students frequent opportunities to make connections between *Amina* and their own lives (text-to-self), a comparison text (text-to-text) and current world events and issues (text-to-world)
- Modelling and encouraging the making of inferences from the text by attending to narrative clues and implied meanings
- Recognising and exploring the potential of this text to change student's thinking and perception

9.1 Literature and context

Identify aspects of literary texts that convey details or information about particular social, cultural and historical contexts. (ACELT1608)

- Read Chapter 1. Readers gain early insight into the key literary pillars of the story: conflict, culture and identity
- Discuss: What visual images are created in this chapter, particularly by Amina's description of her home and city? What are your initial feelings about the story? What reader emotions does the author prompt? List positive and negative responses.
- Create a Y-chart graphic organizer: Looks like, feels like, sounds like. A BLM template is available at <http://www.globaleducation.edu.au/resources-gallery/resource-gallery-templates.html>
- Invite students to list words and phrases in this chapter (and subsequent chapters) that indicate setting, evidence of conflict and clues to character identities as suggested in the table below. Some of these entries could form the basis of further research activities. For example, students can build their own glossary or dictionary

CHAPTER ONE ANALYSIS

CULTURE	CONFLICT	IDENTITIES (characters)
characters' names, prayers, art, maraq, imams, mosque, headscarf, khimar	bomb and grenade attacks, detritus of war, bombed-out buildings, warlords, soldiers, al-Shabaab	Aabbe, Amina, Hooyo, Ayeeyo, Roble

- Encourage students to make predictions about the plot that can be revisited after reading the text
- Read younger students *The Colour of Home* by Mary Hoffman and Karin Littlewood, which tells the story of a family fleeing Somalia

9.2 Analysing and responding - themes

Students learn how ideas and viewpoints about events, issues and characters represented in texts are drawn from and shaped by different historical, social and cultural contexts. (Literature and Context, Content Structure, Australian Curriculum: English)

Create imaginative, informative and persuasive texts that raise issues, report events and advance opinions, using deliberate language and textual choices and including digital elements as appropriate. (ACELT1736)

9.2.1 Children and war

UNICEF sources suggest that in the past decade an estimated 20 million children have been forced to flee their homes because of conflict, two million have died and at least six million been seriously injured in armed conflict. More than one million children have been orphaned or separated from their own families. UNICEF Australia's Children, Conflict, War and Education Kit and <http://teachunicef.org/explore/topic/armed-conflict> are excellent resources for examining this theme in the school setting.

Using IWB or data projector brainstorm ideas about how war affects children. What is the difference between conflict and war? Create a class web map. A BLM template is available at <http://www.globaleducation.edu.au/resources-gallery/resource-gallery-templates.html>

9.2.2 Effects of Somali conflict on the characters

Amina's world is a dangerous and insecure place. Through Amina's eyes we see evidence of the many years of conflict and concurrent images of military activity and the daily life of the city dwellers create the harsh and threatening urban scene. This contemporary conflict zone challenges concepts of normality. The horrors of war are sensitively portrayed:

'Last year, during a four-day skirmish between al-Shabaab and government soldiers, somebody had launched a grenade right onto the roof of their house.' p. 5

'She'd watch as men went in twos and threes to the mosques, as soldiers patrolled the streets, as boys kicked a soccer ball a few blocks away.' p. 6

'Gunshots intermittently shattered the night's stillness...Gun battles, everywhere she could see.' p. 83

'Their guns were as long as the men were tall and each wore strands of bullets wrapped around their waists, draped over their necks and dangling down their chest. Why did one soldier need so many bullets?' p. 69

Jigsaw strategy

The MyRead site describes this strategy at <http://www.myread.org/organisation.htm#jigsaw>. After reading chapters 1-7 divide class into groups to find instances in the text that detail the effects of the conflict on the child characters and their individual responses: Amina, Aabbe, Hooyo, Ayeeyo, Roble, Keinan and Basra. A grid similar to the following can be used to record findings:

Characters	Areas effected	Details	Chapter references
Amina	Family roles & responsibilities Education Shelter Food	Abduction of father & brother Disrupted schooling due to conflict, al-Shabaab's opposition to women's education and the need to care for her mother Bombing of her home	4,5 1,2,3
Roble	Safety Education/Leisure	Persecution by al-Shabaab Recruited by al-Shabaab, soccer outlawed	1,2,5
Keinan	Safety Relationships Morality Freedom of expression Leisure	In his father's shadow Risking persecution by al-Shabaab	2,8,12
Basra	Family Safety Education Freedom	Murder of a her sister Restricted opportunities due to al-Shabaab's opposition to girls' education	3,10

Presentation of group findings

- Use PowerPoint, Keynote or Prezi
- Use Diamond ranking <http://www.globaleducation.edu.au/resources-gallery/resource-gallery-templates.html>
- Write an I AM poem
http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson391/I-am-poem.pdf
- Write a persuasive text about the character they feel has been most affected by the conflict
- Use art materials to create a visual image with key words that captures the effect of the conflict on your chosen character
- Make comparisons with other texts on this theme such as *Shahana* by Rosanne Hawke, *Jameela* by Rukhsana Khan, *Reaching Out Messages of Hope* edited by Mariah Kennedy, *A Long Walk to Water* by Linda Sue Park

Older students: further research ideas:

- Al-Shabaab's recruitment of children from schools in Somalia.
View: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XxC5XbR0oGI&list=UUoS->
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-17111102>
<http://teachunicef.org/explore/media/listen/recruitment-child-soldiers-somalia>
- Amina's family chooses not to leave Somalia but her experience of displacement is profound. Discuss the following quote in relation to Amina's experience:
'No matter whether children fight as soldiers, become victims of violence or flee war as refugees, their universal experience of war seems to be exile, being pushed out and away, no longer a part of that which they have known: exile from their homeland, culture, family, home and—most significantly—their remembered self.' *That Mad Game: Growing Up in a WarZone* (ed.) J.L.Powers p. 17

9.2.3 Rights of Children

Children's rights are severely affected by war and conflict. The specific themes in *Amina* that highlight the rights of children are child soldiers, education, early marriage and health. Exploring and examining the rights of children will enable students to better appreciate the characters' lives in *Amina*.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted in 1989 by the United Nations General Assembly is the most widely accepted human rights treaty in history. In simple terms it states that every child has:

the right to a childhood, which includes protection from harm and exploitation

the right to be educated, including all girls and boys completing primary school

the right to be healthy through access to clean water, nutritious food and medical care

the right to be treated fairly, including having laws and practices changed that are unfair on children
the right to be heard on issues that affect them, and have these views considered by those with the power to make decisions.

UNICEF estimates there are 158 million children between the ages of five and fourteen who are involved in child labour, one in six of the world's children. Over 64 million women aged 20–24 years are married or in union before the age of 18 as a result of arranged or forced marriages and approximately 300,000 children are involved in conflicts, many as child soldiers.

<http://www.childinfo.org/>

<Http://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/childsoldiers.pdf>

UNICEF Australia has produced an excellent middle school unit on the Rights of Children and their photo essays are a wonderful way to introduce the topic of children's rights. Child friendly versions of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) can be used as a starting point for exploration of this theme.

<http://www.unicef.org.au/Discover/Issues-facing-children/Convention-on-the-Rights-of-the-Child/Child-Rights.aspx>

<http://www.unicef.org.au/downloads/Education/Photo-stories/What-are-rights.aspx>

<http://www.unicef.org.au/getattachment/discover/Teaching-and-Learning-Resources/Parents,-Teachers---Educators/Parents/Talk-to-your-children-about-rights-and-responsibil/What-are-rights.pdf.aspx>

Other UNICEF resources can be found at <http://www.unicef.org.au/educational-Resources>

We Are All Born Free: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Pictures published in association with Amnesty International is another excellent resource for this topic. Watch YouTube clip:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x9_IvXFEyJo

What are rights? What are the rights of children in the 21st century?

- Students use sticky notes to jot down responses to these questions using just one or two words and add to class chart. Alternatively, this may be done with IWB tools. Compare the resulting list with UNICEF's child-friendly version of the rights of children
- Students visually rank the rights of children using a visual ranking tool found at <http://www.intel.com/content/www/us/en/education/k12/thinking-tools/visual-ranking.html>
- Read UNICEF publication: *A life like mine: How children live around the world* and discuss similarities and differences between how children's rights are being met around the world.
- Students create persuasive posters for one of the rights from their list using forceful language and symbolism

See examples on UNICEF site: <http://pinterest.com/unicefaustralia/posters-and-infographics/>

- Students write a reflective text on how they could make the world a fairer, safer place for children
- Read about UNICEF Australia’s Young Ambassadors: <http://www.unicef.org.au/Act/Be-a-UNICEF-Advocate/Become-a-UNICEF-Young-Ambassador/Young-Ambassadors-2013-14.aspx>
- Invite Mariah Kennedy, UNICEF Australia 2012 Young Ambassador and editor of *Reaching Out: Messages of Hope* to visit your school
- Register your school for the UNICEF DAY FOR CHILDREN: <http://unicefdayforchildren.org.au/>

Plan, rehearse and deliver presentations selecting and sequencing appropriate content and multimodal elements for defined audiences and purposes, making appropriate choices for modality and emphasis. (ACELY1710)

- Using digital media software such as Comic Life and iMovie create a cartoon or short film about child rights. UNICEF’s photoessays could be used as a model www.unicef.org/photoessays/30048.html. Consider audience: young children, teaching staff, school council
- Using GarageBand or Audacity, students create a podcast using audio files, images and movies that summarise their learning about child rights and upload to a suitable podcast site. Look at podcast in education resources on FUSE <http://www.poducate.me.com>
- Respond to the question: What does it mean to be a global citizen?

Create imaginative, informative and persuasive texts that raise issues, report events and advance opinions, using deliberate language and textual choices including digital elements as appropriate (ACELY1736)

The conflict in Mogadishu violated several of the rights of Roble, Amina and her school friends. A summary of some of these violations and suggested text evidence is presented in the following table:

Character	CRC Rights violated	Text evidence
Amina Hodan Roble Keinan	Every child has the right to an education that respects and develops their personality and abilities to their full potential.	‘Where have you been?’ ... ‘You’ve missed a lot of school. Are you sick?’ p.126 ‘No, I’ve been needed at home,’ she said... With everything that had happened to her family, school

Character	CRC Rights violated	Text evidence
Amina	Every child has the right to survive and develop through access to good health care, nutritious food and clean water	<p>had seemed impossibly distant, part of a normal life that no longer existed for her.’ p.126</p> <p>‘Have you looked at her drawings, Roble?’ Keinan asked. ‘She’s really good.’ p.19</p> <p>‘Anyway, so what if she’s good?’ Roble asked, suddenly sober. ‘Is it worth our lives? Do you want to die, just because Amina likes to draw?’ p. 22</p> <p>‘In the days that followed, Amina found that she rarely felt the hunger pains. The reality of having no food to eat and no way to help Aabbe, Roble or Hooyo pressed in from all sides.’ p. 111</p>
Amina Roble	Every child has the right to feel safe, live in a safe environment and be protected from neglect or abuse.	<p>‘Because they had stayed, Amina had seen just about everything – from her school’s flooding after a grenade burst the waterpipes to a classmate’s sudden disappearance into the fiery explosion created when he stepped on a hidden landmine.’ p. 13</p> <p>‘Amina had to admit that she couldn’t think of a safe place in the whole city.’ p. 43</p> <p>‘Who knew what Roble was being forced to do, just to survive?’ p. 112</p>
Amina Basra Roble Keinan	Every child has the right to relax, play and meet with other children, to feel safe and have their rights respected	<p>‘Al-Shabaab had outlawed soccer.’ p.7</p> <p>‘Despite the danger, Roble and Keinan loved soccer. Al-Shabaab regularly swept their block. Who knew what they would do if they found boys playing the game?’ p.8</p> <p>‘Amina’s parents allowed her to go with the girls as long stayed in a group. There was safety in numbers, Aabbe had told Amina, though even a group wasn’t entirely safe either.’ p. 30</p>
Amina	To be heard on issues that affect them, and have these views considered by those with the power to make decisions.	<p>‘Besides I don’t want to get married yet...I want to finish school and go to college, like you.’ p. 30</p> <p>‘She did this because Allah had given her the vision to do it...because she had things in her heart that needed to be expressed...to convey the message of love and peace through her artwork.’ p. 134</p>

- Choose one of the child characters and suggest the CRC rights they do not have. Search the text for factors that have caused this situation and the effect it is having on the character. Use Microsoft Word or Pages to create a digital poster using symbols and text that visually represent the character's lack of rights
- With a partner discuss ways in which the selected character's rights situation could be improved within the context of the text
- Use a Venn Diagram to show the disparity in rights between yourself and one of the characters in the text. A BLM template is available at:
<http://www.fuelthebrain.com/Printable/detail.php?ID=41>
- Design a questionnaire to survey your class on what rights they consider to be the most important for Amina and Roble as representatives of children living in conflict zones.
- Interviews: Have students interview each other about child rights: Which rights are the most important to the interviewee?
- Using UNICEF photostories as a model, invite students to create a photostory for one of the characters that shows the major areas of their life that are compromised by the conflict
- Write an imaginative text about:
 - Amina attending school regularly and openly practising her art
 - Roble returning to his family and playing soccer for Somalia

9.2.4 Child soldiers

Media coverage and the publication of memoirs of this particular form of child labour and human trafficking may mean that students are more aware of the plight of child soldiers. UNICEF estimates that over 250,000 children have been involved with armed groups.

<http://www.unicef.org.au/Discover/What-we-do/Protection/Child-Soldiers.aspx>

Sixteen-year-old Roble was kidnapped by al-Shabaab to be trained as a child soldier.

'If he's smart, he'll keep his mouth shut and they'll make him into a soldier' Keinan said.

(p.69)

- Look at the Child Soldiers photo essay from UNICEF and listen to Ishmael Beah's story, one of the first to tell his story. Older students may like to research his life
- Older students: Read short story *'The Cheetah and the Hare'* by Danielle Gram in *Reaching Out: Messages of Hope* edited by Mariah Kennedy. A moving short story about the recruitment and training of child soldiers and brides in Uganda
- Research people who have been child soldiers. Using sites such as <http://www.victoriansatwar.net> set up oral history digital exhibitions
- List the factors that contributed to Roble's abduction by al-Shabaab

- J.L.Powers includes subtle references to Roble's plight. Examine these references and create a short graphic novel sequence that uses evocative images and language to convey events and express character's feelings using student's own artwork or iMovie or Kid Pix.

http://www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/worksamples/Year_8_English_Portfolio_Above.pdf

Other books about child soldiers include:

War Child: A Child Soldier's Story, Emmanuel Jal, Megan Lloyd Davies

A Long Way Gone: Memories of a Boy Soldier, Ishmael Beah

Little Soldier, Bernard Ashley.

9.2.5 Survival and Courage

Reflect on ideas and opinions about characters, settings and events in literary texts, identifying areas of agreement and difference with others and justifying a point of view.

(ACELT1620)

The courageous characters in *Amina* face tremendous challenges and great adversity yet manage to survive and remain hopeful of a better future for themselves and their homeland.

Threats to survival

- Examine the text and record specific examples of threats that face the characters such as:

Conflict:

*'The names and identities of the groups battling on Mogadishu's streets were constantly shifting. Only one thing remained certain: the world she lived in was a dangerous and unpredictable place.'*p.4

'One afternoon, she saw what looked like three bodies lying in the middle of the street, a few blocks over. By evening, the bodies had been removed.' p. 112

'Thousands of other men and women in Mogadishu had disappeared, people who had never come home to their families because they had been abducted or killed.' p. 79

'They say several charities flew food in for people who are hungry,' Amina said. 'But al-Shabaab set fire to it.' p. 92

Loss of breadwinner

'And of course, he [Aabbe] always painted people and animals and they said that was un-Islamic.'

So Aabbe had made himself a target with his work.' p.76

'Silent and swift, the two men holding Aabbe dragged him across the tiles and outside the house. Amina's legs felt wobbly and she stared at the door from where Aabbe had disappeared.' p. 54

Drought and Famine:

'It's this stupid drought,' another woman said. 'Maybe we will have peace now – but even if the government is back in power, they can't make it rain.' p. 89

'The drought has made everything scarce,' Ayeeyo said. 'People are desperate so they'll pay anything.' p. 92

Amina, Hooyo and Ayeeyo were on the brink of starvation. Amina eventually fainted from lack of food and Hooyo came dangerously close to losing her life and the life of her unborn child.

- Use *Popplet* or a web map to show the main challenges that face Amina, Aabbe, Roble, Hooyo and Ayeeyo and label connections with the strategies they employ to cope with these challenges. A BLM template web map is available at <http://www.globaleducation.edu.au/verve/resources/webmap.pdf>
- What are the most severe threats and challenges for the young characters? Rank threats from most to least difficult using Diamond Ranking. A BLM template is available at http://www.globaleducation.edu.au/verve/_resources/diamond_ranking-1.pdf
Justify your ranking to a partner
- Amina is responsible for her mother and grandmother's survival and wellbeing. Use a Flow Chart to show sequential narrative events that threaten the family's survival. A BLM template Flow Chart is available at:
<http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/pdf/flow.pdf>

Make text to text connections on the theme of survival using the following books:

Shahana, Rosanne Hawke

Diego, run!, Deborah Ellis

Parvana's Promise, Deborah Ellis

Girl Underground, Morris Gleitzman

Guantanamo Boy, Anna Perera

The Glass Collector, Anna Perera

On Two Feet and Wings, Abbas Kazerooni

The Ink Bridge, Neil Grant

Responding with courage

Our young female protagonist shows great courage throughout the narrative, especially as she travels to Bakaara Market, dashes through the dark and dangerous Mogadishu streets to Rahmo's house and returns to her home to confront the imam. Just when we think she will be overwhelmed by her situation, Amina is a true heroine who finds renewed strength and determination to defend her family and her true self.

- Use iDraw or KidsPix to create a scene in which Amina shows great courage and write about how it made you feel
- Drama: Divide class into groups of four. Invite students to develop a sequence of still images, frozen moments, which illustrate a scene from the text that shows a character's courage. Information about this activity is available at:
<http://dramaresource.com/strategies/still-images-a-freeze-frames>
- Amina is extremely resourceful and single-minded. List some of her main problems and the solutions she finds for them. Focus on Amina's attempt to provide food and medical care for Hooyo and Ayeeyo. Comment on the ethical dilemmas some of the solutions create for Amina. A BLM template is available at:
<http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/pdf/probsol.pdf>
- How is gender important to survival in the text? In groups, discuss how different Amina's life would be if she was a boy. Use a Describing Wheel to record group responses. A BLM template is available at:
http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/pdf/wheel_eng.pdf
- Describe what makes the lives of Basra and Keinan's less challenging?
- Use a Compare and Contrast map and the similarities – to – differences option to explore the two characters, Amina and Basra. A BLM template is available at:
<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/compare-contrast-30066.html>
- Use an interactive Venn Diagram to contrast your own life with Amina. Interactive Venn Diagrams are available at:
http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/venn_diagrams/
- Explain how Amina's artistic compulsion drives her courageous responses to her situation
- Invite students to reflect on strategies they would use if they were in Amina's shoes
- Write a recount about an experience in your life where you have been courageous. Share with a partner or the class
- At what point in the novel does Amina show the greatest resilience? Justify your opinion with text evidence
- Is Amina more courageous than Hooyo? Use a T-chart to record your ideas. A BLM template is available at: http://www.globaleducation.edu.au/verve/_resources/tchart.pdf

- Which character do you feel is the most courageous? Use a ranking ladder to present your opinion. A BLM template is available at:
<http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/pdf/ladder.pdf>

Analyse and evaluate similarities and differences in texts on similar topics, themes or plots (ACARA, English Scope and Sequence: Literature Year 6)

Recent texts on this theme include:

Shahana, Rosanne Hawke

The Best Day of My Life, Deborah Ellis

Then, Now and After, Morris Gleitzman

On Two Feet and Wings, Abbas Kazerouni

Red, Libby Gleeson

9.2.6 Freedom

'Amina sighed. The conflict that she always felt tugged her in different directions – the safety of home was confining, while the freedom of the streets was dangerous. She wanted both freedom and safety but she knew that was impossible.' p. 10

'Soccer was just a game to most people but to Amina it was more than that. It was freedom. It was joy. It was the way life should be – kids playing without fear, playing despite the chaos all around them.' p. 19

- The Oxford Dictionary defines freedom as 'the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants.' This definition could be adopted as a starting point for a brainstorming session on freedom using iPad app *ibrainstorm*
- Create individual or group acrostic poems about freedom
- **Think, Pair, Share:**
- The My Read site describes this strategy at
<http://www.myread.org/organisation.htm#thinkpairshare>
- Individual students find and record evidence in the text that shows the lack of freedom experienced by Amina, Roble, Hooyo, Ayeeyo, Aabbe and Keinan.
Or:
- Connecting self to text: Students create Open Minded portraits: Students draw a portrait of themselves. Underneath they write in first person about what is happening to a chosen character whose freedom is restricted and the emotions they are experiencing.

Information about this activity is available at:

<http://pdspot.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/open-minded-portraits.pdf>

Or

- Discuss: In what ways is Keinan’s freedom to develop his own identity compromised by his father?
- In pairs prepare a dramatic still image of an event from the text where the character’s freedom is severely compromised. Include strong emotions and some dialogue. For example: In chapter 6 Amina, desperate to locate her father, hurriedly draws a picture of her father in an abandoned building as gunfire pings her hiding place. Information about this activity is available at <http://dramaresource.com/strategies/still-images-a-freeze-frames>. Use iMovie to film presentations
- Look at p.19 of the text and create a charcoal drawing similar to Amina’s that captures the sense of freedom Somali boys experience when they are playing soccer
- Research the life of Nelson Mandela and view his presidential inauguration speech: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZ9KIXCkb2s>

Understand how cohesion in texts is improved by strengthening the internal structure of paragraphs through the use of examples, quotations and substantiation of claims (ACELA1766)

- In pairs, students select one character and prepare a persuasive oral speech that addresses their loss of freedom. Include text quotations to substantiate your claims
- Older Students: Plan a persuasive text about Aabbe’s decision to exercise personal freedom to continue to create political art despite the danger it posed to himself and his family. Include supportive evidence from the text and use an interactive persuasion map. Persuasion maps are available at <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/persuasion-30034.html>

9.2.7 Culture and Identity

Amina’s identity is strongly linked to her Somali culture. Important aspects of this culture include customs and traditions, Islam, art, language, food and clothing. The author’s experience with Somali refugees and her meticulous research bring the Somali culture to life. Note it is urban, not rural lifestyle that is depicted. The urban lifestyle including customs, attitudes and beliefs of the characters is clearly and sensitively captured through the use of simple language coloured by ethnic vocabulary and carefully crafted descriptive passages with cultural markers.

- Read sections from the UNICEF publications: *A life like mine: How children live around the world* and *A school like mine: A unique celebration of schools around the world* to introduce discussion about culture and cultural diversity
- **Inquiry questions:** What is culture? Students post their definitions on display site, and can add to each other's ideas
- How is the relationship between Islamic faith and Somali culture developed in Amina?
- Using **Think, Pair, Share** strategy students identify, list and classify examples of Somali culture they have discovered in the text. (The My Read site describes this strategy at <http://www.myread.org/organisation.htm#thinkpairshare>)
- Create a Word it Out using key words from your analysis. The Global Education site describes this activity at: <http://worditout.com/>



- Which cultural elements has the author highlighted in the narrative? What is the effect of this on your understanding of Somali culture?
- On p. 102 Ayeeyo provides readers with a glimpse of rural Somali culture. On hearing Ayeeyo's description of her childhood, Amina says she wants to 'live out in the middle of nowhere'. What aspects of Amina's personality would not suit rural life?

Participate in and contribute to discussions, clarifying and interrogating ideas, developing and supporting arguments, sharing and evaluating information, experiences and opinions. (ACELY1709)

- Are there any negative representations of the Somali culture in the text?
- Somali pride is an interesting cultural feature of the narrative. Discuss in relation to Amina's relationship with her neighbours and with Basra
- In what ways does the text present non-stereotypic representations of Muslim culture?

- View a video interview with Young Adult author Randa-Abdel Fattah speaking about themes of identity and culture in literature:
http://lrrpublic.cli.det.nsw.edu.au/lrrSecure/Sites/Web/writerstalk09/lo/raf/raf_02.htm
- Use a triangle Venn Diagram to compare and contrast your own culture with Somali culture. A BLM template for this is available at
http://www.educationoasis.com/curriculum/GO/GO_pdf/compcon_triangle.pdf
- Find out about cultural diversity research and projects at the Australian Multicultural Foundation: <http://amf.net.au/>

Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, selecting aspects of subject matter and particular language, visual, and audio features to convey information and ideas. (ACELY1725)

Poetry is an important form of Somali cultural expression and the author has included many examples in the text. 'We Somali, we are nothing but poetry and camels, camels and poetry.' p. 36

- Select a poem from the text and using art materials reproduce the poem with pictures and symbols that reflect your appreciation of the message that is being conveyed in the prose. For example: Amina's poem on p. 35:

'When the sun falls from the sky
And lies broken on the city street
What is left to fear?
We've lost much but we've survived
We are true Somalis.'
- Compose a non-rhyming poem that conveys information about culture and cultural attitudes
- Conduct a class poetry competition similar to the one in Chapter 3
- Write a script for an interview with Hooyo or Ayeeyo on how the conflict has affected the Somali culture? Consider Hooyo's comments on p. 29
- Write a diary entry: A Day in the Life of Amina that reflects your understanding of the Somali culture
- Create a short film using iMovie that shows the differences between your own life and Amina's
- Create a website or webpage that combines students' research on Somali culture with information from the novel. A free design tool is available at website available at <http://education.weebly.com/>
- Older students: J.L.Powers has included a subtle reference to female genital mutilation. Hooyo makes her position clear: *'It isn't demanded by the Quran or Sunnah', she had*

told Amina. 'It's our culture that demands it. But culture can be wrong.' (p.62)

Find out more about this controversial issue at: <http://www.unicef.org.au/Media/Media-Releases/July-2013/Opposition-to-Female-Genital-Mutilation-growing-bu.aspx>

9.2.7.1 Islam and the status of women

Amina's life is strongly influenced by her religion. J.L.Powers gives readers sensitive insight into daily Muslim practices, the position of girls and women and the dangers of religious extremism.

- Using a KWL chart students brainstorm what they know about Islam and what they think they need to know. A BLM template for this is available at: <http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/pdf/kwl.pdf> An excellent website to inform primary students is <http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk/carolrb/Islam/holybook.html>

Jigsaw strategy

The MyRead site describes this strategy at <http://www.myread.org/organisation.htm#jigsaw>. After reading the novel divide class into four groups to find instances in the text that show aspects of Islam and effects on characters. A grid similar to the following can be used to record findings:

Aspect of Islam	Text references	Effect on characters
Prayers and Wadu	p. 6 p. 45	Closeness to Allah
Ramadan	p.39	A feeling of being pure and right with Allah
Dugsi	p. 25 & 26	
Women and girls	p. 7, p. 14, p. 39	
Boy/girl relationships	p.15, p. 69, p. 37	
Extremism	p. 139	
Art	p.42	

Extremism and fanaticism occur in many religions. *Amina* will assist young readers to understand the different expressions of Islam.

- Using a Fact and Opinion graphic organizer analyse Amina's family's practice of Islam with al-Shabaab's strict enforcement of Sharia law. A BLM template for this is available at: <http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/pdf/factopin.pdf>

- Research Malala Yousafzai's life and view:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9CTZtuTLN8g>
- Older students: Read *Marrying Ameerah*, Rosanne Hawke and/or *Does My Head Look Big in This?*, Randa Abdel-Fattah

9.2.8 Artistic expression/activism

A major theme of the text is artistic expression. Amina's father represents many Somali artists whose work was banned by the Islamic Courts Union, al-Shabaab being especially restrictive. Samatar Khalid's work could only be sold on the black market. We sense Hooyo's frustration:

'I mean he couldn't just paint a pretty picture to make some money. He always had to make a statement...' p. 76

Amina understands why her father's paintings had a deeper meaning:

'You mean that he was an artist, He said what he needed to say. He didn't have a choice' p. 76

- As a class, discuss the following questions:
 - What motivated Amina to create street art?
 - Why did she find it so hard to stop?
 - The author describes Amina's compulsion as an itch in her fingers. What other words or phrases could you use to describe her craving?
 - Why didn't Amina paint in a studio like Aabbe?
- Debate: Amina's art is non-political
- Working in groups, recreate Amina's art and create an exhibition dedicated to her. Ask students from other classes to view and explain the message behind her art
- Create a piece of artwork about something important to you and write the message you want your art to convey. Display artwork and have the class try to match the students' messages with each work
- Amina did not feel 'herself' if she could not create art. Is there an important part of your identity that craves expression?
- Design a gallery to exhibit Amina's art
- Research the difference between graffiti and art? Would you consider Amina's art to be graffiti? Why or Why not?
- Amina's signature is the Somali Star. Use Google to find out what the Star represents on the Somali Flag

- Research Somali artists such as Amin Amir:
<http://www.cgcer.ualberta.ca/en/Past%20Events.aspx>
- View examples of street art:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/nygus/sets/72157614867675506/>
- Art as social protest continues to be a very contemporary phenomenon. Research political art in countries such as Mexico and also in Kenya where messages of peace have been painted on trains:
<http://www.npr.org/2013/02/19/171916072/kenyas-graffiti-train-seeks-to-promote-a-peaceful-election>

Older students: Read *Graffiti Moon*, Cath Crowley

9.3 Examining Literature

Discuss how authors and illustrators make stories exciting, moving and absorbing and hold readers' interest by using various techniques, for example character development and plot tension. (ACELT 1605)

Recognise that ideas in literary texts can be conveyed from different viewpoints, which can lead to different kinds of interpretations and responses. (ACELT161)

9.3.1 Voice

J.L.Powers has cleverly chosen to write *Amina* in close third person, allowing the reader to have both the immediacy of the child protagonist and the wider viewpoint and background detail characteristic of first person narration.

The author respectfully presents a range of viewpoints on important contemporary issues avoiding didacticism – characters' actions and dialogue portraying emotions and attitudes that encourage readers to ponder the big issues implicit in the text.

- Choose a short section of the text and rewrite in first person from Amina's perspective
- Share the rewrite with class members and ask them to comment on how this change in voice affects their engagement with and comprehension of the novel

9.3.2 Plot development

Amina has wonderful cumulative plot development as events relentlessly build upon one another, creating great suspense, dramatic tension and gripping climactic moments that finally resolve into an ending that is both hopeful and reflective.

Create literary texts that adapt or combine aspects of texts students have experienced in innovative ways
(ACELT1618)

- Plot Profile: In groups students decide on six of the most important events in the text, include the inciting events (that make the characters take action), turning points and climax of the narrative. Decide how exciting each of these events was, on a scale of 1 to 10. Create a graph of the levels of excitement, to show how excitement rises and falls in the story.
- In groups, examine how the author has built suspense and created tension in the scenes in the table below. Consider how the author has used variation in sentence length, punctuation and dialogue to affect reader response

Scene	Reference	What I noticed about the writing and how it affected me.
Abduction of Samatar Khalid	Chapter 4	Short descriptive sentences, harsh, explosive dialogue create a threatening scene that evokes fear.
Fight between Keinan and Roble and kidnapping of Roble	Chapter 5	Strong action verbs and extended noun groups provide vivid description capturing my attention and sympathy.
Amina's failed attempt to sell her father's painting at Bakaara market	Chapter 8	Descriptive noun-groups create a threatening scene and strong imagery helps me to feel Amina's despair.
Hooyo's pregnancy complication and Amina's journey to Rahmo	Chapter 12	Use of simile, imagery and action verbs create urgency and panic.
Amina's new relationship with Hooyo	Chapter 14	Tender images and use of adjectives make me feel happy for Amina.

- Use **Sculpting** strategy to heighten student's awareness of plot tension: Students work in pairs and student A sculpts student B (who is like a piece of clay) to represent the plot moment showing appropriate body language, gesture, facial expression and body position. Amina's traumatic experience at the market in Chapter 8 would suit this strategy. Photograph sculptures using iPads and use Keynote to add text and create presentations. An explanation of Sculpting is available in: *Teaching Language Learners in Mainstream Classes*, Margery Hertzberg, an excellent reference for dramatic responses to literature

- Create a book trailer for *Amina* showing the main plot events. The Inside a Dog website provides information about book trailers at:
<http://www.insideadog.com.au/teachers/book-trailers>
- In pairs discuss how Amina's romantic interest in Keinan provides a level of complexity to the plot and list instances where this interest influences Amina's decisions
- Use Comic Life to recreate your favourite scene from the novel
- In groups create a piece of street art or graffiti that captures a scene from the novel and contains a relevant message
- Hooyo's pregnancy in a time of famine is a key plot element that creates enormous challenge for the characters especially Amina and Ayeeyo. A particularly poignant scene is in Chapter 9 as the women resort to eating weeds. Share with a partner your own experiences of family pregnancies and births
- The author has created a very hopeful ending for *Amina*. Use Pages to create a newsletter for a fictitious artists' society in Mogadishu that features Amina's latest art projects including the final piece of street art described on p. 169. An example of a newsletter can be viewed in the iWork template gallery:
<http://www.apple.com/iwork/pages/>
- The author has chosen not to have Roble return to the narrative. With a partner discuss this decision and complete a Futures Line for the return of Roble. A BLM template is available at: http://www.globaleducation.edu.au/verve/_resources/futures.pdf

9.3.3 Characterisation

Compare the ways that language and images are used to create character, and to influence emotions and opinions in different types of texts. (ACELT1621)

The author has created engaging, dynamic characters that show credible development throughout the narrative and draw empathy from readers.

Amina is a compelling, endearing protagonist. The uniqueness of Amina is a key theme that is built throughout the novel – not just in terms of her artistic compulsion and talent but also as a young Muslim woman finding her place in a shattered and restrictive world. Her feisty spirit ensures: *'she was trouble from the tips of her itchy fingers all the way down to her toes.'* p. 55

- Referring to the book cover image, use art materials to draw or paint Amina:
'She knew she was pretty in her scarf, with her light brown eyes, dark maarin skin and white teeth.' (p.17)
Find words and phrases from the text which describe Amina's uniqueness and add them to your drawing

- Create a wordle for Amina that reflects her character as revealed in the text:
<http://www.wordle.net>
- Write a journal entry for a day when Amina sneaks out to create street art. Describe how she feels when she is creating and what it means to her
- The ‘Conscience Alley’ drama technique can be used to explore Amina’s dilemma about creating art that is dangerous and her conflicting feelings about trusting Keinan:
A whole class or group forms two lines facing each other. One student pretends to be Amina and walks between the lines while the other students take turns to speak a word or phrase of advice to her. Students on one side of the alley give opposing advice to those on the other side. When Amina reaches the end of the alley, she makes her decision. The Drama Resource site describes this strategy at:
<http://dramaresource.com/strategies/conscience-alley>
- Amina’s relationship with Hooyo is strained. Choose a section of the text where this tension is evident but not voiced. Create thought bubbles for Amina and Hooyo that suggest the reasons for their behaviour towards each other
- Choose one of the characters from the book. Create a character web map. A BLM template is available at
<http://www.globaleducation.edu.au/verve/resources/webmap.pdf>
- Work in pairs to create Kennings poetry (two-word phrases of several stanzas that describe objects or people):
Amina: daring and creative/courageous and strong
Roble: loyal and caring/vulnerable and sensitive
- In groups, discuss the level of empathy you feel for individual characters. Write a letter to your character explaining your empathetic feelings for them
- Create an imaginative text: Using text and research knowledge write Roble’s reply to Amina’s letter on p. 129
- Samatar Khalid and Abdullahi Hassan are very different characters. How does the author make us feel about each character? Consider their dialogue, mannerisms and physical descriptions
- Hooyo is a complex character. Create an I AM poem that captures the key aspects of her personality as revealed in the narrative. Explanation of this activity is available at:
<http://www.teachingaboutreligion.com/activities/Activity05.pdf>
- Ayeeyo is a wonderful grandmother to Amina. In what ways is she non-stereotypic?
- Keinan shows credible development throughout the novel. Compare his conversation with Amina in Chapters 2 &3 with Chapters 13 &14. Describe the change in his personality and in the way he relates to Amina

- Create a Futures Wheel that shows a possible future together for Amina and Keinan. A BLM template is available at:
http://www.globaleducation.edu.au/verve/resources/futures_wheel.pdf
- Which character is the most inspiring and why? Prepare a reflective speech on your inspirational character to present to the class
- Use the HotSeating strategy to learn about the internal conflicts of a chosen character through their thoughts, actions and words. Information about this strategy is available at:
<http://dramaresource.com/strategies/hot-seating>
- How does understanding a character's internal conflicts help us to understand the external conflicts addressed in the wider themes of the text?
- Rewrite an event using another character's point of view. For example, write about Roble's capture from Abdullahi Hassan's point of view
- Using digital tools, design your own compare and contrast organiser and use it to represent the different character traits of Amina and Filad. Repeat this activity for yourself and a classmate
- Write an online journal entry for a character from a chapter or chapters in the story using first person and integrating detail from the text including emotions, motives and reflections
- Write a journal entry for a difficult period in your own life and compare with Amina's
- Create a piece of artwork that represents your favourite character using mosaic, collage, sculpture or painting techniques
- Locate descriptive passages about Aabbe in the text. Using Scribble Press create a story about how his life may have unfolded in a different society
- Write an imaginative text about Jamilah's life in Mogadishu

9.3.4 Literary Style

Analyse how text structures and language features work together to meet the purpose of the text (ACELY1711)

Description

The author uses simple prose that is enhanced by vivid description.

- Use IWB to examine extracts from the text, looking closely at the language. Select a scene from the text and using a Y-chart list words and phrases, particularly noun phrases, that build description e.g. the scene at Bakaara Market in Chapters 8, al-

Shabaab's retreat in Chapter 6. Use these ideas to write a descriptive passage about these scenes or draw them. A Y-chart template is available at <http://www.globaleducation.edu.au/verve/resources/ychart.pdf>

- Contrast the language used to describe Mogadishu in 2011 and the former Mogadishu referred by Hooyo, Samatar Khalid and Ayeeyo
- Write a descriptive first paragraph for a sequel to *Amina*, then use Publisher or Pages to design the book cover and blurb for your sequel giving reasons for your choice of font and graphics

Ethnic language

The author includes several Somali words in the narrative. Ethnic words are explained both in the text and in the glossary.

- Discuss the author's use of ethnic words and consider the effect it has on the reading of the novel
- Students complete a PNQ on the use of ethnic language in the text. A PNQ chart BLM is available at: <http://www.globaleducation.edu.au/verve/resources/pnq.pdf>
- Invite pairs of students to rewrite short sections of a chapter omitting the ethnic words. Make comparisons between the original text and the edited sections. What are the main differences in terms of reading fluency, comprehension, reader engagement and appreciation?
- Students could create their own pictorial dictionary for words such as canjeero, dhaagdheer, tasbih, maarin. (Examples of student dictionaries could be emailed to the Through My Eyes website to assist other students. www.throughmyeyesbooks.com.au)

Figurative language: imagery, personification, similes and metaphors

Understand, interpret and experiment with sound devices and imagery, including simile, metaphor and personification, in narratives...shape poetry, songs, anthems and odes.
(ACELT1611)

The author uses figurative language such as imagery, personification, similes and metaphors to enrich her writing, creating strong visual images of setting, character and emotion. Examples include the following:

- Amina describing her constant hunger

'A dull ache burrowed itself in the pit of Amina's stomach.' p. 61

'She felt hollowed out of anything good and right, a deep dread skulking within. The loneliness gathered and bunched inside, a hard stone.' p. 59

- scenes at the Bakaara market

'...a cacophony of bellowing voices, laughter, clucking chickens and even the bleating of a goat announced their arrival at the market... Men and women moved slowly down the street, like small herds of camels ambling along a ravine...Amina smelled dust and roasting meat and burning fires and sweat and it made her feel faint, all of it.' p.102

- Abdullahi Hassan

'Amina thought human faces were like houses. Some had lots of windows, letting the light. Others were like a solid brick wall, hiding everything. His father had little slits for eyes that took in light but reflected nothing.' p. 123

- al-Shabaab

'Their guns were as long as the men were tall and each wore stands of bullets wrapped around their waists...' p. 69

- Find further examples in the text and draw the images they create for the reader
- Create a Figurative Language Chart. A BLM template is available at: <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/4882041/Figurative-Language-Chart>
- Choose a character or event and create your own similes that describe or convey the intended emotion

Show how ideas and points of view in texts are conveyed through the use of vocabulary, including idiomatic expressions, objective and subjective language, and that these can change according to context.

(ACELY1698)

The author often uses rhetorical questions to indicate introspection and uncertainty. Amina's internal conflicts centre around her relationship with her mother, her confused feelings for Keinan and her need to express herself:

'Ayeeyo was asking a lot. Wasn't Hooyo the mother? Wasn't she, Amina the child? If somebody needed to be kind, why did it have to be Amina?' p. 76

'She'd decided to trust Keinan the day she'd gone to the market with Ayeeyo, but maybe she had been too hasty. Why was he following her?' p. 134

'She too was an artist. She couldn't help it. This was her way of being in the world, her way of helping her city, her people and her family.' p. 131

- Comment on the author's ability to take the reader on Amina's psychological journey
- Using Comic Life create a text that gives insight into a character's inner conflicts

10. About the Author of this Guide

Lyn White has been a primary school teacher-librarian and English as a Second Language teacher for more than twenty years and recently completed postgraduate studies in Editing and Communications at the University of Melbourne.

She is passionate about children's literature, committed to developing life-long reading habits in children and has great expertise in engaging students with quality texts and teachers with quality resources. Lyn is a part-time teacher at Blackburn English Language School and a pre-service supervisor with Deakin University.

She is the Series Creator and Editor for Through My Eyes. Lyn developed the style and structure of these Through My Eyes Teaching and Learning Guides, and prepared the content for this Guide.

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