

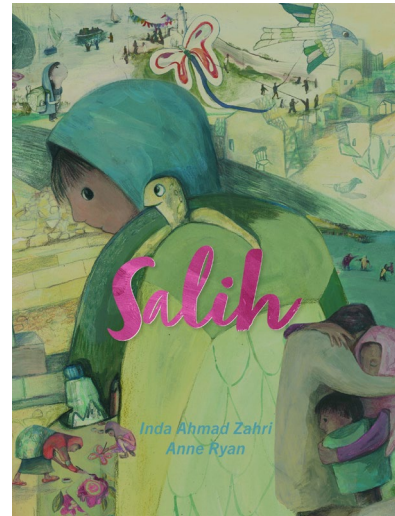
Teacher's Notes

Salih

Author: Inda Ahmad Zahri

Illustrator: Anne Ryan

Publisher: Ford Street Publishing in
2021



Like a turtle, Salih carries his home on his back. He must cross a raging sea in search of a safe home.

Salih paints his happiest memories and sends them as messages in bottles.

Will someone find them and understand? Will Salih find a new home?

About the Author

Inda Ahmad Zahri writes and illustrates for children and adults. Her stories are inspired by natural and cultural gems curated from her travels and lovingly added to her Malaysian heritage. She is also a surgical doctor, swapping her writer's hat and paintbrush for scrubs and scalpel when duty calls.

For more information about Inda's work, visit www.indabinda.com

About the Illustrator

Anne Ryan an author, illustrator, artist, and art educator who lives and works in Melbourne. She is passionate about sharing storytelling, visual literacy and creativity with young children through art making and children's picture books.

Anne wrote and published her first picture book, *Unforeseen Circumstances*, in 2005. For more information about Anne's work, visit www.anneryan.com.au

Themes

Empathy

Art

Kindness

Hope

Refugee

Humanity

Migration

Author's Inspiration for the Story

This story was written in early 2018, during a period where many thousands of people were making their way across the Mediterranean, fleeing war, persecution, and poverty in their home countries.

These journeys were incredibly dangerous and involved crossing both land and sea with little shelter and food. Almost half were children. Many led perfectly ordinary lives until they were forced to become refugees. Unfortunately, many did not survive.

According to a UNHCR report, in 2018 alone, there were 139,300 new arrivals into Europe by both land and sea (across the Mediterranean) from strife-stricken countries in Africa and the Middle East. Shockingly, this number was a decrease from the staggering number of humans seeking refuge in previous years.

The stories that were coming out of the news were heartbreaking, and I found it disturbing that the nightmare often continued at the end of their journey. Instead of finding safety and the chance to rebuild their lost lives, many refugees faced indefinite detainment, abuse, indignity and prejudice in new lands.

At the time of writing, I was a new mother. So, not only did I wonder what it would be like to make that journey myself, I wondered what it would be like to make it with a child. It led me to imagine the entire ordeal from a child's point of view – how would they feel, and what would they do to handle those emotions and difficulties?

After writing about the journey, I wanted very much to showcase a best-case-scenario ending, where the refugees' hopes and dreams could come true, simply because people chose to be kind and generous in accepting them.

I included art as a form of expression and therapy. The paintings that the refugees made were rolled up into bottles, as I liked the idea of messages in bottles arriving in a new place.

Suggestions for Discussion

- Who is a refugee or asylum seeker?
- Are there refugees or asylum seekers here in Australia? Where have they come from?
- What are the ideas or presumptions that come with the word 'refugees'? Are these correct or fair?
- Are refugee families different or similar from our own? What makes this so?
- What are some of the reasons that someone like Salih might have to leave their home country?
- What are the emotions that Salih and his fellow travellers experience throughout the story? (Young children may want to mime emotions like happy, sad, angry, scared, hope, safe.)
- What emotions do you feel when reading the story?
- Why does Salih identify with a turtle in the story?
- What is the role of art in their journey?
- Which double page spread do you like the best? How do you interpret the artwork in those pages, with or without the words?
- The word 'Salih' means 'goodness' in Arabic. What is the word for 'good' in other languages that you know?
- What are the problems or difficulties faced by someone who has had to relocate to another country?
- Do you believe that we each have a role to play in this dilemma? What steps would you like to take to help Salih and his fellow travellers?

Activities

- Draw a child with a turtle shell (can be a self-portrait).
- Pretend that the turtle shell is your backpack. You need to leave home, but you can only carry what you can fit inside it. What would you bring?
- Place an item in each of the shell compartments. Think about why you've chosen each item. Are your chosen items:
 - Essential?
 - Precious?
 - Useful?
 - Full of memories?

- Draw a picture of something that makes you happy. Now swap it with a classmate. Write down what acts of kindness you would perform based on the wishes or drawings of others.

Online Resources

In the past year, Inda compiled a short series of videos where she chatted with friends about their experiences with refugee aid and awareness, and shared information regarding the plight of refugees and ways to help.

In each episode, she shares a picture book that deals with the topic of refugees with the hopes of starting conversations, shedding light on issues and inviting ripples of change. These can be found on her website: <https://indabinda.com/refugee-week-video-project/>

Anne has written a blog post about her reflections on refugees and displaced people, including some earlier artwork inspired by refugees travelling in harsh conditions. Her thoughts and experiences helped her to bring Salih's story to life in her illustrations. These can be found on her website: <https://anneryan.com.au/below-zero/>

Refugee Council Australia

- <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/quick-guide/>
- Plenty of up-to-date information
- Recommend starting with a quick guide and delving further from there.

Multicultural Australia

- <https://www.multiculturalaustralia.org.au>
- A non-profit organisation in Brisbane, QLD, working with refugees in the community.

You Belong Australia

- www.youbelong.org.au
- A charity organisation empowering newly-arrived refugees to thrive in Australia.

Australia for UNHCR

- www.unrefugees.org.au

Asylum Seeker Resource Centre

- www.asrc.org.au
- A Melbourne-based (VIC) organisation providing frontline services, advocacy and empowerment for refugees.

Other Picture Books with a Refugee Theme

‘I’m Australian, Too’ by Mem Fox & Ronojoy Ghosh

‘Waves’ by Donna Rawlins, Mark Jackson & Heather Jackson

‘My Two Blankets’ by Irena Kobald & Freya Blackwood

‘Grain of Hope’ by Nicola Philp & Aldy Aguirre

‘Kind’ by Alison Green and various illustrators including Axel Scheffler

‘Room on Our Rock’ by Kate & Jol Temple & Terri Rose Baynton

‘A Home For Luna’ by Stef Gemmill & Mel Armstrong

Junior Fiction/YA with a Refugee Theme

‘Boy Overboard’ by Morris Gleitzman

‘Girl Underground’ by Morris Gleitzman

‘Detention’ by Tristan Bancks

‘The Bone Sparrow’ by Zane Fraillon

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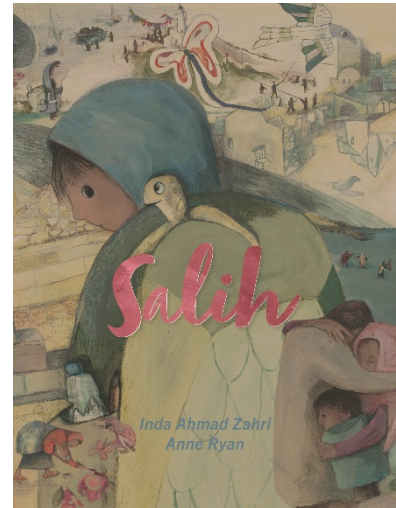
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Publisher: Ford Street Publishing in 2021

ISBN: 9781925804638 (hardcover)

ISBN: 9781925804645 (paperback)

Recommended for 6+



Contents

About *Salih*

Themes

About the author Inda Ahmad Zahri

About the illustrator Anne Ryan

Introducing *Salih*

Before reading

Reading the story

Links to the Australian Curriculum

Key Curriculum Areas

Learning Areas

General Capabilities

Extension

Discussion

Art

Personal and Social Capability/Music

About *Salih*

Like a turtle, Salih carries his home on his back. He must cross a raging sea in search of a safe home. Salih paints his happiest memories and sends them as messages in bottles. Will someone find them and understand? Will Salih find a new home?

It is sometimes too easy to view refugees as ‘other’. *Salih* ensures we identify what connects us when he shares his memories, so similar to ours, and wishes he could forget the bad times. He shows us the importance of the simple things that bring us all joy. This picture book empowers readers of all ages to understand life from another’s point of view.

Themes

Refugees, cultural identity, diversity, emotions

About the author

Inda Ahmad Zahri writes and illustrates for children and adults. Her stories are inspired by natural and cultural gems curated from her travels and lovingly added to her Malaysian heritage.

She is also a surgical doctor, swapping her writer’s hat and paintbrush for scrubs and scalpel when duty calls.

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Introducing *Salih*

Please adjust the following discussion and activity suggestions to the ages and needs of the children with whom you are sharing the story. It is not necessary to engage children in all the discussions suggested or to complete them all in one session. The richness of the text and the depth of meaning in the story invites multiple readings.

Before reading

The front cover

Show children the front cover on which there is a lot depicted.

Ask children to tell what they observe: What can they see happening? How does Salih feel? Why might he feel this way?

Invite the children to ask any questions the cover may have raised for them. It is not necessary to answer their questions at this stage, but it is good to get them thinking. Some of their questions may be answered in the book.

The back cover

Show children the back cover. Read the blurb.

Invite the children to ask any additional questions that may have arisen, and to make any observations about the illustration or the information in the blurb.

Some questions you may ask if the children haven't:

- What does it mean that Salih carries his home on his back like a turtle? (You may refer to the front cover again which shows Salih and his turtle backpack.)
- What are raging seas? What does the word tell you about Salih's journey?
- It says that Salih is looking for a safe home. What does that tell you about the home he is leaving?
- Do you think Salih will find a new home? Do you think his new home will be safe? Will Salih be happy in his new home?

Once again, at this stage, the questions are more important than the answers.

The end pages

Show the children the end pages as you prepare to read the book. They may like to point out things they see in the illustrations; for example, the turtle constellation, the heart-shape in the bird formation, the tiny boat on the huge expanse of water.

Reading the story

As you read the story, invite children to point out things they observe in the illustrations and to ask questions about the visual or written text. Point out anything you feel is important to improve children's understanding of Salih's situation.

However, on the first reading, you may wish to read without discussing all aspects. More in-depth discussion can occur with subsequent readings.

First spread — *My name is Salih. I carry my home on my back.*

Notice Salih's backpack. The turtle has a similar expression to Salih's.

The clouds are sad.

What might be in Salih's back pack? What would be the most important things to take?

Second spread — *on long roads ... across fields and arid land. We are heading to the sea.*

Explain the meaning of *arid*.

What are the people carrying? Where are they going?

Third spread — *Many others carry what remains of their homes. We have left entire worlds behind, fleeing with our memories.*

There is a lot of meaning in these few lines. Discuss the meaning behind each of the phrases: *what remains of their homes* — What has happened to their homes? What does the word *remains* tell you?

left entire worlds behind — What does that mean? How could they leave *entire worlds* behind?
fleeing — What does it mean?

Fleeing with our memories. — Why is it important to tell us they are taking memories? What memories are illustrated?

Fourth spread — *I remember ... ice-creams at the park, my favourite teacher, warm milk at bedtime.*

Ask children if these things that Salih remembers are similar to things they do. What are some of their favourite things to do or their favourite memories? (Make the connection so that children can see Salih is not so different from themselves.)

Fifth spread — *I wish I could forget ... deafening blasts, white dust shrouding the sun, the sound of crying in the darkness.*

Observe Salih and the turtle and how they are feeling.

Discuss the things that Salih wishes he could forget and what they signify.

Would it be easy to forget? Do they have any memories they wish they could forget? (No need to discuss what they might be.)

Sixth spread — *I try to remember the happy times. But the bad times force their way in.*

How is Salih feeling?

Compare the colours on both sides of the spread. How do they show Salih's feelings and memories?

Seventh spread — *One day, an old man sits beside me. He's holding a paint brush. He shows me how to make pictures on the papers that fly past our tents.*

Where is Salih now? (Children may notice the letters on the tents. HCR – UNHCR, a United Nations Refugee Organisation)

Why would he need to paint on papers that 'fly past our tents'?

Why are they living in tents? Are they on a camping holiday? Who has ever been camping?

Would you like to live in a tent for a long time?

Eighth spread — Discuss each page separately.

I sit with my friend Ayshe who sings when she is sad. She smiles as we paint a rainbow from her favourite song.

What do you do when you are sad?

Do you know any songs about rainbows? What do you think Ashe's favourite song might be?

How does Ashe feel when she paints the rainbow?

A little boy shows me what's left of his toy. When we paint the rest of it, he dances for joy.

How was the little boy feeling when he showed Salih his toy?

How does he feel after Salih paints the toy?

What is happening to the children's feelings when Salih is painting pictures for and with them?

How do you think Salih is feeling?

Ninth spread — *Our mothers find us and hug us close. ... butterflies on a field.*

How do the people feel when they are painting? What are they painting pictures of? (their lives before they had to flee/happy memories/things that make them happy) What would you paint to make you feel happy?

Tenth spread — Discuss each page separately.

I roll up the paintings and slip them into empty bottles. By the time we reach the sea, I am jangling like a potioneer.

Explain (or ask the children to explain) what it means to be *jangling like a potioneer*.

If Salih has a lot of bottles that jangle and a lot of paintings in those bottles, how long do you think he and his family might have been living in the tents?

Why would Salih put the paintings into empty bottles?

The sea is wild, the waves whipped by a rattling wind. Spray hits us in the face. On the slippery boat, we hold each other's hands.

How are the people on the boat feeling? Why do they hold each other's hands?

Is it a big boat for crossing the ocean?

Eleventh spread — *The sea is angry for the homes we've lost. It rages about our shattered lives. Our empty stomachs lurch and the blistered soles of our feet thrum.*

Why does Salih say the sea is angry? Is the sea really angry?

Why would their stomach be empty? What does it mean that their empty stomachs *lurch*?

What are their *soles*? Why are they blistered? Why would they *thrum*? What does *thrum* mean?

What does the illustration tell you about the way that Salih is feeling?

Twelfth spread — *The furious waves snatch at my bottles. They float away, until they are out of sight.*

Why do the waves seem furious? Are they really furious? Do waves have feelings?

What does the word *snatch* tell you? What does it mean?

How would you feel to be in a little boat like that on an ocean like that? How do you think Salih feels?

How would Salih feel about the waves taking the bottles with his paintings?

Thirteenth spread — *We hold each other's hearts. Squinting against the salt water, we cry out with broken voices.*

'Please, sea, calm your rage. We have been angry, too. But now we need a home.'

Before reading the text, ask the children to describe what they notice in the illustration. They may notice; for example, the bottles floating in the water, the hands forming hearts, the sea less angry.

How can they *hold each other's hearts*?

What does *squinting* mean? Why would they be *squinting against the salt water*?

Why are their voices broken?

Salih tells the ocean to calm, that they *have been* angry too. Now they need a home. How do you think they are feeling now? Are they still feeling angry?

Fourteenth spread — *The wind quietens, and the sea calms. Land appears on the horizon.*

Before reading the text, invite children to describe what they see in the illustration, comparing it with the previous illustrations. Especially note the change in colours used and how the colours portray the emotions.

What is the sea like now?

How do you think Salih and the turtle are feeling?

Why is seeing land important to them?

Fifteenth Spread — *We painted pictures of all we loved, daring to hope that, on this new shore,*

Before reading the text, invite children to describe what they see in the illustration; what they notice about the colours used, the activities of the people and how they might be feeling.

What does *shore* mean?

Why is it a *new shore*?

Last page — *love will come to greet us.*

Before reading the text, invite children to describe what they see in the illustration.

How is Salih feeling?

How are his parents feeling? How are the other people in the illustration feeling?

Do you think Salih and his family will find love in this new land?

What symbols of hope can you see in the illustration?

Links to the Australian Curriculum

Key Curriculum Areas

Learning Areas: English, HASS (families)

English

Language

Language for interaction

(ACELA 1429) Understand that language can be used to explore ways of expressing needs, likes and dislikes

Text structure

(ACELA 1430) Understand that stories and informative texts have different purposes

Expressing and developing ideas

(ACELA 1786) Explore the different contribution of words and images to meaning in stories

(ACELA 1453) Compare different kinds of images in narrative and informative texts and discuss how they contribute to meaning

(ACELA 1437) Understand the use of vocabulary in familiar contexts related to everyday experiences, personal interests and topics taught at school

Literature

Literature and Context

(ACELT 1575) Recognise that texts are created by authors who tell stories and share experiences that may be similar or different to students' own experiences

Responding to literature

(ACELT 1783) Share feelings and thoughts about the events and characters in texts

(ACELT 1582) Discuss characters and events in a range of literary texts and share personal responses to these texts, making connections with students' own experiences

Literacy

Interacting with others

(ACELY 1646) Listen to and respond orally to texts and to the communication of others in informal and structured classroom situations

(ACELY 1650) Use comprehension strategies to understand and discuss texts listened to, viewed or read independently

HASS

Discussion of this book fits perfectly into the lower primary HASS curriculum that focuses on children's own personal and family histories, their homes, their heritage and places and artefacts that are important to them.

After they have made those investigations and had those discussions, they may be better able to empathise with Salih and all that he has lost. This will help ensure that their new understanding forms a bridge to the hopefulness which permeates the story.

(ACHASSI001) (ACHASSI018) (ACHASSI034) Pose questions about past and present objects, people, places and events

(ACHASSI005) (ACHASSI022) (ACHASSI038) Explore a point of view

(ACHASSK015) The places people live in and belong to, their familiar features and why they are important to people

(ACHASSI019) Collect data and information from observations and identify information and data from sources provided

(ACHASSI023) Compare objects from the past with those from the present and consider how places have changed over time

(ACHASSK047) The way the world is represented in geographic divisions and the location of Australia in relation to these divisions

(ACHASSK050) The connections of people in Australia to people in other places in Australia and across the world

General Capabilities

Literacy

- Comprehending texts through listening, reading and viewing

Personal and Social Capability

- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Social awareness
- Social management

Ethical Understanding

- Understanding ethical concepts and issues
- Reasoning in decision-making and actions
- Exploring values, rights and responsibilities

Intercultural Understanding

- Recognising culture and developing respect
- Interacting and empathising with others
- Reflecting on intercultural experiences and taking responsibility

Extension

Discussion

- If you had to leave your home and take only what you could carry in a backpack, what would you take? List them. Explain why each item is important to you.

- In what way is Salih like a turtle?

Art

- Provide children with paper and paints and invite them to paint pictures of happy memories or things that make them happy.
- Provide children with paper and paints and have them explore the way colour can be used to convey meaning. Refer to illustrations in the book to support understandings.

HASS

- Investigate the origins of the children in your class (if possible, include parents and grandparents in the discussion):
 - Where were they born?
 - Where were their parents born?
 - Where were their grandparents born?
 - How many children were born overseas? How many parents? How many grandparents?
 - What were some of the reasons for them coming to a new country?
 - What are some of the differences between their country of origin and their new country? Did they have to leave anything behind that they miss?
- If desired, display a world map showing the countries from which children's families have come.

Personal and Social Capability/Music

Ayshe sang a song about rainbows when she was feeling sad. Discuss strategies children use (or could use) to cheer themselves up when they are feeling sad.

On an outline of a turtle have children write a personal positive attribute on each scute.

Teach children to sing a rainbow song; for example, *'I Can Sing a Rainbow'*.

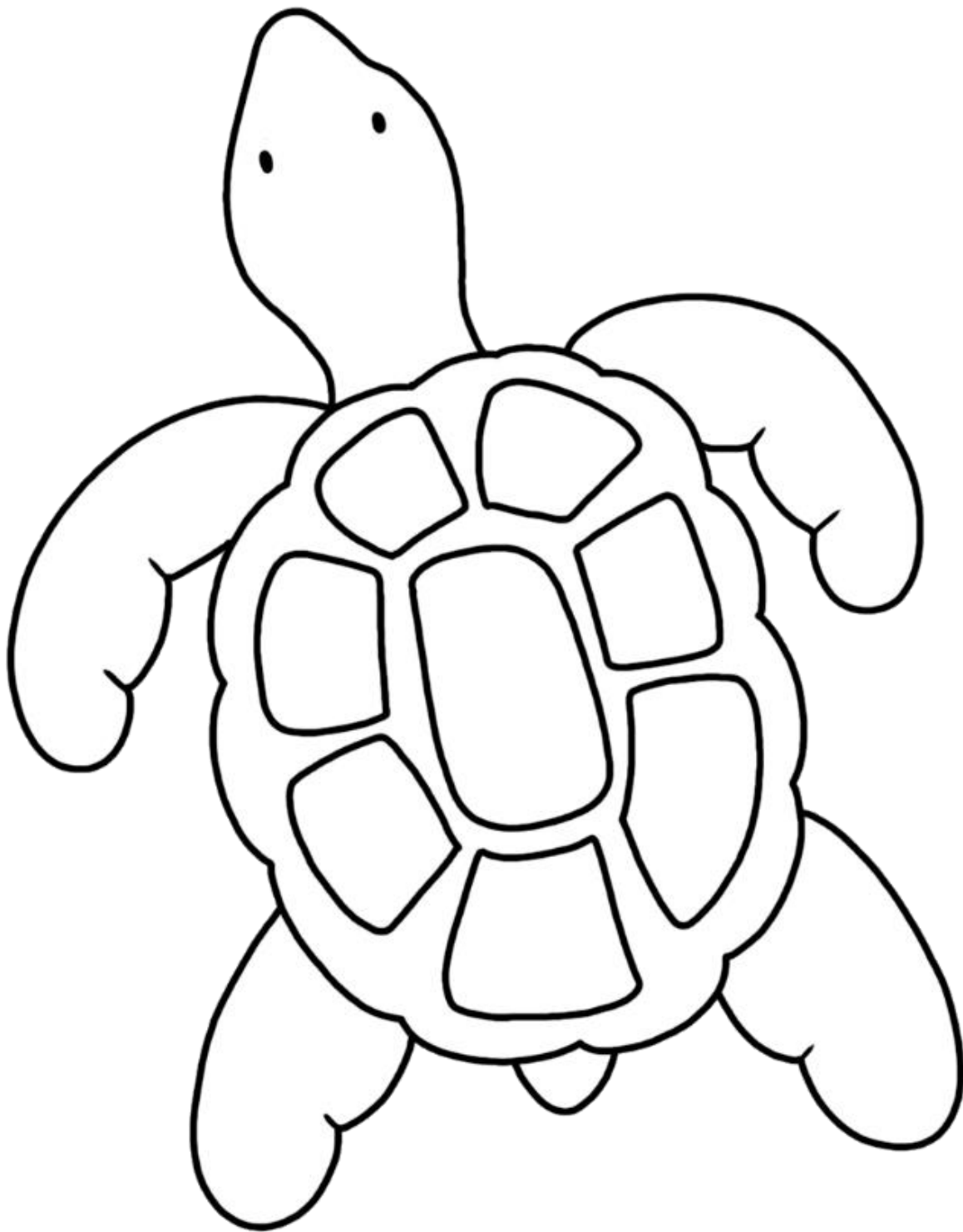
These teaching notes have been kindly produced by Norah Colvin

www.readilearn.com.au

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Date: _____

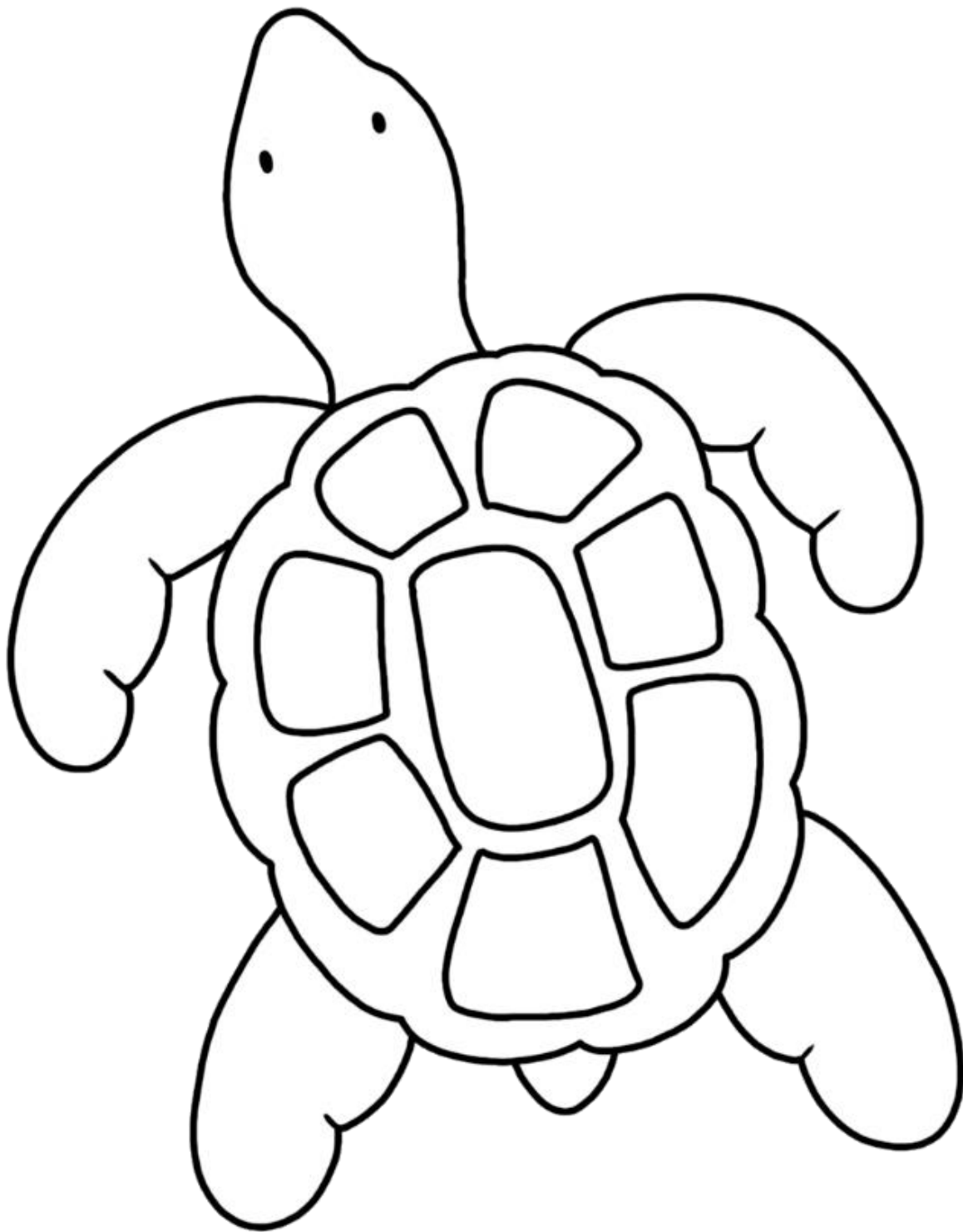
Salih had many personal positive qualities that enabled him to survive the journey from his home to a new shore. Write one quality in each of the turtle's scutes.



Name: _____

Date: _____

In each of the turtle's scutes, write one of your own personal positive qualities.



Dear Parents,



To help us get to know each other and appreciate the diversity in our classroom, please help your child complete the "My Family" sheet.

Your child could draw pictures of the family members, or you could add photos if you wish.

Using coloured dots, as shown in the **Map legend**, please mark on the map and write the name of the country to indicate where each person was born.

I would appreciate it if you could return the sheet by

Thank you for your support,

Class teacher

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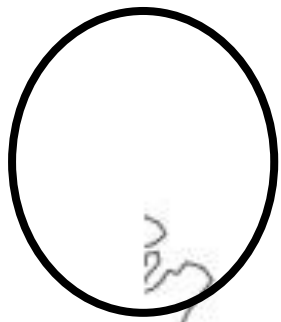
Class teacher

My Family

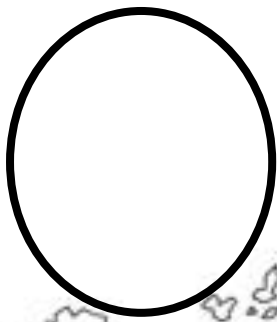
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Date: _____

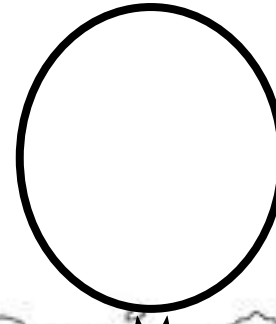
and where we were born



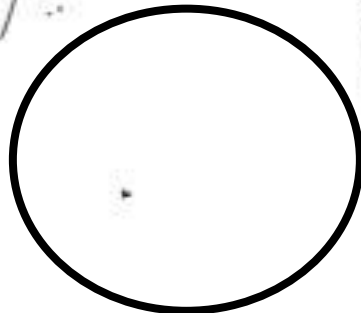
Mum



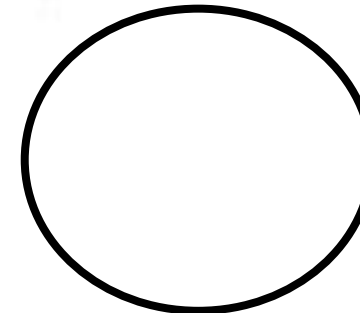
Dad



Me



Grandparents



Grandparents

Map legend

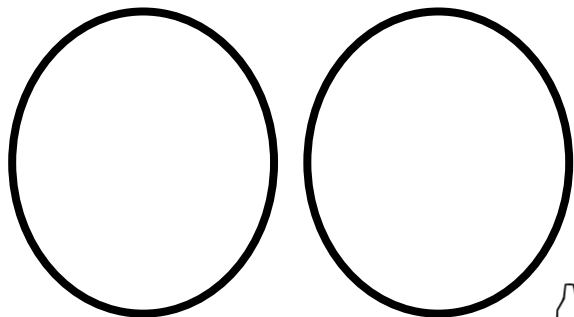
- where I was born
- where Dad was born
- where Mum was born
- where my grandparents were born

My Family

Name: _____

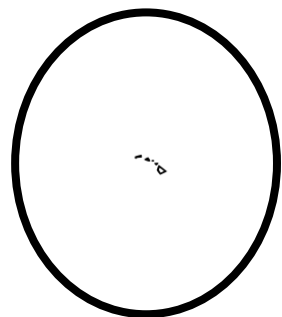
Date: _____

and where we were born

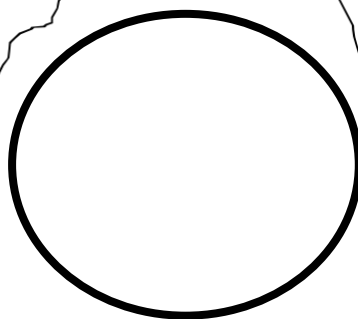


Mum

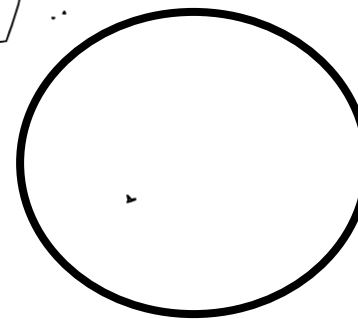
Dad



Me



Grandparents



Grandparents

Map legend

- where I was born
- where Dad was born
- where Mum was born
- where my grandparents were born

