

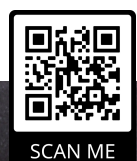


# Teaching Notes & Resources

Key Stage 2-3

Themes: Identity | Heritage  
Memory | Family | Stories

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SCAN ME



# Introduction

## About the Book

"Grandma Farida is losing her memory – but I'm going to help her remember a huge secret."

Twelve-year-old Nyla's dad died when she was four, or that's what she's been told. So when Grandma Farida insists she saw him in the supermarket, Nyla wonders if she is 'time-travelling' again - the phrase she uses when Grandma forgets.

But when Grandma asks Nyla to find her dad and bring him home, Nyla promises that she will.

As Nyla sets out on her journey, she hopes that uncovering the past will help her to understand the mystery at the heart of her family ... and to work out who she is.

**A page-turning verse novel about memory and identity, and the unbreakable bond between grandmother and granddaughter.**



# Contents

## Theme 1 – "I am"

Objectives: Discover Nyla's identity; consider the questions we ask when we want to find out about someone's identity; write an 'I am' identity poem like the one in the story.

## Theme 2 – Grandma's Memory-Magic Brain

Objectives: Understand and define Alzheimer's; describe how Alzheimer's impacts Grandma, Nyla, and other characters in the story; create memory bracelets.

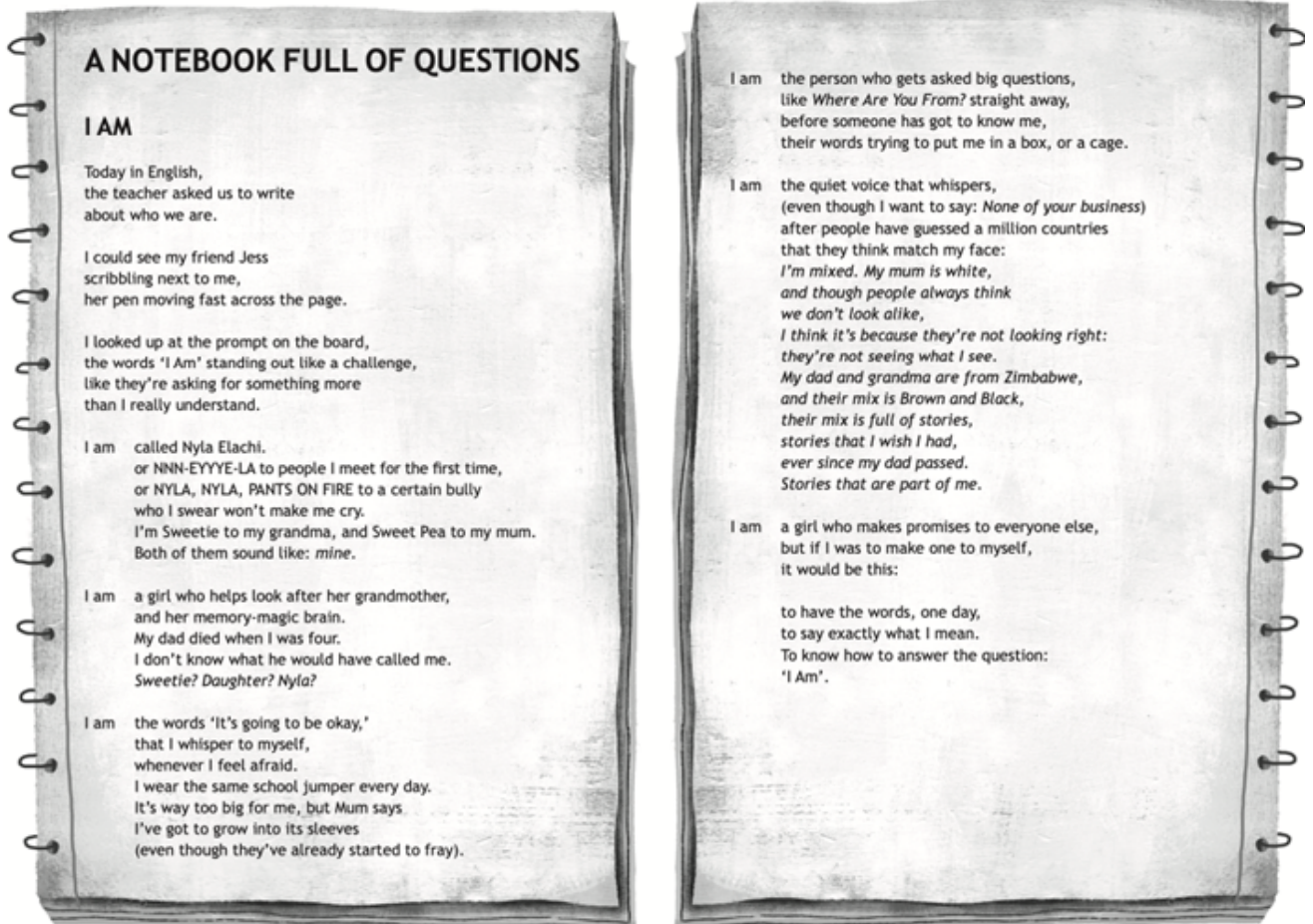
## Theme 3 – Family

Objectives: Discuss the importance of family; understand Nyla's Zimbabwean heritage; create a family tree and list of personal VIPs.





# Theme 1 – "I am"



## Discussion Questions

- What does Nyla see as a 'challenge'? Why do you think she sees it this way?
- What are Nyla's different names? Make a list of them. How does she feel about her different names?
- What do you think Nyla means when she says that her Grandma has a 'memory-magic brain'?
- What else do you learn about Nyla's family?
- Nyla describes being put 'in a box, or a cage'. What or who has this effect on Nyla?
- How does Nyla feel when she is asked: 'Where Are You From?'
- How do you think Nyla feels about her own identity? What does she hope for?





# Theme 1 – "I am"

## Activity 1: Who are you?

Using the same extract, pull out the first line of each stanza and list Nyla's answers to the question "Who am I?", then list your own answers to the same question using inspiration from Nyla. You might like to start by thinking about where you were born, your name and your favourite hobbies.

Who is Nyla?	Who are you?



# Theme 1 – "I am"

## Activity 2: "I am" Poems

Using your answers from Activity 1, write your own version of the 'I am' poem. You don't have to share your 'I am' poems with anyone – these can just be for you to read.

Today,  
the teacher asked us to write  
about who we are.

I am...





# Theme 2 - Grandma's Memory-Magic Brain

## THE THINGS GRANDMA FORGOT (AND HOW I FOUND THEM)

It started small at first:  
hanging up the telephone,  
but forgetting who she'd spoken to  
(so, I called them back on redial,  
and figured it all out).

Then making cups of tea,  
and leaving them  
all over the house  
(so, I collected each one,  
and made her something fresh).

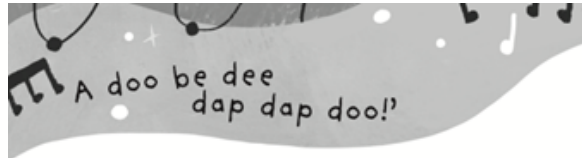
Then sometimes  
she'd put things together  
like she'd forgotten what was what:  
sandwiches filled with washing-up liquid,  
or a summer dress with winter socks.

But through it all she was still Grandma,  
still telling me stories about Zimbabwe,  
and always knowing who I was.  
Always knowing the story of us.

But now when I ask:

'Grandma, what was it like  
when you first moved to the UK?'

Her answers become vaguer and vaguer:



'Grandma, what was Dad like  
when he was my age?'

'Age is just a number, Sweetie,  
it's what's in the heart that counts!'

I know there's a story in there,  
in all of Grandma's sayings and songs,  
but I'm not sure how to find it,  
in between the mix of what she has  
and hasn't forgotten.

I think she knows it too,  
the way sometimes she goes quiet,  
and says to me:  
'Sweetie — there's something,  
there's someone ...'  
and I wish I had a time-travel-translator,  
to help her get her words,  
so she can tell me what I need to find for her.

I need Grandma's stories,  
to help understand who I am —  
to help understand my dad.  
But how can I do that  
when they're fading away  
with every washing-up liquid sandwich,  
and question mark at the end of my name:  
'Sweetie?'

'I'm here, Grandma,'  
I always say.  
And that will never change.

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## Discussion Questions

- Grandma is gradually forgetting more and more. List some of the ways that Grandma is presenting as forgetful.
- Grandma's answers become 'vaguer and vaguer'. What does this mean? How does Nyla feel about this?
- Why are Grandma's stories so important to Nyla? What is Nyla afraid of?
- How would you describe Nyla's relationship with her Grandma?
- When Nyla asks 'Grandma, what was it like when you first moved to the UK?', Grandma responds in song. Why do you think this is? Can you think of a song that reminds you of a particular time or event?



# Theme 2 - Grandma's Memory- Magic Brain

## What is Dementia and Alzheimer's?

Teachers may choose to share the below definition with your class if helpful. Further resources and support are available at <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/>

Dementia is a group of symptoms, which can include: memory loss, confusion, needing help with daily tasks, and difficulty understanding. There are many types of dementia, however Alzheimer's disease is the most common.

If you know someone who has dementia or Alzheimer's, you can speak to your parent, carer or guardian for support.

**Source: Alzheimer's Society**





# Theme 2 - Grandma's Memory-Magic Brain

## Activity 1: Memory Bracelets

*The Stories Grandma Forgot (And How I Found Them)* is a book which explores memory loss and the stories that make up our identities.

Using the strip outlines below or a separate piece of paper, create a memory bracelet for Nyla's Grandma. This could include things you know about Grandma from Nyla's descriptions, or your own ideas. Consider what Grandma likes, for example her favourite colour, as well as any key life events, for example having children.



Create another bracelet, this time for yourself. This can include anything you like - your favourite things, memories or stories about your life. You can create as many bracelets for as many people as you like!



Ask an adult for help if you would like to cut your memory bracelet out to wear.



# Theme 3 - Family

## 'WELCOME, CLASS. SETTLE DOWN,'

says Mr Harkin.  
I like the way he says 'down',  
his accent from a place called Belfast.  
I asked Mum to show me it on a map,  
and she did.

It's like he drops his 'O',  
the letter moving down the line  
like the word it is trying to show:  
*welcome class,*  
*settle d wn.*  
oooooo  
And we do.

'When we look at the past,' Mr Harkin says,  
'it helps us understand where we are now,  
and where we're going next.'

He draws a line on the board,  
and I picture it expanding into years.

'The history of a place can help us understand its today,  
because everything adds up –  
all history is a series of yesterdays.  
All of them leading us here to today.'

Mr Harkin's classes always start like this:  
with a speech to help us see  
how important history is.

Last week, he did a lesson on apartheid  
in South Africa, and Jess whispered:  
'Wait, isn't that near where your family are from?'

I whispered back: 'Zimbabwe.'

Mr Harkin put pictures from South Africa up on the board,  
talking about how the white government  
oppressed people who were Black and Brown.

Jess nudged my arm:  
'Did that happen to your family, too?'

I didn't know what to say.  
Grandma used to talk about it –  
'Those were hard, hard times,'  
she'd said, talking about how the authorities  
separated people into categories,  
sometimes splitting up whole families,  
saying where you could go,  
who you could love.

I looked down at my hands,  
half Mum, half Dad,  
wondering which one of them  
the government would have put me with  
or if they would have split  
me in two.

That was when I remembered  
something else Grandma used to say,  
about being mixed:  
'Our family –  
we're Southern African and Indian and Arab and Malay.  
We're from everywhere,' she'd say.  
And then she'd hug me close.  
'And that is just one of the many ways  
to be from Zimbabwe.'

I wrapped her words around me,  
warm as a hug.  
But after the lesson,  
Jess's questions went on and on:  
*Was it like that too in Zimbabwe?*

*What happened to your family?  
Were they put in categories? Which one?  
Until I felt like I was the one  
on the history board,  
someone else trying to determine  
who I am in their eyes,  
not mine.*

I wanted to explain that Grandma  
isn't a statistic on a form,  
but the person who gives the best cuddles.  
That her stories aren't for other people  
but for me – to know where I'm from  
by knowing my family.  
That when she tells me about Zimbabwe  
she tells me about trees with purple blossoms,  
and night skies so dark you can see every star –  
and it feels like it's not the Zimbabwe of a map or a book  
but the Zimbabwe of Grandma's heart.

As I settle into class today,  
I think about how if I was gonna do a speech  
like Mr Harkin, then maybe I'd try to say  
what it's like having this whole history a part of you,  
but no one to explain it.  
Having others make assumptions about you,  
and not knowing how to correct them.  
Others asking you questions,  
seeing history as something that is yours,  
but not knowing how to talk about it,  
not knowing how to claim it.

## Discussion Questions

- What does Mr Harkin mean when he says: 'all history is a series of yesterdays'? Do you agree?
- How does Grandma describe the way people were treated? How does she go on to describe Zimbabwe?
- What does Nyla consider when she looks down at her hands?
- How does Grandma describe 'being mixed'? How do you think Nyla feels about her mixed heritage?
- What sort of 'assumptions' does Nyla feel that others make about her?
- What pressure does Nyla feel when she's asked about her family and their history?
- Nyla says 'the Zimbabwe of a map or a book' is different to 'the Zimbabwe of Grandma's heart'. What things about where you live do you hold in your heart?





# Theme 3 - Family

## Activity 1: My VIPs

Read the below extract. Mr Harkin sets his class a Term History Project.

‘I want you to focus on your VIPs,’ Mr Harkin says.  
‘Your main players, top dogs, the number-one person  
that you want to tell a story about in your family.  
Take your presentation from there:  
tell us about them,  
and how they help make you,  
you.’

Think about the VIPs in your life. Like Mr Harkin says, family is not just about blood relatives, it is also about the people around you who you love, and who inspire and shape you.

Draw and/or describe your very own VIPs in the space below. You may want to share your VIPs with your class or a class mate.

VIP

VIP

VIP

