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You're out of LUCK Alina Butt

Teacher Guide

Meet Alina Butt, an endearingly awkward twelve-year-old who must navigate the challenges of friendship, family, fitting in and standing out after moving from Pakistan to England.



About the author

Ambreen Butt-Hussain is the author of the debut middle-grade novel *The Unlovable Alina Butt*. Ambreen was born in Pakistan but lived in England and Scotland before finally settling in Canada for many years. She has a bachelor of science from the University of Toronto and a master of education from Queen's University. She continues to move around and has recently made Princeton, New Jersey her new home, with her husband and two sons.

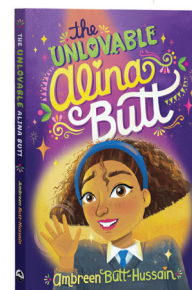
Pre-Reading Questions/Activities:

1. Observe the cover page. Write down or discuss your predictions about what will happen in the book. Use specific details from the cover page to support your answer.
2. A big theme in the book is gratitude. Why do you think it is important to be grateful in life? How does gratitude help a person get through difficult times?
3. The author, Ambreen Butt-Hussain, uses her own childhood experiences as well as what is currently happening in the world to influence her writing. What are some of your past experiences or current world events that you could use as inspiration for your writing? Use one of the examples to begin writing a short story, a poem, an article or another option of your choice.
4. Our homes play a major role in making us who we are. Alina has moved many times, so she is trying to figure out what "home" really means. What, or who, is home to you? Describe your definition of home either in words or using visuals, highlighting the aspects that feel most important.



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Discussion and Writing Questions:

1. Alina finally has friends at school. These friendships strengthen over the course of the book. Pick two characters and explain how they were good friends to each other. Find a quote in the book to support your reasoning.
2. Alina chooses not to use the money for herself that she and her friends have worked so hard to raise for their school trip to Paris. Instead, she wants it to be used by her classmates who need it more. Alina's dad proudly says, "Sacrificing what you really, really want to give someone else what they really need...that's a sign of responsibility. A true sign." (p. 49) What does this quote mean? Do you agree? Why or why not? Think of a time you have sacrificed something you really wanted for someone else. How did it make you feel?
3. Later, Alina reflects on her dad's advice and thinks, "I couldn't constantly give up everything I had. I would be left with absolutely nothing." (p. 61). Do you agree? Why or why not? How do you think someone can balance doing things for themselves with. doing things for others? How does this connect to Alina's mother?
4. Sophie is cheerful and eager to make friends with Alina. What causes Alina's initial hesitation? What events in the story lead to Alina and Sophie developing a friendship? What was your first impression of Sophie? How did it change as the book progressed?
5. Alina observes something about her sister, Nadia: "There was something special about her that pulled people in. That made people listen. It wasn't her clothes. It wasn't her jewelry. It was just...her." (p. 125). What do you think is "special" about Nadia which Alina is not able to explain?
6. Our five senses can make us feel certain emotions and remind us of specific memories. For example, Alina relives a memory with her dada jaan as she listens to a Pakistani band with Nadia. She says even her friends in England might like this music. "But that's the cool thing about music. You don't have to understand it to enjoy it. You just have to feel it." (p. 162). Pick a song that transports you back to a certain time and place. Explain how it makes you feel. Alina also notes that her dada jaan smells like "pages of an old book." Pick a scent and describe what it makes you think of or feel.
7. Discuss the theme of immigration in the book. How does Alina's experience of immigrating to a new country compare to her grandfather's experience? What are some pros and cons of leaving your home to move to another country? Make a list.
8. Various characters in the book display resilience. For example, Sophie handles the loss of her mother and her father's health issues with a lot of strength and positivity. Think of an obstacle you are facing in life or something that makes you feel upset. Now try to describe the situation in a positive way. (It's hard, but you can do it! Hint: Maybe it is teaching you something; maybe there is something else happening alongside it that you are missing.)
9. The sibling relationships in this book are beautiful. Describe some ways in which Alina and her siblings support each other.





10. Alina is nervous about performing a dance at her cousin's wedding until Daniyal gives her a helpful tip. "I'll tell you the secret to it though," he said, leaning in a little. 'Just smile the whole time. It makes everything look better.'" (p. 102). How does this strategy help in difficult situations? How does it connect to having a positive mindset?
11. Alina appreciates the choices and sacrifices her parents made, while at the same time resenting them. Why do you think that is?
12. How do you feel Nadia's character evolved through the book? What did she learn about herself?
13. When Alina meets Bushra, the "bubble" she is in finally "pops". What do you think that means? What does she learn from Bushra? How does that help her see things differently and change her perspective on life?
14. What do you think Alina's mom's new white cardigan represents? When she accepts the cardigan that Nadia buys for her, how does that connect to the balance between doing things for yourself vs. sacrificing for others (as mentioned in question 3)?
15. Alina sometimes finds it hard to be honest about her feelings. Why do you think it was so hard for her to admit, even to herself, how she felt about Adam?
16. As Alina is leaving Pakistan, she dreams of coming back one day with books and dolls to give to the children that are less fortunate. Write down what you want to do now or in the future to make the world a better place.

Post-Reading Questions/Activities:

1. Alina's grandfather gifts her a tasbeeh, a string of beads Muslims use to pray and to give thanks to God. Make an image of a tasbeeh with thirty-three circular beads. Inside each bead, write a word or draw a picture to represent something you are grateful for.
2. Alina and her friends raise money so that students who need financial assistance can also attend their class trip to France. Think of a good cause you would like to raise money for (you can research a charity working toward the cause you have chosen). In a small group, come up with a list of realistic fundraising ideas to raise money for a donation. If possible, bring one of your ideas to life!
3. Alina spends a lot of time with her grandfather, learning from his life experiences. People who have lived a full life have so much wisdom to offer. Create ten interesting questions to ask an elder in your life. Interview them and write a reflection about what you learned from their lived experiences and what advice you received.
4. Create a poster highlighting one of the themes in the book. Write a paragraph explaining the images and words you have used to reflect the theme.
5. Alina and her family take a tour of Lahore. Imagine you are working with a travel company. Create a travel brochure of the city of Lahore (or a city of your choice), highlighting the main attractions, special foods, fashion and any other interesting details about the place.
6. This book is part of the Alina Butt series. Make five predictions about what you think may happen next in Alina's life. Write a letter to the author. Letters can be mailed to Orca Book Publishers at 1016 Balmoral Rd, Victoria BC, V8T 1A8. Include your thoughts on the book as well as your predictions. What do you hope will happen with Alina and her friends and family in the next book?

