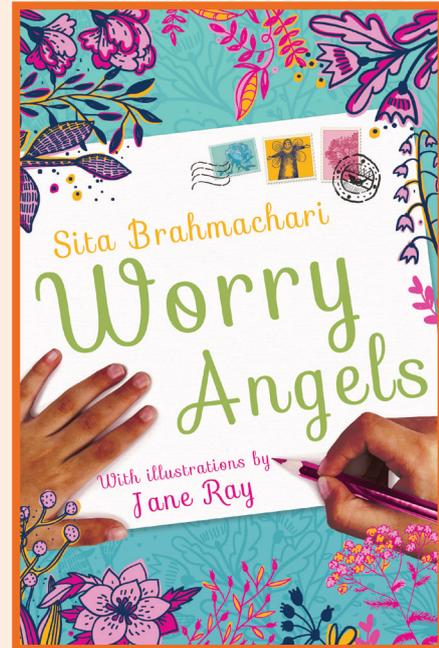




Barrington Stoke

CLASSROOM RESOURCES



WORRY ANGELS

Sita Brahmachari

- PART 1** Synopsis and Themes
- PART 2** Suggested Questions to Develop Reading Strategies
- PART 3** About Sita Brahmachari

PART I SYNOPSIS AND THEMES

SYNOPSIS AND THEMES

This guide has been produced to provide ideas for guiding young readers through Sita Brahmachari's **Worry Angels**, a brilliant short novel with powerful themes. The novel is filled with current issues and topics that many young readers can relate to. The guide is therefore 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 or writing work. There is also a brief author biography.

We hope you enjoy using these materials with your students.

Sita Brahmachari's **Worry Angels** is the story of Amy-May and all the changes in her life after the separation of her parents.

Before her parents split-up they live together in a small seaside cottage, Amy is home-schooled and she spends most of her days making pottery and gardening with her Dad. When her and her Mum move house Amy is faced with starting at the big school in the city. Amy can't face the idea of this and is too anxious from all of the changes to attend the school.

Her Mum decides that a step between home-schooling and the big school would help Amy, so she sends her to Grace's art-school instead. Here Amy is able to do her lessons whilst gardening, making craft projects, and expressing her worries to Grace through sand sculptures. Grace tells Amy that she is not just worrying but that she has anxiety, which makes it difficult for her to process all of the big changes in her life.

A new family joins Amy at the art-school and she is introduced to Rima, Ali and Asraf, who are Refugees in the UK having fled the war in Syria. Soon Amy and Rima form a close relationship, despite their language barriers, and they learn to understand each other's struggles and to help one another talk about their fears.

Worry Angels is written in a gentle, accessible style whilst remaining a powerful story that covers a wide array of serious and pertinent topics. This book is perfect for classroom discussions as it will help children to engage with and begin to understand the Syrian war and the Refugee crisis, the difficulties of dealing with anxiety, understanding the struggles of other's, learning to express your own worries and frustrations, and dealing with big changes in life, such as moving home or school.

PART 2 SUGGESTED QUESTIONS TO DEVELOP READING STRATEGIES

A girl is sitting in a huge plant pot in the corner of a room. The man and the woman come over to pick up the pot with her inside it. They pull at the girl in the pot in a tug of war. She shouts and screams at them to stop, but they're yelling so loud at each other that they can't hear her [...] The girl is left alone in the garden, tangled in vines, picking up the pieces of her broken pot.

Explore Amy's anxiety and frustration about her parents' separation

- o How does it affect her? What does she feel? How does she react?
- o What impression do you get of Amy's family life? Is it a happy one?
- o What are Amy's mum and dad like? Do you like them?
- o Discuss the above quote and the italicised passage at the end of Ch. 1.
What is the purpose of this scene?
Is this image helpful in explaining Amy's feelings towards her parents' separation?
What does this passage make you feel as a reader?
What images within this scene are particularly interesting to you?
Can you relate to this scene at all?

We stand and stare at the metal and glass building that looks more like an art gallery than a school. The outlines of hundreds of children move like ants along the corridors. [...] "I can't come here, Mum!" I say and turn away. I won't go the next day or the day after that either.

Explore Amy's reluctance to attend school and her mum's decision to place her at Grace's Art School

- o What do you think Amy's worries about starting school are?
- o Were you worried when you first started school?
Or moved to a new school?
- o Do you ever feel like Amy does about school?
- o Why do you think a place like Grace's school is helpful for Amy?



My teacher here says I have “anxiety”. Anxiety is when you really, really worry about stuff.

Explore the difference between worry and anxiety

- o What does worrying mean to you? How does it make you feel?
- o Why do you think anxiety is different from worrying?
- o Can you relate to the extremes of the way that Amy feels?
- o What information does the book give us that shows that Amy has anxiety and isn't just worrying?
- o Discuss the image of the vines used throughout the book.
What does this image represent?
How does it make you feel?
Is this a good way of explaining Amy's anxiety?

We play together in the sand and it doesn't feel childish. The pictures the twins make in the sand aren't childish. Their sandcastles and sculptures are of tanks, fire and guns. They find model people in the boxes and lie them on the ground or bury them under the sand. They make different sounds for bombs and guns ... and Iman doesn't need to translate these sounds.



Discuss the conflict in Syria and the Refugee crisis

- o What do you know about Syria? What have you seen in the news?
- o What does the word Refugee mean to you?
- o How do you think you would cope if you had to flee your home like Rima?
How would you deal with a new country with a very different language and culture?
What would leaving your home and possessions be like?
What would not knowing where your friends and family are feel like?

“Feel about it!” Rima says when Iman finishes. She says that a lot these days. “Think about it ...” Iman starts to correct her [...] Actually, I think, “feel about it” is what Rima means.

Discuss this quote

- o Why do you think that Rima confuses feel and think?
- o Do you think it is a mistake or is it, as Amy thinks, exactly what Rima means?
- o What does this phrase mean to you?
- o Why do you think it becomes so meaningful to Amy?

“Me.” She smiles and points for me to place the figure in the sand. “You,” she says and places the other figure in the sand next to me. “Habibi sister,” I say [...] “Yes!” she laughs. “Habibi sister.”

Explore Amy and Rima’s friendship

- Do you think the language barrier between Amy and Rima helps them become friends? Why?
- Think about Amy’s thoughts about translation and “the space” this allows them. Why do you think this helps them? Would you find this “space” helpful when speaking to people?
- Why is it so important that Amy doesn’t compare her experience to Rima’s? What would comparing herself to Rima achieve?

Sita Brahmachari dedicates this book in part to Maggie Barron a Sandplay Therapist who works with children and adults like Grace does in the book. Sita writes that Maggie “*taught me to follow the lines in the sand that led me to write my own stories*”. Building sculptures in sand becomes a big part of Amy, Rima and the twins working through their anxieties and emotions in the book.

Explore the use of sand therapy in the story

- Why is it important for Rima, Amy and the twins to express themselves with sand sculptures? How does this help them communicate?
- Do you think that using sand to talk about emotions would be helpful? Would it be relaxing?
- Do you think that using sculptures allow the characters to tell Grace more than they could with words? Why do you think that is?



WATCH THE WORRY ANGELS TRAILER
FEATURING ANIMATION BY GRACE EMILY MANNING:

[HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/232792920](https://vimeo.com/232792920)

PART 3 ABOUT SITA BRAHMACHARI



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Sita Brahmachari was born in Derby in 1966 to an Indian Doctor from Kolkata and an English nurse from the Lake District. She has a BA in English Literature and an MA in Arts Education. Her many projects and writing commissions have been produced in theatres, universities, schools and community groups throughout Britain and America.

Sita was nominated for the Carnegie Medal three times and her debut novel, *Artichoke Hearts*, won the 2011 Waterstone's Children's Book Prize. She has published six books for children. Sita lives and works in North London with her husband and three children.



ILLUSTRATED BY JANE RAY