

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### SALMA JOINS THE TEAM

by Danny Ramadan

illustrated by Anna Bron

Discussion Questions by Rabia Khokhar

**GENRE:** Early chapter book

**THEMES:** sports, social and emotional learning, Muslim identity, self-esteem

**SUITABLE FOR:** Grade 1–4, Ages 6–9

**GUIDED READING LEVEL:** Fountas and Pinnell M

**LEXILE:** 710L

**COMMON CORE STANDARDS:** RL.2.2.1,2,3,4,5,6,7  
W.2.1,3,5,6  
SL.2.1,1a,1b,1c,2,3,4,5,6  
L.2.2,3,4,4a,4b,4c,4d,4e,5,5a,5b,6





#### SUMMARY:

Salma dreams of becoming a champion swimmer like her hero, Olympian Yusra Mardini. So when she signs up for her school's swim club, it feels like her dreams could come true . . . until mean comments from older girls at the pool and women at her mosque spark body image and self-esteem issues. But with the help of her close friends and family—the team that always has her back—Salma is ready to claim her place in the pool.



Please remember that the suggested questions are meant to serve as a starting point. Educators are encouraged to select questions that work best for their style of teaching and will help them meet their goals when covering the topics in this book. Questions and prompts should be tweaked and/or reformatted to best fit your students, context, and community to ensure equity and inclusion.

## Discussion Questions

-  One of Salma's role models is Yusra Mardini, a Syrian Olympic Swimmer. Do you have role models that you look up to? What inspires you about them?
-  Write a letter, make a piece of artwork, or create a video from Salma's perspective that she might send to Yusra Mardini.
-  Throughout the story Salma experiences many different emotions. Can you list the different emotions she feels and the reasons why she may be feeling them?
-  In the story, there are many people who continue to support Salma and her dream of becoming a great swimmer. Who are these people? How do they support her? Use the following chart to help you organize your responses.

Name(s) of the people who support Salma	How they support Salma
Salma's parents	
Riya	
Granny Donya	

5. Swimming is a new activity for Salma, so she feels nervous and wants to make sure she is doing everything correctly. Has there been a time you have felt nervous? How did you overcome your nervousness?

6. In the story, Salma faces some challenges while swimming, like gossiping and body shaming comments from her teammates and judgments from some members of her community. How does she navigate and deal with them?

7. Granny Donya is a great friend to Salma. She also gently guides and helps Salma when she is going through a hard time. Why do you think it's important for Granny Donya to ask Salma the following question, "Do you like wearing that swimsuit, Salma?" (page 51). How does this question inspire Salma to continue pursuing her dream of swimming in the way that she wants to rather than based on others' views and opinions?

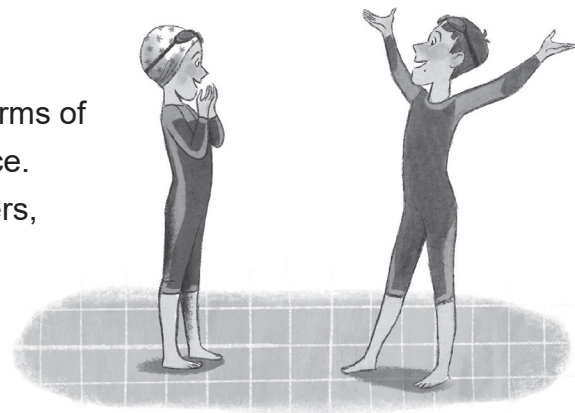
8. On page 86, we see that there are many different ways and forms of wearing a swimsuit. Design and draw a swimsuit of your choice. Make a small replica of your work by using fabric, pipe cleaners, construction paper, buttons, beads, etc.

9. On page 50, Granny Donya says, "Their words are water off a duck's back." What do you think this means and how does it help Salma continue to pursue her dreams?

10. In the story, Salma learns how to do the butterfly stroke like her role model Yusra Mardini. If you are a swimmer, what strokes do you enjoy doing? Research other swimming strokes and techniques.

11. We all come from different cultures, religions, families, and communities. Sometimes there are a lot of differences in how people make choices about how they want to live their lives. How do Salma and her family navigate some of the tensions/issues that arise from some of the choices she makes?

12. Salma's friend Ayman is also on the swim team, yet his experience with his teammates and his community are more supportive. How do stereotypes around gender impact people's experiences in their lives? What actions does Ayman take to show his support of Salma and in doing so, challenge gender stereotypes?



13. Throughout the story, Salma becomes more determined, comfortable, and confident. Can you find two to three moments in the story that demonstrate this?
14. On page 49 it says, “If it’s not your height, it’s your weight, or the color of your skin, or the thickness of your hair. There will always be people with time on their hands to speak negatively about you.” What do these words mean and why are they an important reminder for Salma?
15. What is your favorite part of the story? How do Salma, her family, and her community inspire you?

