

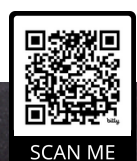


# Teaching Notes & Resources

Key Stage 2 - 3

Themes: Mystery | Truth | Identity  
Friendship | Community

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# Introduction

## About the Book

When twelve-year-old Estie is expelled from school, she's sent to stay with her aunt in Scotland over the summer. Even though nobody, not even her mum, asked to hear her side of the story.

Estie's determined to keep her barriers up and stick to herself until the holidays are over. But when she comes across an intricately folded paper castle with a secret message written inside - a message from someone desperate to tell their own unbelievable story - a chord is struck, and Estie can't help but follow the clues to the next piece of artwork. Who are these messages from? And what will their secret reveal about the town?

In helping to uncover the anonymous artist's truth, Estie just might find the words to tell her own. . .

**A page-turning mystery novel in verse about identity, friendship and learning to use your voice, with accessible text and beautiful illustrations throughout.**

## About the Author

Nadine Aisha Jassat is an award-winning writer, and author of *The Stories Grandma Forgot (And How I Found Them)* and the poetry collection *Let Me Tell You This*. She has been published widely, including in *It's Not About The Burqa* (shortlisted for the Foyles Non-Fiction Book of the Year).

Nadine delivers creative practice work filled with heart, which addresses social justice, builds community, and supports participants to connect to and grow their voices. She often works with schools and youth groups and has worked with libraries around the world. She is a regular borrower in hers.

Nadine lives in Edinburgh, and grew up in the North of England with a Yorkshire mum and a Zimbabwean dad. She is of mixed heritage; a heritage which can only be told in stories.



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# Extract 1: Taken from Chapter 1 Welcome To Brunstane



## WORDS

There's a word I've been carrying,  
that I don't know how to say.  
It's been with me since before  
I got on this train.  
Since before Mum's sad eyes  
as she waved goodbye to me  
at the station in Hillworth.

It's been there since before  
her phone call to Aunt Ru,  
her sister who we never see,  
and rarely talk to:  
'My leave doesn't start  
for another month,  
and now Estie's off school ...'

I overheard Aunt Ru's speakerphone reply  
from behind the living room door:  
'Send her here.  
It's the school holidays in Scotland.  
It would be good for Estie  
to see where you grew up.'

It's been with me since before  
the headteacher's office,  
*expelled expelled expelled*  
ringing louder than the school bell  
telling me for the last time to go.  
And so I did:  
walking out  
in the middle of the meeting.

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If they were going to expel me,  
then I was leaving *now*.

It was there in the classroom,  
the other kids around me silent,  
looking at me and Mr Morton,  
their eyes burning my back,  
his face  
an angry snarl.

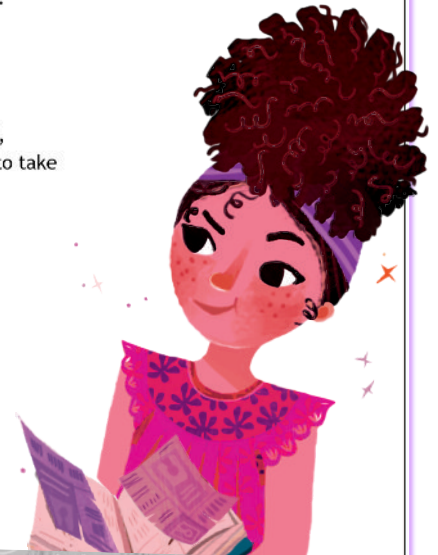
I think it's even been there  
before my clenched hands.  
Before my fingernails left  
a night sky of half-moons  
across my palms.

I don't know how to tell it,  
the word Mr Morton tried to take  
from me:

*Truth.*

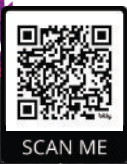
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WELCOME to BRUNSTANE, ESTIE!



## Discussion Questions

- Where is Estie being sent? Who will she be staying with?
- What do Estie's "clenched hands" and the "night sky of half-moons" tell you about how she felt in that moment?
- What is the word that Estie says she doesn't know how to tell? What do you think she means?
- Who tried to take it from her? What do you think happened?
- What does Estie's struggle to express the word tell you about how she is feeling?
- How does the way the lines are broken up change the way that you read each sentence?

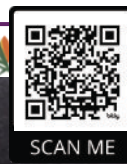


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## Extract 2: Taken from Chapter 5 Message Hidden in a Castle



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#### MESSAGE HIDDEN IN A CASTLE

The first thing I see is paper -  
flashes of white,  
dotted with the blurry ink of printed letters.  
It's a castle.

It's *the* castle we're standing in right now,  
a three-dimensional version made of newspaper  
intricately folded and wrapped together,  
with a subtle coating on top,  
as if helping to hold it in place.  
It's correct down to every detail:  
the castle's long central column,  
its turrets,  
and small window gaps.

'Flipping frogspawn,' Idris breaths,  
which I think is Brunstonian  
for the same words that rush out of my chest  
in a flurry of wonder and excitement:

'It's *amazing*.'

'Somebody hid this here,' Idris says.

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'And I don't think they did it yesterday,'  
I reply brushing dust from the box's lid.  
'This has been here for a *long* time.'

Idris's eyes gleam with satisfaction.  
'And we're the first to find it.'

I reach in, gently lifting the castle out  
and examining it, before passing it to Idris  
to look at, too.  
'*Why* would someone hide  
something like this?' I say.

'And why *here*?' Idris replies,  
humming, as if it is the sound his thoughts make  
when they are doing their work.  
He looks at the sign on the wall  
above the desk, and whispers its words:  
'*Brunstane Castle is full of stories -  
what tales do you have to tell?*'  
As he speaks, he gently turns  
the castle side to side in his hands.  
There comes a shifting, sliding sound,  
like something within it is moving.

Idris pauses, and stares at the paper castle.  
'What if it's not just the castle we're standing in  
that's full of stories, but this one, too.'  
He turns the castle again,  
releasing the same shifting noise.

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## Extract 2: Taken from Chapter 5 Message Hidden in a Castle



His eyes flick to the writing on the sign.  
'What if someone planted this *exactly* here  
because this paper sculpture  
has something to say?'

'There's something inside it?'  
I ask., leaning forwards.

Idris nods, holding it out,  
with the noise of a *slide and swish*.  
'It's how to get it out that's the question.'

I stare at the sculpture,  
the exact replica of where we are now.  
'We go the same way we came in,'  
I say, reaching forward to the castle  
made not of stone, but paper,  
and opening its front door.

A thin strip of rolled parchment  
tumbles out, as if it has been waiting  
to be unlocked.

'Flipping—' Idris begins,

'—frogspawn,' I finish.

I unroll the scroll gently,  
and hold it up to the light,  
the swirled ink of the calligraphy,  
illuminated as we read.



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Scan the QR code to  
listen to author,  
Nadine Aisha Jassat,  
reading this extract.



## Discussion Questions

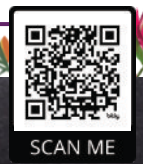
- What do Estie and Idris find inside the box?
- What does Idris's reaction tell you about how he feels about what they have found?
- How does Estie know that it has been there for a long time?
- What does Idris mean when he says the paper sculpture, 'has something to say'?
- How does the author build anticipation throughout the extract?
- What do you think will be written on the parchment?



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## Extract 3: Taken from Chapter 9 Strong Standards

### SOMEONE LIKE YOU

As I leave Idris's house  
I pass the set of framed images lining the wall  
that I saw when I first arrived:  
women with their eyes raised high,  
faces strong.  
My eyes catch one in particular,  
a woman rising up,  
her arm high in the air.

'Your aunt gave me that one,'  
a familiar voice says behind me,  
and I turn to see Hawa,  
a playful smile on her face.  
'I collect images of women's activism  
- of women making a difference -  
from around the world.  
This one is from the women's marches in South Africa.'  
She pauses, smiling softly at me.  
'Part of your heritage, Estie.'

It feels like her words soothe  
a part of me,  
a part of that jigsaw-puzzle-like ache  
that I've been carrying with me  
ever since Hillworth.  
Like they answer the questions  
Mr Morton planted;  
the feeling that I couldn't touch  
what was mine.



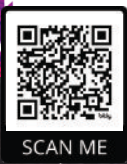
I look back at the picture.  
'Why do you collect these?' I ask.

Hawa smiles.  
'To remind me, and all who come here,  
to stand up for what's right.'

I shuffle. 'But what if -  
what if you try to do that ...  
and it all goes belly up?'

'Then you find your people,  
the ones who will stand with you,  
so you're not doing it alone,'  
Hawa says, rubbing my shoulder with her hand.  
'It is always better to know the truth inside you,  
and stay true to it,  
than to give in.  
Than to live in silence.  
These posters remind me of that,  
help me remember I'm not alone.'

I look back at the drawing.  
I hope the woman in it found her people.  
I hope she wasn't living in silence.



## Extract 3: Taken from Chapter 9 Strong Standards

I turn to Hawa.  
'Idris is really lucky,  
to have someone like you.'  
And I remember, for a split-second,  
Mum's smile, the warmth of her body  
as we curled up together  
and she shared stories  
that inspired her, too.  
The memory feels both happy  
and sad, and instead of looking  
at it for too long,  
I look up at Hawa's eyes instead,  
their warm brown smile.

'From the laughter I could hear  
coming from our garden,'  
she says,  
'I think he's lucky  
to have someone like you,  
too.'

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### Discussion Questions

- Why does Hawa describe one picture as part of Estie's heritage?
- Why are the pictures important to Hawa?
- What can you infer about Hawa's character and values from her collection of images and her explanation?
- What is identity? How does the conversation with Hawa make Estie feel about her own sense of identity?
- What does Hawa advise that Estie does if she has trouble when trying to stand up for what is right?
- What clues can you find in the extract that show that Estie admires Hawa?



# Character Study - Estie

While reading *The Hidden Story of Estie Noor* by Nadine Aisha Jassat, gather information about the character, Estie.

You should add to each category as the story develops and you learn more about her.



What do you know about Estie? Give examples.

What is Estie's identity?  
What makes her who she is?

What are the relationships that that are important to Estie during the story?

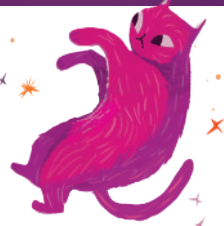
What challenges does she overcome?



# Character Study - Idris

While reading *The Hidden Story of Estie Noor* by Nadine Aisha Jassat, gather information about the character, Idris.

You should add to each category as the story develops and you learn more about him.



What do you know about Idris? Give examples.



What is Idris's identity?  
What makes him who he is?

What are the relationships that that are important to Idris during the story?

What challenges does he overcome?



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# Teacher's Pet



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