



# A Teacher's guide for Bilal Cooks Daal



## **Bilal Cooks Daal**

By Aisha Saeed

Illustrated by Anoosha Syed

HC: 9781534418103

EB: 9781534418110

Ages 4-8; Grades P-3

Salaam Reads / Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers

## ABOUT THE BOOK

Six-year-old Bilal is excited to help his dad make his favorite food of all-time: daal! The slow-cooked lentil dish from South Asia requires lots of ingredients and a whole lot of waiting. Bilal wants to introduce his friends to daal. They've never tried it! As the day goes on, the daal continues to simmer, and more kids join Bilal and his family, waiting to try the tasty dish. And as time passes, Bilal begins to wonder: Will his friends like it as much as he does?

This debut picture book by Aisha Saeed, with charming illustrations by Anoosha Syed, uses food as a means of bringing a community together to share in each other's family traditions.

"A quietly radical, eminently delightful book." —*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR

**Aisha Saeed** is a *New York Times* bestselling author. She wrote *Written in the Stars* (Penguin/Nancy Paulsen Books, 2015), winner of the 2019 California Medal for young readers. She is also the author of the middle grade novel, *Amal Unbound*, (Penguin/Nancy Paulsen Books, 2018) which received four starred reviews and was a 2018 Global Read Aloud selection, *Aladdin: Far from Agrabah* (Disney Publishing, 2019), and the forthcoming young adult novel co-authored with Becky Albertalli, *Yes No Maybe So* (HarperCollins, 2020). Aisha is also a founding member of the nonprofit We Need Diverse Books™. Aisha lives in Atlanta, Georgia with her husband and three sons. You can find her online at [aishasaeed.com](http://aishasaeed.com) or @aishacs on Twitter and Instagram.

**Anoosha Syed** is a Pakistani-Canadian illustrator based in Toronto, who has a passion for creating charming characters with an emphasis on diversity and inclusion. She is the illustrator of *The Daring Dreamers Club* (Disney Publishing, 2018), *Kid Scientists* (Quirk Books, 2018), *Look!: Babies Head to Toe* (Abrams Appleseed, 2019), *I Am Perfectly Designed* (Henry Holt BFYR, 2019) and more. Anoosha is also a freelance character designer and has worked with Disney Jr and Dreamworks TV. Find Anoosha online at [anooshasyed.com](http://anooshasyed.com) or @foxville art on Instagram and Twitter.

## THEMES IN BILAL COOKS DAAL

FAMILY, CULTURE, RELATIONSHIPS, FRIENDSHIP,  
COMMUNITY, FOOD, PATIENCE, EMPATHY



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS TO SHARE WITH YOUR STUDENTS



- Bilal loves to eat daal. What is your favorite meal to eat and why?



- Bilal gets worried his friends may not like his favorite meal of daal. Why do you think he feels this way?  
Do you ever worry your friends may not like something you do?  
How does that feel?



- Bilal and his friends go on many different adventures while they wait for their meal to be ready. What were some of the things they did while they waited?  
What are some things you like to do with your friends?



- Have you ever tried to eat something or do something for the very first time?  
Share what that was like.



- Bilal tells his friends that daal takes time, so they have to wait.  
Patience can be hard when you're excited to do something or try something.  
Can you share a time you had to be patient and what that was like?

## ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR CLASSROOM

- Using the recipe in the back of the book, bring the ingredients and a slow cooker to the classroom to make daal with your class.
- Lentils (daals) are available at all South Asian markets and at many regular grocery stores as well. Bring in a sampling of different daals for students to touch and sort through for a sensory experience. Students can share the similarities and differences between the different lentils.
- Let students share their favorite meals with a potluck luncheon; have each student explain why this particular meal is their favorite.
- Investigate different parts of the world and what sorts of foods are most common around the globe. Students can be assigned to work in teams and present their results to the class.
- Create a booklet with favorite foods labeled and illustrated by students alongside their favorite meals.

*This guide was created by the author of Bilal Cooks Daal, Aisha Saeed.*

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