



Barrington Stoke

CLASSROOM RESOURCES



THE GREAT (FOOD) BANK HEIST

Onjali Q. Raúf

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PART 1 SYNOPSIS AND THEMES

This resource has been produced to provide ideas for guiding young readers through Onjali Q. Raúf's **The Great (Food) Bank Heist**, a brilliant short novel with powerful themes. The guide is written to be used after reading the full text in order to discuss the book and its overarching themes as a whole.

A synopsis is followed by quotes from the book with suggestions for discussion points designed to help young readers engage with the complex topics the book covers. The questions assigned to each quote are intended to further understanding of the text and provide opportunities for classroom discussion. There are also suggestions for creative exercises and a brief author biography.

We hope you enjoy using these resources with your class.



Onjali Q. Raúf's **The Great (Food) Bank Heist** is the story of Nelson. On Voucher Thursdays, he, Ashley and Mum head out to the bank. But it's not just any old bank – it's a food bank. With its shining tins and packets of food stacked from floor to ceiling, Nelson thinks it's the best kind of bank there is.

But the bank is under threat. There's a thief in town, and the shelves of the food bank are getting emptier by the day, leaving people hungrier than ever.

For the sake of his family and everyone else's, Nelson needs to make them stop. But can he and his friends really be the one to catch the bank robber?

The Great (Food) Bank Heist is written in a gentle, accessible style whilst sensitively addressing a complex and thought-provoking topic. This book is perfect for classroom discussions as it will help children to engage with and begin to understand the reality of food poverty, developing an awareness of the hardships that many families face in the UK and the crucial support that food banks provide for them.

PART 2

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS TO DEVELOP READING STRATEGIES

Krish and Harriet could see that I was feeling tired all the time, so they tried to give me food by pretending that they suddenly didn't like their favourite things any more or had eaten too much already. I knew they were lying, so one day I told them to just stop it and to leave me alone. [page 42]

Explore Nelson's relationship with his friends:

- Why do you think Nelson and the other children who attend Breakfast Club don't want their classmates to know about it?
- Why do you think Krish and Harriet lie to Nelson, instead of offering him food directly?
- Can you think of any other examples of when Krish and Harriet try to help Nelson's family out, even before they find out about the Bank?

I hated the months where we had to be little troopers. They were always hard because the games we played at home suddenly didn't feel like fun any more. Nothing was ever fun when you were so hungry you felt as if you were full of gaps and holes. [page 36]

Think about how Nelson and his family manage during a Little Troopers Month:

- Why are these worse than normal months for Nelson, Ashley and Mum?
- Why do you think Mum comes up with so many food-related games to play?
 - Do you think these games help Nelson and Ashley? Try and pick out a quote from the book that shows this.
- How do you think these months make Mum feel? Can you find any examples in the book of when she might be hiding this from Nelson and Ashley?



Mrs Bell saw that we weren't talking or playing as much as we normally did, so she began to give out extra portions of fruit and toast. But it still wasn't enough. Nothing was big enough to fill the giant black holes in our tummies. [page 42]

Examine how the food shortage impacts Nelson's school life:

- Think about how you feel when you're really hungry. What sort of things become more difficult? Discuss with your class.
 - How do you think feeling like this might affect your school work or your ability to take part in sports and games?
 - Can you find any other quotes from the book that show how hunger is making school difficult for Nelson and the other children at Breakfast Club?
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My Bank Withdrooling List was a list of every single thing I had ever wanted to withdraw from the Bank and bring home for us to eat. You know, things that make your mouth go all watery and your tummy start to lick its lips and drool too! [page 13]

Discuss Nelson's "Bank Withdrooling List":

- What sort of foods does Nelson dream of? Are you surprised by any of the things that he mentions?
 - Do you think Nelson's friends have a wishlist? What sort of things do you think they would put on it? Why might this be different to Nelson's?
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I watched and watched and watched the trolleys as lots of people dropped things into them on their way out. Most put in all the normal things, like boxes of cereals and tins of tomatoes and packets of pasta. But some people put strange things in too: like an old man who put in five packets of chewing gum and a bunch of flowers. And a woman who put in seven packets of red chillies and a basil plant. [page 66–67]

Think about the different items that Nelson sees being placed in the supermarket trolleys:

- What do you think is the purpose of products like cereals and pasta, compared to a bunch of flowers?
- Do you think they offer different things for families like Nelson's? Discuss with your class.

PART 3 THE TRUSSELL TRUST

The Trussell Trust is charity that works to end the need for food banks in the UK. A portion of royalties from **The Great (Food) Bank Heist** will be donated to the Trussell Trust. Emma Revie, CEO, says:

“We are so grateful to Onjali for writing this powerful book which will help raise vital funds and awareness to support our work.

As we continue to face the economic fall-out of the Covid-19 pandemic, we’re seeing more families than ever unable to afford the basics, forced to turn to charity to put food on the table for their children. Every day, food banks across the UK are meeting this unprecedented challenge with compassion and care, but it’s not right that any child is facing hunger in 2021.

We will continue to support food banks to provide emergency food for as long as it’s needed. But we know that with the support of people like Onjali, we can build a better future together – a stronger, more just society, where no one needs to turn to charity to get by.”

Who are the Trussell Trust?

We are a charity that supports food banks across the UK to:

1. provide emergency support to people who can’t afford to eat or stay warm and dry, and
2. to talk about the changes that would mean all of us have enough money in the future.

What do we do?

We want everyone to have enough money to live on.

But right now, some of us don’t have enough money for the basic things we all need, like food, heating, somewhere to live, toiletries, essential clothing like school uniform, coats and shoes. Food banks are places where people can get support if they don’t have enough money to live on.

We work with food bank centres across the UK to provide emergency food to people who don’t have enough money for the basic things we all need. Food banks are all run and supported by local communities – your school may have collected donations for your local food bank. That donated food will then be given by the food bank to local people in your area who don’t have enough money to buy food in the supermarket.

Food banks give the best possible help to people. But we think everyone should have enough money to choose their own food in the supermarket. That's why food banks also gather information about why people don't have enough money and talk about what kind of support would mean everyone has enough money in the future.

Why are we needed?

We're needed because in the UK right now, more people than ever don't have enough money for the basic things we all need, like food and heating, somewhere to live, toiletries, essential clothing like school uniform, coats and shoes. We help food banks give people support to people right now, but we're also looking ahead to the future. Because we want to be a country where everyone has enough money to choose their own food. That's why we also work with food banks to gather information about why people don't have enough money and talk about what changes would mean we all have enough money to live on in the future.

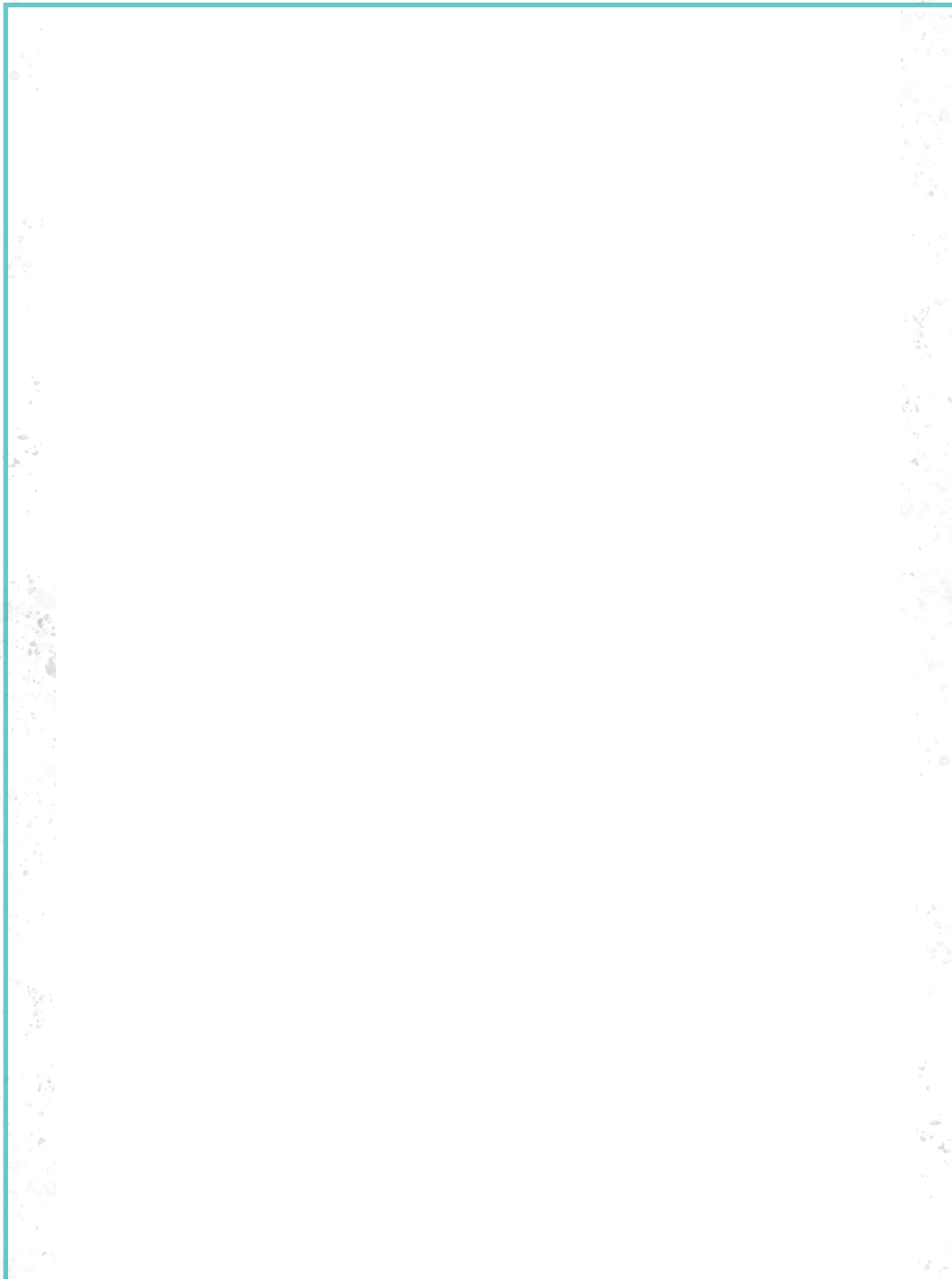


www.trusselltrust.org



PART 3 CREATIVE EXERCISES

Task 1: Design a poster to support your local food bank or organise your own food collection - maybe you are raising money or sourcing specific food donations. Adapt to fit your own community's needs!



PART 3

CREATIVE EXERCISES CONTINUED

Task 2: As a group or as individuals, imagine that you are in charge of the world! Create a list of ten things that you would change or rules that you would make that you think would make life better for yourself, your community, or the world as a whole. Think widely – this doesn't have to be all about food banks, it could be anything that the group or individual thinks would make a difference.

Task 3: Choose one of the items from the list you made in the previous task. Who could help make this change in real life? Compose a letter to a person in a position of authority to make them aware of the issue and what you would like to change. This might be your teacher, your headteacher, your local councillor or MP, maybe even the Prime Minister!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR



ONJALI Q. RAÚF is the bestselling and multi-award-winning children's author of titles including *The Star Outside My Window*, *The Night Bus Hero*, and the Blue Peter Book Award and Waterstones Children's Book Prize-winner *The Boy at the Back of the Class*. As well as writing children's books, Onjali is the founder of *Making Herstory*, an organisation helping to tackle the abuse and trafficking of women and girls in the UK and beyond. She is also the founder of *O's Refugee Aid Team*, which works to aid frontline refugee response teams in France, Greece and beyond.



ELISA PAGANELLI is an Italian award winning illustrator now living and working in UK. She was born in Modena (Italy) in 1985, and since childhood has considered books to be her best friends. After a career in advertising and as an entrepreneur, she now works as an illustrator and author in UK accompanied by her beloved pets.

Elisa's award-winning books include *The Highland Falcon Thief* (winner of British Book Award 2021 - Children's Fiction), *The House with Chicken Legs*, and *Moon's First Friends*. Her aim is to work more on sustainable projects about human and animal rights, environment and mental health. Elisa is a kind of a modern-day hermit and she feels most at home when she's out in the natural world.

