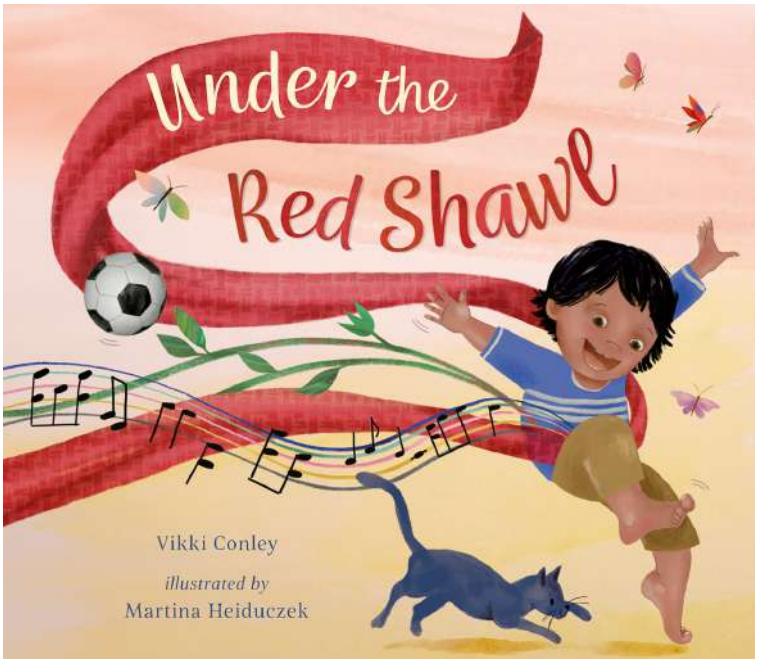
UNDER THE Red Shawl



TEACHING NOTES:

Written by Vikki Conley
Illustrated by Martina Heiduczek
Published by New Frontier Publishing
www.newfrontierpublishing.co.uk
www.newfrontier.com.au

SYNOPSIS

Starting out in a new place is tough, but friendship, kindness and imagination help Salim, Mama and Donkey discover their new world. In this stunning picture book, by award-winning creators – Vikki Conley and Martina Heiduczek – we journey with Salim as he grows up, creating a new life around himself.

This is a story about a journey, hope and creating fun with the little that you have. It is also a book that explores home and place, as well as how stories and play can help us cope and heal during difficult times.

THEMES

- inclusion
- home and place
- refugees
- other worlds
- diversity
- family / cross-cultural connections
- growing up
- creativity and play.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vikki is an award-winning author with multiple internationally published picture books. An intrepid traveller, nature lover and creative all-rounder, she has worked as a professional writer, with diverse communities in Africa, Asia and Australia, for over 20 years.

Vikki writes and shares stories that celebrate the spirit of wonder, freedom and adventure that she wishes every child could enjoy. Her title *On the Way to School* is shortlisted for Speech Pathology Book of the Year 2023, *Amira's Suitcase* became a CBCA Honour Book in 2022 and *Little Puggle's Song* became a CBCA Notable Book in 2020.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Martina grew up in a small village on the Baltic Sea in Germany. Here you could find her galloping with flying pigtails through the forests on her Shetland pony, drawing or reading. These days she lives in Australia and works as an illustrator. Her illustrations are a mixture of digital and traditional media. With a passion for colour and textures, she aims to create happy images to evoke emotion and thought in young and old minds alike.

EDUCATIONAL APPLICABILITY

*Under the Red Shaw*l is a story about a journey, hope and creating new beginnings. It's a wonderful starting point for discussions about change, displacement and other cultures and lifestyles. Sensitive and playful illustrations by award-winning illustrator Martina Heiduczek interact with the text beautifully.

BOOK MOTIVATION by the author

During my 10 years working for the international aid agency, World Vision, I met many children with extraordinary stories. Across Africa, children and their families shared their experiences with me about leaving home, fleeing conflict or being forced to travel away to find enough food or work to survive.

For many of these children, play became something that helped them heal and become happy again. In Africa, I saw children make balls out of plastic bags and string, and toy trucks out of clay and sticks. One girl had a beloved pet beetle, with shiny green wings.

In post-tsunami Sri Lanka, where homes were washed way and destroyed, one of the first things that World Vision rebuilt while I was there, were the playgrounds. Here children and families could have a place to play, laugh and reconnect. Safe play spaces were also created for children to come each day, while the schools were being rebuilt.

I wrote this story to explore the many challenges that our world presents for our children. We all have different homes and places where we live (cities, towns, villages), but for some children they are forced to leave for different reasons, and that can be hard.

In places like Australia, America, Canada, New Zealand and the UK, we are fortunate to have relatively safe homes and towns to live, a roof over our heads and a school to go to. Many children, in poor and unsettled regions of Africa and the Middle East may not even have a proper home. Some refugees may live in a shelter like a tent in another country or region away from their home, for many months or years. Can you imagine being born in a refugee camp and living there for most of your life?

But the joy of being surrounded by people who love us, who welcome us and share and give, is something that is appreciated universally – something that connects us all. The character Zada represents this notion.

WRITING STYLE by the author

Under The Red Shawl is a lyrical, heart-felt narrative written in prose, with frequent use of figurative language and the 'show don't tell' writing technique.

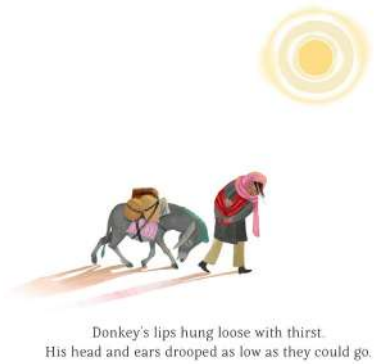
When writing *Under The Red Shawl*, I wanted the words of the story to draw readers into Salim's life, so they could imagine the journey using all of their senses. I deliberately used the 'show don't tell' writing technique heavily through the story so readers could see, feel and sense the snow, dust and heat of the extreme environments.

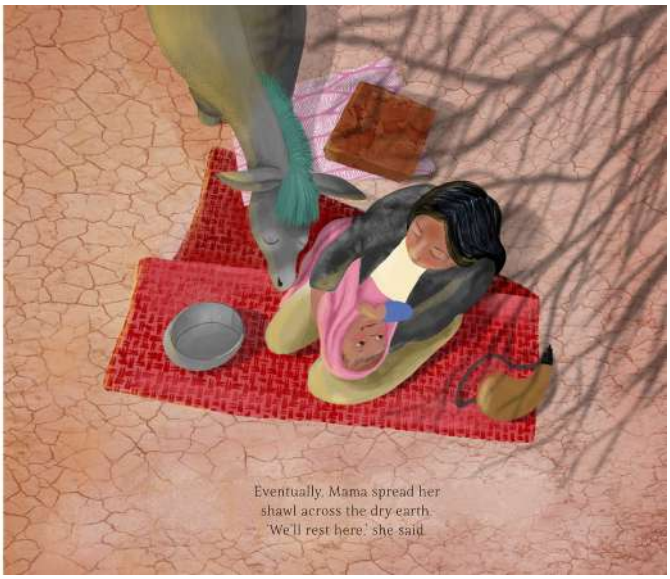
Carefully selected verbs, such as nipped, folded and hung, all helped to create an evocative text that would build empathy and allow the reader to pause and consider what each instance might feel like. I also love using figurative language, which helps further engage readers, allowing children to 'feel and see' the story.

Inspired by my own memories, *Under The Red Shawl* is a good example of how writing about personal experiences can result in authentic and powerful narratives. I always encourage students to use their memories to inspire their story writing.

Symbolism is something that is fun to use in narrative writing. I wanted the red shawl to represent the connection, strength and love of the mother-child bond, and the comfort that this offers, particularly difficult times.

I aimed to craft an accessible text (for children, parents and teachers) that would spark conversations about home, place, connection and inclusion. The story's themes can be explored on a variety of levels appropriate for preschoolers up to middle primary, even secondary students.





DISCUSSION TOPICS

Before, during and after reading the book

1. Introduce *Under the Red Shawl* to the children and ask them what they think the story might be about.

2. Mama says to Salim that they'll find another place – a safer place. What does this mean?

3. Mama wants Salim to feel safe despite their difficult situation.
What does 'Mama wrapped him like a cocoon' mean?

4. Salim makes shadow puppets. Have you ever made them?

5. Why do you think Mama and Salim have to create a new story?
What do you think happened to them previously?

6. Who is Zada? How does she behave towards Mama and Salim? What does she teach Mama to do?
Do you know someone like Zada?

7. Zada gives Salim a gift of a book. Salim wraps it like a baby. What does this mean? Salim has never seen a book before. Can you imagine or remember seeing a book for the first time ever?

8. Discuss all the different ways that Mama and Salim use the red shawl?
Why has the author used the red shawl like this in the story?

9. After reading the book, ask them what did they think of the story?
Which was their favourite part and why?

EXTRA CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

ENGLISH

Grammar

Search for the verbs (action words) and adjectives (describing words) within the story of *Under The Red Shawl*. Then write the nouns, verbs and adjectives in different colours for two sentences in the book.

Figurative language

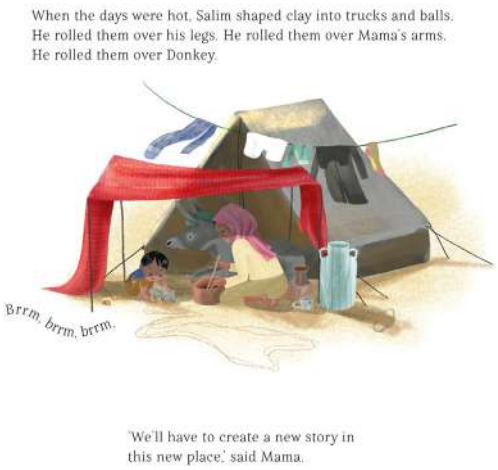
There are a few examples of similes in the story. Try and find them all! Can you create one of your own?

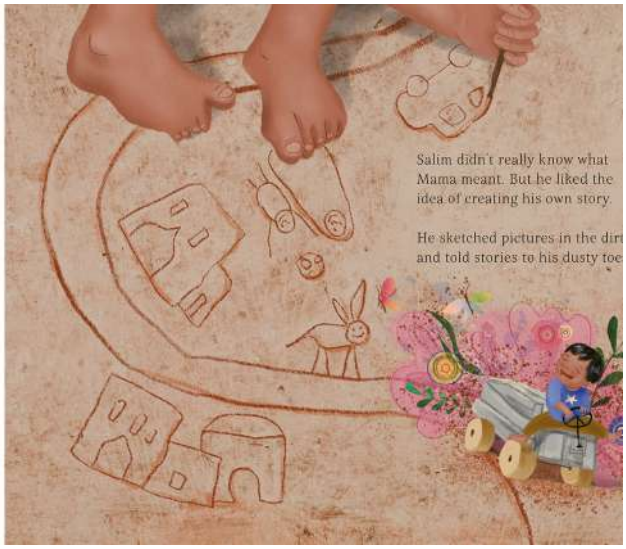
'Show don't tell' writing technique

There are many examples of this technique in the story. Can you spot them? Now try to practise this technique for two of your own sentences.

Narrative writing

Have you ever had to move home? Have you been homesick? Have you been camping before or had a sleep over at someone's house for the first time? Try writing a story about this.





GEOGRAPHY

Where do you think this story might be set? Pick a country/region that you feel might be similar to the one in *Under The Red Shawl*. Research what homes are like for children in these countries, how do they go to school, can they get things like clean water and food easily? Try countries in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia.

ART & SCIENCE

Shadow Puppets
Make shadow puppets! Discover what you need to create shadows.

Make an enviro-friendly boat
Create your own toy using nature or recycled materials. Try these boat ideas! Can you float them?

Make an enviro friendly boat

Nature and recycled household items offer fun and free educational activities that promote hands-on learning, reuse and accessibility. Get in touch with nature, up-cycle and have fun!

Nature Boats

Spending time in nature to forage, discover and wonder inspires mindfulness and creativity.

What you need:

Sticks or twigs for base
String
Stick or wooden skewer for mast
Leaves, fabric or paper for sail
Scissors and glue stick, PVA or glue gun (if using paper/fabric)

Jar Lid Boats

Water play and repurposing jar lids are great examples of educational activities that utilise recycled household products.

What you need:

Jar lids and play doh or plasticine
Wooden skewer, popsicle stick or twig
Glue stick, PVA or glue gun
Recycled plastic paper or waxy cardboard for the sail
Recycled cork or smaller lid, plus google eyes for sailor

vikkiconley.com

photo credit: minieco.co.uk

photo credit: myboredtoddler.com

PERFORMING ARTS/FOOD TECH

Listen to some music or learn a dance from one of the countries/regions where you think the story might be set. You could even cook a meal from one of the regions you saw in the story.

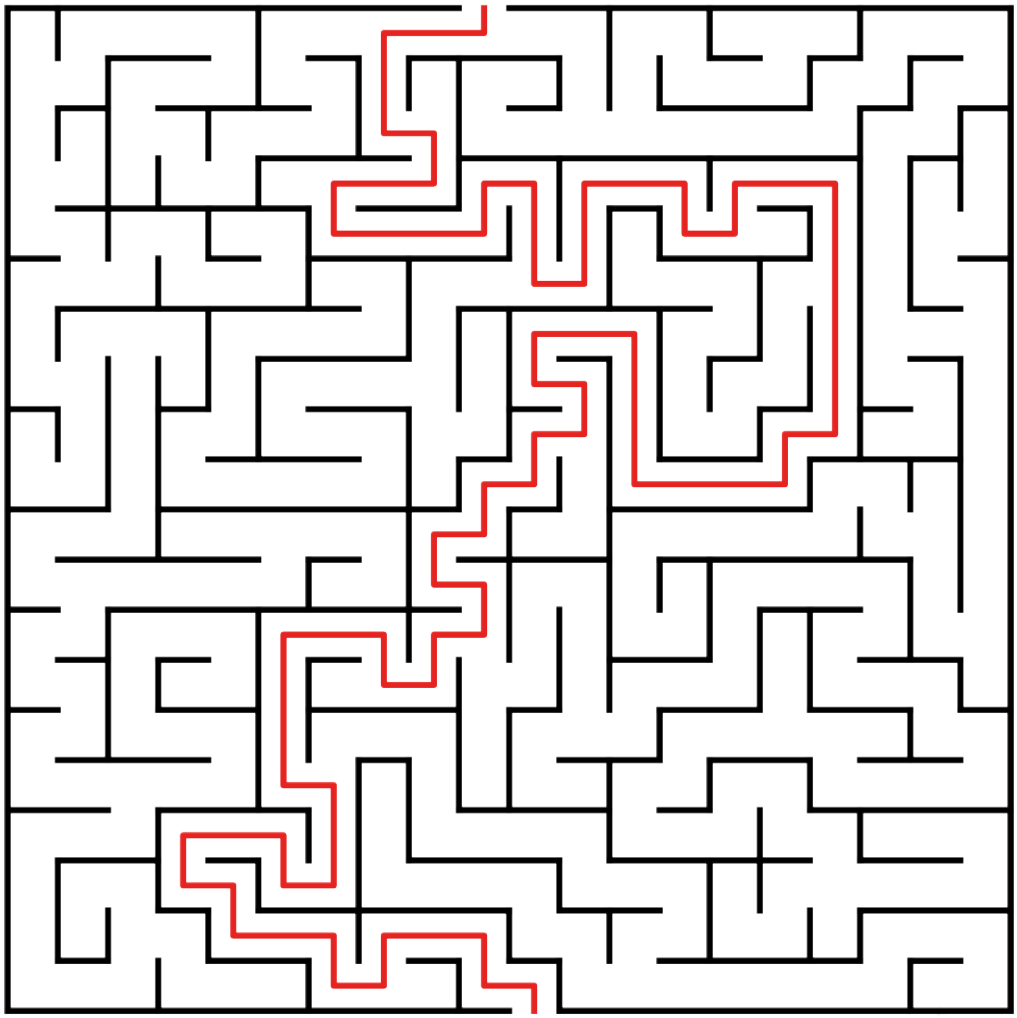
ACTIVITY
A-MAZE-ING JOURNEY

Help Salim, Mama and Donkey find their way to Zada.

Copyright © 2023 Alance AB, https://www.mazegenerator.net/

www.newfrontierpublishing.co.uk
www.newfrontier.com.au

SOLUTION TO THE MAZE



Copyright © 2023 Alance AB, https://www.mazegenerator.net/

NEW FRONTIER PUBLISHING

www.newfrontierpublishing.co.uk
www.newfrontier.com.au

ACTIVITY

WORDSEARCH

Find all the words in the *Under the Red Shawl* wordseach.

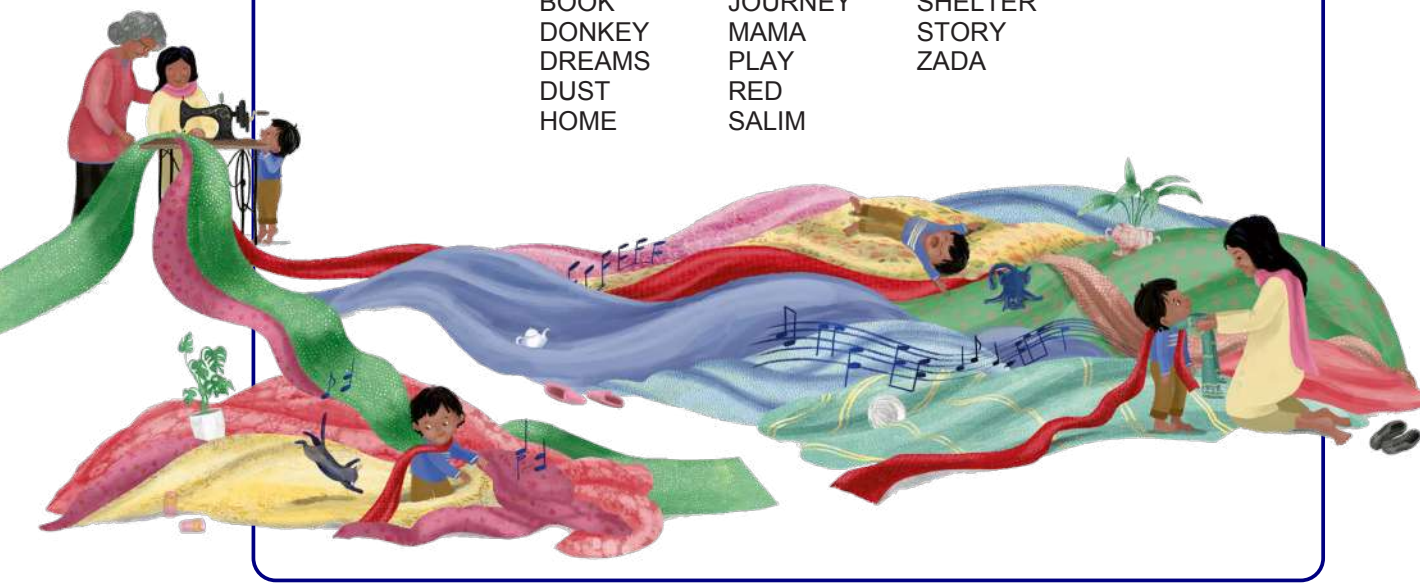
Name: Class: Date:

word search

UNDER THE RED SHAWL

H S P W U T D O I
B O H O P E S Y R
O A M A M C E E A
O Y L E W K T N D
K A R L N L R R A
E L E O E J E U Z
R P D H T A G O R
D U S T M S L J D
S I D S A L I M I

BALL
BOOK
DONKEY
DREAMS
DUST
HOME
HOPES
JOURNEY
MAMA
PLAY
RED
SALIM
SHAWL
SHELTER
STORY
ZADA



www.newfrontierpublishing.co.uk
www.newfrontier.com.au

SOLUTION TO THE WORDSEARCH

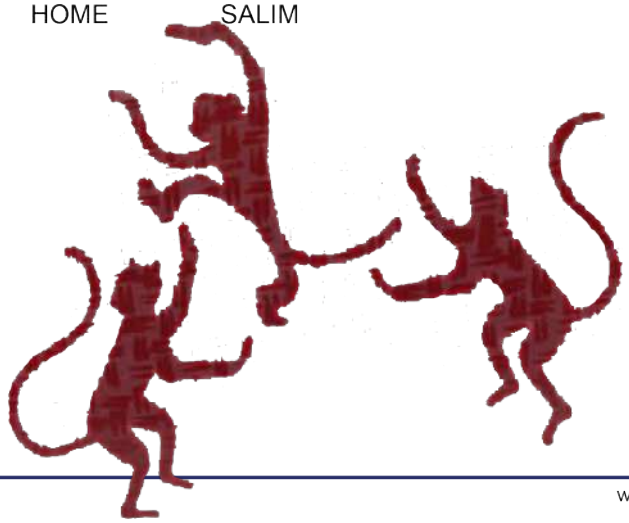
Answer Sheet

word search

UNDER THE RED SHAWL

H S P W U T D O I
B O H O P E S Y R
O A M A M C E E A
O Y L E W K T N D
K A R L N L R R A
E L E O E J E U Z
R P D H T A G O R
D U S T M S L J D
S I D S A L I M I

BALL
BOOK
DONKEY
DREAMS
DUST
HOME
HOPES
JOURNEY
MAMA
PLAY
RED
SALIM
SHAWL
SHELTER
STORY
ZADA



www.newfrontierpublishing.co.uk
www.newfrontier.com.au

ACTIVITY
IT MAKES SENSE

Think about the things you can SEE, SMELL, TASTE, HEAR and FEEL around your home.
Write them in the boxes below

SEE

FEEL

HEAR

SMELL

TASTE

www.newfrontierpublishing.co.uk
www.newfrontier.com.au

DRAWING ACTIVITY
MY HOME, MY PLACE

Draw a picture of your home or your special place. What do you love about it? Why is it so special to you?

Fun Fact!

Did you know that the author of the book has lived in eight different homes and travelled to over 20 countries in her lifetime?

www.newfrontierpublishing.co.uk
www.newfrontier.com.au