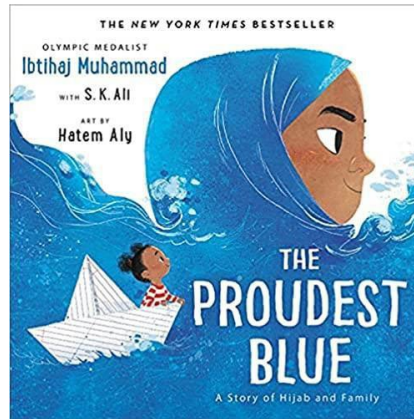


The Proudest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family



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Topics: Bullying, Compromise/conflict, Student voice, Building community, Who we are as citizens

Genres: Bully fiction, Picture books, School stories, Affirming personal identity stories

This story is one to which many young people can relate for several reasons. First, the characters excitedly anticipate the first day of school. Second, they are eager to share information about themselves as they meet new classmates. And finally, they come to understand that some of us experience bullying simply because of who we are.

In *The Proudest Blue*, Ibtihaj Muhammed – the 2016 Olympic gold medalist in fencing and social activist – relates a story of how she and her sisters learned to be strong and proud of who they are.

During the Read Aloud:

1. *Hijab* (حجاب) in Arabic means “to cover” and generally symbolizes one who is humble and modest. Muslim girls wear the *hijab*, or scarf, once they reach puberty (around sixth to eighth grade).

In this story, Asiya is excited to wear her “beautiful blue *hijab*” to school for the first time on the first day of sixth grade. But her delight is short-lived because

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some schoolmates laugh at her for wearing it.

Imagine you were walking with Asiya in the schoolyard on that first day of school. What would you say to the students who were making fun of her for wearing her *hijab*? How do you think her classmates could learn about the different cultural traditions and religions observed by the other students? Why do you think this would help? Be prepared to explain your answer, particularly how it helps to spread acceptance of the unique characteristics of each classmate.

2. Asiya's mom tells her that if you understand who you are, others will understand who you are too. What do you think she means by that? Now take some time to think about who you are. Then draw a self-portrait and label it with at least five adjectives that you believe best describe who you are.
3. If you could choose one thing to wear that would help your classmates to understand more about you, what would that be? Would it be an outfit, a hat, or maybe a necklace?
4. Ibtihaj Muhammad is not only an Olympic medal-winning fencer, but also the first athlete to wear a *hijab* while competing in the Olympics. Imagine that you were the first to do something special. What would you like to be the first to do and why?

