

TEN PRINCIPLES ANALYSIS

Title: A Very Large Expanse of Sea

Author: Tahereh Mafi

Intended Audience: Young adults, grades 9 and up, ages 13+

ESL Audience: Intermediate to advanced

Audience

This novel is an authentic, own voices story from a hijabi author. Young adult students who enjoy reading about romance and school will connect immediately with this book. The characters are teenagers, but adult learners may still find this book enjoyable.

Although the story revolves around the experience of a Muslim girl, readers of any age and gender will be able to connect with this story. The story is not so focused on Muslim culture that students from other cultures won't be able to follow along.

Themes

While this book is written for teenage readers, I think there is something that most students, no matter their age, can connect with. The high school experience, starting over in a new place, family relationships, and first love. Racism and microaggressions are a major theme throughout this novel.

Scaffolding

There are a few ideas in this novel that will require some pre-teaching, especially depending on the population of students that you work with. The first idea is related to hijab. If you are working with non-Muslim students, they have likely seen a hijab, but don't know what it is or why it's worn. In addition, students (especially younger students) will not be familiar with the Muslim experience in America during and right after 9/11. Discussing both of these ideas will help set the stage for understanding the major themes of the novel.

Accessibility

Genre - This book is contemporary fiction, and there are no barriers to genre that will prevent students from understanding and enjoying the novel.

Culture - There are some references to Muslim life, and to break-dancing, but these are easily addressed in class.

Format - Right now this book is available hardcover, audiobook, and e-book. The paperback will be released on Oct. 8, 2019.

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Additional Notes and Resources

There is a teaching guide available for this novel, but is focused on discussing the book as a whole after reading, as opposed to weekly reading assignments. It also does not include vocabulary, but is a great place to start with if you're teaching this book.

The reading guide is attached to this blog post.

Some helpful book reviews and websites:

<https://www.npr.org/2018/10/20/658963583/prejudice-complicates-the-course-of-love-in-a-very-large-expanse-of-sea>

<https://www.epicreads.com/blog/read-very-large-expanse-of-sea/>

<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/tahereh-mafi/a-very-large-expanse-of-sea/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjyxTLNgJAc>