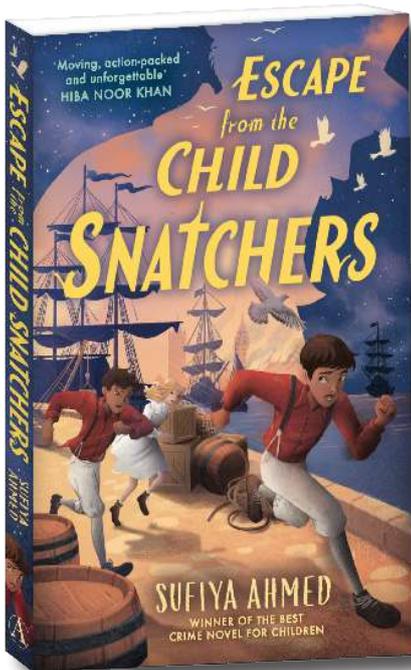


ESCAPE from the CHILD SNATCHERS

By **Sufiya Ahmed**

Scheme of Work and Discussion Guide

ABOUT THE BOOK



From award-winning Sufiya Ahmed comes a fast-paced historical fiction adventure following two Indian boys on a rescue mission in Victorian London.

1865, India. Humza and his friend Ranj set off on a daring quest to find Humza's missing brother, Dani, in London.

After a terrifying journey, they are welcomed by a seemingly kind Englishman who leads them to an inn. There, Daisy, the innkeeper's daughter, warns them – they've been captured by the notorious child snatcher!

Can Humza and Ranj escape his clutches and find Dani?

PRAISE FOR ESCAPE FROM THE CHILD SNATCHERS:

'Moving, action-packed and unforgettable'
Hiba Noor Khan

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sufiya Ahmed was born in India and arrived in the UK as a baby. She lived in Bolton, Lancashire, before moving to London where she still lives. Sufiya has worked in advertising and in the House of Commons, but is now a full-time author. In 2010 Sufiya set up the BIBI Foundation, a non-profit organisation, to arrange visits to the Houses of Parliament for diverse and underprivileged children.



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CHAPTERS 1-3

Developing background knowledge

In small groups, it may be beneficial to conduct historical research into what India was like during the 1860s. Points of consideration could include:

- The Indian Rebellion of 1857
- The British Raj
- The British East India Company
- How Britain imposed its own values and beliefs on India
- Christianity and Hinduism
- The exploitation of India's natural resources and how this affected everyday people and their jobs
- The expansion of the railway networks
- The shift from subsistence to commercial farming
- The Upper Doab famine of 1860–1861 and the Odisha famine of 1866–1867

Vocabulary and phrases to discuss

cocooned (page 1)	intruders (page 2)	submerged (page 5)
incredulously (page 7)	humility (page 9)	obedient (page 12)

Tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is true or false

	True	False
Dani is Humza's older brother.		
There are twenty children in Humza's class.		
Humza's mother is called Fatima.		

Tick one box in each row to show whether you agree or disagree with the statements. Can you include evidence to support your opinions?

	AGREE	DISAGREE	NOT SURE
Humza and his family live in poverty.			
Sister Joan is a cruel and mean person.			
Ma is scared of Maureen Memsahab.			
Humza is reckless and irresponsible.			

DISCUSSION POINTS

What does the verb 'cocooned' suggest about Ma and Usman? (page 1)

What impression do you get of the hut and what condition it is in? (page 2)

What does the phrase 'rulers' language' suggest about the relationship between the British Raj and 'the locals'? (page 3)

Why do you think Ma's eyes are 'red-rimmed'? What might she be thinking and feeling? (page 6)

What do you think Dani did to his hair? (page 7)

Use the descriptions on page 11 to draw and label a picture of the 'main residence'. How is it different to Humza's home?

Humza believes that Maureen Memsahab has 'no tact'. What does this mean? Do you agree? What impressions do you get of her? (page 13)

Do you agree that Humza is irresponsible and useless? Is there any evidence to support this? (page 15)

Read to the end of page 19. What do you think Ranj is going to do?

What might Humza mean when he says he is placing a stone on his heart to stop him from weakening? What might he be thinking and feeling? (page 21)

Can you summarise Ranj's reasons for going to England in three sentences? How are his reasons different to Humza? (page 22)

Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast Humza and Ranj. How are they similar and different?

What impression do you get of Humza? Does he remind you of any other characters from other books? Do you think readers will like him and warm to him? Why? Why not?

CROSS-CURRICULAR LINKS

POETRY: Ranj discusses his dreams for the future with Humza on page 4. Spend some time exploring the poem 'Just One' by Laura Mucha which can be found here: <https://childrens.poetryarchive.org/poem/just-one/>

Can you use a similar template and structure and write a poem from the perspective of either Humza or Ranj. What might they say about their hopes and dreams?

DRAMA: Complete a Role on the Wall activity. Draw an outline of Humza. On the inside of your drawing write down everything you learn about him during the story. On the outside, record any questions you might like to ask him. In a different colour, you could imagine you are Humza and write his answers.

GEOGRAPHY: Can you locate India on a map? What can you find out about India's climate, culture, famous landmarks and food? You could create a colourful poster!

CHAPTERS 4-6

Vocabulary and phrases to discuss

ship's bowels (page 27)	sapped it out of him (page 29)	eccentricity (page 35)
eradicated (page 37)	quashing the hope (page 39)	pandemonium (page 49)
hospitable (page 51)	gushing tone (page 59)	gratitude (page 75)

Tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is true or false

	True	False
At the beginning of Chapter 4, Humza and Ranj have been on the boat for three days.		
It takes Humza and Ranj four and a half months to sail to England.		
Humza is excited and happy to go with Basil Brookes.		
Basil Brooke only takes children with white skin.		
Daisy allows the boys to hide in the attic.		

Tick one box in each row to show whether you agree or disagree with the statements. Can you include evidence to support your opinions?

	AGREE	DISAGREE	NOT SURE
The journey is negatively affecting Ranj more than Humza.			
Karan and Arif are kind and helpful.			
Ranj is more easy-going and trusting than Humza.			
Daisy is humble, brave and kind.			

DISCUSSION POINTS

This is the second time that rats are mentioned. Why might this be? What might the rats symbolise and signify? (page 26)

Why does Humza describe the ship as a 'self-imposed prison'? What might this mean? (page 30)

Imagine you are Humza in Chapter 4. Make a list of everything you can see, hear, taste, touch and smell.

The author compares the sea to a monster. What literary device is this? Is it successful? How does it make you feel? (page 32)

What does the verb 'shuffle' suggest about Humza and Ranj? How are they feeling? (page 34)

Is there a difference between a 'quest' and a 'journey'? How are these words similar and different? (page 35)

What are your impressions of Saheb on page 35? Can you describe him in three words and explain your word choices?

Do you trust Karan and Arif? Why? Why not? (page 40)

What do you think the Strangers' Home is? What might Humza and Ranj find there? (page 46)

Do you trust Basil Brookes? What are your first impressions of him? What should the boys do? (page 52)

The answer is 'DAISY'. What could the question be? (page 58)

Why do you think the child snatcher kidnaps children? What happens to them once they've been snatched? (page 58)

How does Ranj feel about Daisy? How do you know? (page 59)

What kind of children does Basil Brooke snatch and why? (page 62)

How do you think the author feels about 'rich men'? Why? How do you think they wish us to feel? (page 65)

CROSS-CURRICULAR LINKS

DRAMA: Create a 'Conscience Alley' to explore Humza's decision on page 31. Should they venture out at night or stay where they are? Take it in turns to walk down the alley of voices, arguing for and against the decision, and then write a paragraph about your decision.

WRITING IN ROLE: Can you retell the events in these chapters from Ranj's perspective. What might he say about the journey? Who might he be missing? Consider how writing from someone else's point of view develops your understanding of the character and story.

ART: Spend some time exploring a range of famous pieces of Indian artwork. You could look at:

- Bharat Mata by Abanindranath Tagore
- Three Pujarins by Jamini Roy
- Krishna (Spring in Kullu) by Nicholas Roerich
- Five Horses by MF Husain
- Saurashtra by SH Raza

Use these paintings and the descriptions in the story to create your own Indian-themed pieces of artwork.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: We learn that Ranj is a Sikh. What can you find out about Sikhism? You may wish to find out about Guru Nanak, the Five Ks, Guru Granth Sahib and the Sikh place of worship which is called a Gurdwara.

CHAPTERS 7-9

Vocabulary and phrases to discuss

distrustful (page 78)	last-minute jitters (page 79)	engrossed (page 82)
accommodates (page 84)	curb his panic (page 93)	ambushed (page 93)

Tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is true or false

	True	False
Around four hundred lascars live in the Stranger's Home.		
Dani and the captain of his ship fell out due to a dispute over money.		
Dani has been arrested and sent to prison.		
Humza and Ranj are kidnapped but manage to escape.		

Tick one box in each row to show whether you agree or disagree with the statements. Can you include evidence to support your opinions?

	AGREE	DISAGREE	NOT SURE
Fred is different to all the other adults the boys meet.			
Humza and Ranj are having an exciting, enjoyable adventure.			
Humza and Ranj don't realise how dangerous London is.			
Humza is quick-witted and wily.			
Fred and Daisy should have gone with the boys to the Stranger's Home.			
Ranj has a habit of panicking and over-reacting.			

DISCUSSION POINTS

Can you find out what a roti is? (page 70)

How has the character of Ranj provided moments of comic relief throughout the story so far? Why might the author make some parts of this story funny? (page 75)

Ranj is greedy and only thinks about money. Do you agree with this statement? Why? Why not?

Were you surprised by Fred's reaction on page 75? Why? Why not?

Imagine you are Dani and try and answer Humza's questions on page 82. Can you make a prediction about what has happened to him?

What does the verb 'saunters' suggest about Ranj? How is he moving? What might he be thinking and feeling? (page 82)

On page 86 we discover that Dani has attacked an Englishman. Ranj says that Dani must have had a good reason. Can there ever be a good reason for attacking someone else? What does Ravi mean when he says that 'Indian men cannot attack Englishmen'?

Why do you think Dani has received such a long sentence? Do you think racism may have played a part in his sentencing? (page 87)

Why do you think Ranj has said no to staying with Umar? (page 89)

Read to the end of page 91. What do you think has happened?

How do Humza and Ranj manage to escape? Do you think they will face any more problems or dangers?

How would the events in the story so far have been different if Fred and Daisy accompanied the boys to the Stranger's Home? Why do you think the author has the boys go alone?

CROSS-CURRICULAR LINKS

FOOD TECHNOLOGY: How do you make rotis? Perhaps with the help of an adult you can make your own rotis! There may even be some other traditional Indian food you might like to try and taste!

WRITING: How does the author create a sense of fear and excitement on page 77? Is it successful? Can you write your own paragraph about Humza and Ranj's experiences of London, making it as tense and as terrifying as possible?

HISTORY: Humza and Ranj visit a place called The Strangers' Home which was a real place called The Strangers' Home for Asiatics, Africans and South Sea Islanders. What can you find out about this place, when it opened, and its purpose?

CHAPTERS 10-12

Vocabulary and phrases to discuss

unleash rain (page 100)	cooped up (page 100)	cramped-looking houses (page 112)
regain consciousness (page 115)	accomplice (page 120)	stifle a cry (page 126)
all skin and bones (page 128)	Anglo-Indian (page 130)	perk up (page 135)

Tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is true or false

	True	False
Humza is kidnapped by someone called Bill.		
Humza escapes from Bill by hitting him around the head with a plank of wood.		
A middle-aged woman spooning out soup helps Humza.		
Humza and Ranj meet Daisy's friend Amina, who has also been kidnapped.		

Tick one box in each row to show whether you agree or disagree with the statements. Can you include evidence to support your opinions?

	AGREE	DISAGREE	NOT SURE
Ranj is a true friend to Humza.			
Daisy does not fully understand the impact of the British Empire.			
Humza should have waited for Ranj before going to find Dani.			
Humza is too preoccupied with finding Dani to think sensibly.			
Humza is to blame for the boys being kidnapped.			
Suzie is a liar and is part of Basil Brookes' gang.			
Ranj is mean and rude to Amina.			
Basil Brookes is funny and kind.			
Basil Brookes treats the children like animals.			

DISCUSSION POINTS

What can you find out about monsoons and the 'rainy season'? (page 100)
Why might the English people in London be nicer to the boys than the English people in India are? (page 102)

Why are the convicts being shipped to Australia? (page 105)
What does the verb 'orders' suggest about Daisy? What might she be thinking and feeling? (page 105)

Sister Joan believes it is a good thing that the tribespeople in Australia have 'given up their ways'. Do you agree? (page 108)

Read to the end of page 109. Do you think the letter really is from Dani? Who else might it be from?

Do you trust Bill? Why? Why not? (page 113)

What might the Basil Brookes' Children's Circus be? (page 117)

On page 123, Humza 'marvels' at Daisy's intelligence. What does this mean? How might the story have changed if the boys had listened to Daisy instead of Suzie?

Bill says on page 127 that the boys need to be 'paraded'. What do you think this might mean?

Ranj speaks in a 'strained voice'. What might he really be thinking and feeling? Do you think he is being rude on purpose? (page 129)

The answer is 'AMINA'. What could the question be? Is there more than one possibility? (page 128)

Amina says, "That boys like you are not really human." What does she mean? How does this make you feel? (page 133)

Humza says that the city has 'hidden monsters'. Who are they? What might he mean? Could they be the 'sick and strange rich people'? (page 137)

CROSS-CURRICULAR LINKS

DRAMA: What does the verb 'snarls' suggest about Bill? Perhaps you could try saying some of his words out loud? You may wish to act out this scene in pairs, one of you playing Bill and another playing Humza, thinking carefully about your body language and facial expressions. (page 116)

WRITING: We discover in Chapter 12 that Ranj has also been kidnapped. Can you write an exciting paragraph to describe what has happened to Ranj? Alternatively, you may wish to tell Amina's story from her perspective, thinking carefully about her relationship with her Pa and mum.

CHAPTERS 13-15

Vocabulary and phrases to discuss

retort (page 139)	immaculate (page 142)	lavishly decorated (page 143)
wince (page 145)	brows cocked (page 146)	concedes defeat (page 147)
intervene quickly (page 153)	despicable (page 154)	diverted (page 155)
fate is sealed (page 160)	hunger pangs (page 162)	babbled everything (page 176)

Tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is true or false

	True	False
Bill paints Humza's face white, his eyes black and his lips red.		
A stray dog walks around Humza's cage, eyeing him up.		
Humza initially believes that the crowd are cannibals and are going to eat them.		
Daisy saves the boys by unlocking their cages.		

Tick one box in each row to show whether you agree or disagree with the statements. Can you include evidence to support your opinions?

	AGREE	DISAGREE	NOT SURE
It is better to feel angry than afraid.			
Ranj is foolish to argue with the thugs.			
Basil Brookes is a charming and captivating person.			
Daisy has dressed as a maid so she can infiltrate the crowd.			
Humza should not try and save Amina on page 158.			
I understand why Amina wants to give up on page 163.			
Dani is patient and kind.			

DISCUSSION POINTS

What do the verbs 'flinging' and 'scrubbed' tell us about how Bill is treating the boys? (page 139)

What do you think the white paint-like substance is? What is Bill doing? (page 140)

Humza believes it is better to feel angry than afraid. What might this mean? Do you agree with him? (page 144)

Ranj's face is 'contorted in pain'. Can you show a partner what this might look like? (page 146)

Why do the men laugh at Ranj on page 147? How might their response make Ranj feel?

Humza likens the man on page 150 to a hungry, stray dog. Why? What might the man be thinking and feeling? Where else in the story have animals been used to describe someone or something?

How and why has Basil Brookes been 'plaguing' the boys since they arrived? What might this mean? (page 151)

Basil Brookes compares the boys to 'specimens'. How does he feel about the boys and how do you know? (page 152)

Why does the thug move 'carefully' through the crowd of posh ladies and gentleman? Do you think he is scared of them? (page 156)

Do you believe Amina when she tells Humza she's just tired? What else might she be thinking and feeling? Why might she lie? (page 162)

Amina describes herself as a 'real-life doll'. What does she mean? (page 163)

What does the verb 'gaze' suggest about Humza and how he is feeling? How did you feel when he is reunited with Dani? (page 167)

CROSS-CURRICULAR LINKS

POETRY: Spend some time exploring the poem 'The Lonely Child' by Sarojini Naidu, who was famously known as 'the Nightingale of India'. The poem can be found here: <https://poetryarchive.org/poem/the-lonely-child/>. In small groups discuss what you like and dislike about the poem. Is there anything strange or puzzling about the poem? How might the poem link to this story and the experiences of the kidnapped children? Afterwards, read the poem 'My Mother Saw A Dancing Bear' by Charles Causley. How might this poem also link to the story?

CHAPTERS 16-18

Vocabulary and phrases to discuss

injustice (page 181)	sinister (page 182)	vulnerable (page 184)
ambush (page 185)	admiration (page 188)	riling up the men (page 192)
smears of a disgruntled captain (page 195)	impoverished (page 197)	stomach had been in knots (page 200)

Tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is true or false

	True	False
Humza, Ranj, Amina and Daisy stay at the inn while the men go to sort out Basil.		
Fred knows the prison guards on the ship.		
The four remaining boys are also rescued and are invited to live at the inn.		
Amina decides to stay in London.		

Tick one box in each row to show whether you agree or disagree with the statements. Can you include evidence to support your opinions?

	AGREE	DISAGREE	NOT SURE
Daisy is the real hero in this story.			
Basil Brookes gets what he deserves.			
Family means more than who you are related to.			
Family means more than who you are related to.			
Dani has a strong sense of what is right and what is wrong.			
Dani is a troublemaker.			
The main theme in this story is STANDING UP TO BULLIES.			
Humza has learned the true meaning of family.			
I found this story engaging, exciting and informative.			

DISCUSSION POINTS

Can you summarise the events in Chapter 16 in six sentences? What about three sentences?

What does the verb 'stroll' tell us about Basil? What might he be thinking and feeling? (page 185)

Why had Dani been blacklisted? (page 193)

What do you think Dani means when he says, "A man must live with dignity or he has nothing." Do you agree with him? (page 194)

Do you think Ma will be proud of Dani and how he has behaved? Why does he feel ashamed? (page 198)

Do you think readers should read the 'Author's Note' before starting the story or after they have read it?

How has Humza changed and developed throughout the story? What do you think he has learned about himself, his friends and his family?

Which character do you think has changed the most during this story?

The main theme in this story is 'BRAVERY'. Do you agree? Why? Why not?

Do you think this story has a message? If so, what might it be?

What was your favourite part of the story? Why?

Who do you think the main character(s) in the story is? Why?

Do you know anyone like the characters in real life?

How important are the following themes in the story? Can you order them from least to most important? FAMILY, FRIENDSHIP, ADVENTURE, COLONIALISM, RACISM, EXPLOITATION, FREEDOM.

What do you think might happen next?

CROSS-CURRICULAR LINKS

DRAMA: Have a go at performing Dani's moving and rousing speech on page 183, thinking carefully about your body language and facial expressions. Perhaps you might like to write your own persuasive speech encouraging people to stand up to Basil Brookes? Afterwards, you could perform it!

ART: Create an eye-catching 'ESCAPE FROM THE CHILD SNATCHERS' display for your classroom! You could include maps of India, diary entries describing Humza's journey to England, artwork, poetry and your thoughts and reflections on what you enjoyed about this story.