

Don't Break Tradition

A story about family, traditions, and finding joy in difficult times

About the Story

Lexile® Measure 630L

For qualitative complexity factors, go to *Scope Online*.

Learning Objective: to analyze the theme in a work of fiction

Featured Skill: theme

Additional skills covered in this lesson plan: inference, interpreting text, character, character motivations

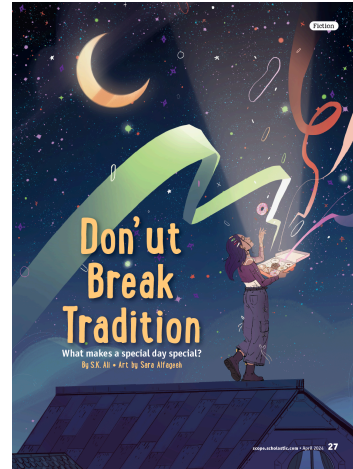
Essential Questions:

- How can a shift in perspective affect how we feel?
- How do our traditions and celebrations help shape who we are?
- What does it mean for something to be “special”?

Standards:

The article and its suite of support materials support these Common Core Anchor Standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.6, W.2, SL.1

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to *Scope Online*.



Your Teaching Package

Find your full suite of support materials at scope.scholastic.com.

Audio:

- Story read-aloud
- Text-to-speech

Slideshow:

- Background Builder: Arabic Terms in “Don’t Break Tradition”

Connected readings

from the *Scope* archives:

- “How to Make S’Mores”
- “Freddie in the Shade”
- “Ode to Family Photographs”
- “Voilà”

Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Featured Skill: Theme
- Close-Reading and Critical-Thinking Questions
- Choice Board
- Lesson Plan Slide Deck
- **Core Skills Workout:** Inference
- Quiz*

*Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Featured Skill

1. Prepare to Read (20 minutes)

Do Now: Journal and Discuss (10 minutes)

- Project the following on your whiteboard for students to respond to in their writing journals or on a sheet of paper:
 - Write a definition of *special* in your own words.
 - Think about a holiday that you celebrate. Create a list of practices or traditions that make that holiday special to you, your family, or your community.
- Invite volunteers to share what they wrote.

Preview Terms (10 minutes)

- “Don’t Break Tradition” includes several terms that are Arabic or rooted in Arabic. To help students understand their meanings, project the **Background Builder Slideshow** on your whiteboard, which includes images and pronunciations. Discuss each term as a class. Included terms: *Eid, Ramadan, Eidi, abaya, hijab, oud, Muslim, Islam, Eid Mubarak*.

2. Read and Discuss (75 minutes)

- Read the “As You Read” box on page 28 or at the top of the digital story page.
- For students’ first read, have them follow along as they listen to author S.K. Ali read her story aloud. The **audio read-aloud** is located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View.
- Optionally, have students reread and annotate the story independently. Here are some symbols you might have them use:

! = I’m surprised.

? = This is unfamiliar.

★ = This is important.

💬 = “I wonder . . .” (add comments or questions)

♥ = I love this.

- Divide students into groups to discuss the close-reading questions along with their annotations. (The close-reading questions appear in the margins of the print magazine or by clicking on the bolded words on the digital story page.) If you'd like students to respond in writing, an interactive and printable **Close-Reading and Critical-Thinking activity** is available in your Resources tab.

Close-Reading Questions

(30 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **At the beginning of the story, how is Nadia feeling about Eid? Why?** (inference) *At the beginning of the story, Nadia is feeling disappointed about Eid. This is clear from the first line of the story, when she says, "It's Eid, but it doesn't feel like Eid." She contrasts this Eid to Eids past, when she would have been wearing fancy clothes, smelling delicious foods cooking, and listening to lively music. We can infer that this Eid is different from Eids of the past because of her mother's serious illness. Nadia says that "happiness left the house" and refers to staying home to take care of her sleeping mother. The family also seems to have fallen on financial difficulties (likely related to paying for Nadia's mother's care); Nadia reveals that the family had to sell their car and rent out the basement and upstairs of their house.*
2. **What does Nadia do after she leaves the donut shop? What do you learn later about how this connects to Joy's ring?** (inference) *After leaving the donut shop, Nadia goes to Buyway to purchase a turquoise hijab for her mother. Later in the story, Nadia opens the Buyway bag and offers the hijab to her mother, saying, "Do you want your favorite color? Turquoise?" These lines make clear that Nadia bought the hijab at Buyway and that it was the color of Joy's ring that gave Nadia the idea, because turquoise is her mother's favorite color.*
3. **Say Kareem's line out loud. What does the word donut sound like? What is Kareem saying about having donuts on Eid?** (theme) *Donut sounds like do not. Kareem is saying that it's important to stick to the traditions of the holiday because they set it apart from other days. Eating donuts is an example of a special holiday tradition for Nadia and Kareem's family.*
4. **Why might Noor think Mama doesn't need a hijab? What is Mama's "hair situation"?** (inference) *Mama has lost her hair—Nadia refers to her "bare head"—which indicates she has been receiving cancer treatments, which can cause hair to fall out. Because a hijab is meant to cover the hair, Noor might think that her mother does not need one, given that she has no hair to cover.*
5. **What is the it Mama is starting to feel?** (interpreting text) *The it Mama is starting to feel is the special feeling that comes with celebrating Eid. It's what makes the day different from ordinary days.*

6. **How has Nadia started to look at things more in the way her dad looks at them?** (character) *Nadia has started to see things in a more positive way, like her dad does. Whenever something bad happened, "Dad pointed out something good," Nadia says. For example, the family had to sell their car, but rather than complain, Nadia's dad pointed out how lucky they were to have a bus stop right in front of their house. At this point in the story, Nadia explains that her family had to rent out part of their house and fit into a smaller living area, but rather than dwell on the loss of space, Nadia expresses her gratitude to have a wide front porch.*
7. **Why do Joy and Mr. Laidlaw come to Nadia's house?** (character motivations) *Mr. Laidlaw tells Nadia's family that they have come to bring some new Cinnamon Chai donuts, since Nadia had not picked any out earlier. But it's likely they have other motivations as well. Mr. Laidlaw knows that Nadia's mother is ill because Nadia told him so; he probably wants to do something kind for the family. Furthermore, he doesn't have his own family to celebrate with, so he might want to spend time with Nadia's family. Joy seems like she might have a crush on Kareem, so she probably likes having a chance to see him.*
8. **What does Nadia mean when she refers to running toward special days?** (theme) *Nadia means that you can take actions to make a special day special. She has learned that she has the power to create the kind of Eid she wants to celebrate. It seems that in the past, when she was younger and her mother was well, Eid was special without Nadia having to make any particular efforts—probably because her parents were able to uphold traditions that made the day feel special. Now that Nadia is older and has more responsibilities, she realizes that she can do things to make the day feel special, like buying donuts for the family and buying her mother a brightly colored hijab. When Nadia talks about running toward special days, she might also be talking about looking at things in a positive way and embracing the holiday as it is—in other words, focusing on what is good and what she can be grateful for rather than on what is challenging or seems like a loss.*

Critical-Thinking Questions

(20 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **In what ways does Nadia change from the beginning of the story to the end?** *At the beginning of the story, Nadia is disappointed that Eid doesn't feel like Eid. In other years, specialness seemed to be baked into the day. The family would wear special clothes, eat delicious food, and decorate the house. Bit by bit, though, Nadia realizes that she can take steps to restore some of the happiness that has "left the house" since her mother became ill. By the end of the story, Nadia is more optimistic and empowered. She sees that she has the power to create the Eid she wants.*
2. **The author includes many sensory details; she describes how things look, smell, taste, and so on. For example, she refers several times to favorite colors, Nadia's being almost-black purple and Mama's being turquoise. What are some other sensory details in**

the story? Why do you think sensory details are important in this story? Other sensory details include references to smells, such as the scents that usually come from the kitchen on Eid, the “deliciousness in the air” at the donut shop, and the perfume of Mama’s oud. Important sights in the story are smiles—Joy’s and Mama’s—which Nadia decides can make a day special. And the sound of Mama’s laughter is “like a door opens for happiness to step back into the house.” Senses are important in this story because it is often through our senses that we experience the specialness of a day. Holidays, in particular, often stand out from other days because of what we eat, how we dress, the music we hear, and so on. The things Nadia craves for Eid mainly have to do with sights, sounds, tastes, and smells.

3. **In what ways do you think Nadia’s experiences are a universal (experienced by everyone) part of growing up? In what ways are they particular to her?** Answers will vary, but students might say that taking on more family responsibilities and helping out more on holidays is a universal experience of growing up. But Nadia has the added burden of caring for an ill mother and coping with the consequences of her mother’s illness.

3. Write Your Paragraph (30 minutes)

- Have students use the **Featured Skill Activity: Theme** to help them respond to the writing prompt on page 31 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page:

Over the course of the story, what does Nadia come to realize about what makes a special day special? Answer in a well-organized paragraph. Use text evidence.

- Alternatively, have students choose a task from the **Choice Board**, a menu of culminating tasks. (Our Choice Board options include the writing prompt from the magazine, differentiated versions of the writing prompt, and additional creative ways for students to demonstrate their understanding of a story.)

Support for Multilingual Learners

Language Acquisition Springboard

Practice Reading Italics

Explain that italics are letters that slant to the right and are used in many ways. In this story, they are used in two ways: to emphasize certain words and to express an important thought in the narrator’s head. Practice saying the following lines from the story, reading the italicized words with more emphasis than the rest of the words in that statement as appropriate.

Emphasis:

- It's Eid, but it doesn't *feel* like Eid.
- What makes a day special? What I mean is, what makes a *special* day special?
- Because all of a sudden, I remember something *special*.
- It *almost* smells like Eid.
- I want it to be a surprise, but it was never a surprise *before*.
- They look like they want to see *everything* again.
- Mama needs to know *everything*.
- And when she turns to me, her face tells me it's true—she's starting to feel *it*.
- I have an idea! I'll make *everyone* hot chocolate.

Expressing a thought in the narrator's head:

- *Don't ever break Eid tradition.*
- *I want Mama to get ready for Eid day.*
- *She isn't here to check on me.*
- *Yes, a smile can make a day special.*
- *Enough for everyone!*
- *Special days start when you run toward them.*

Connected readings from the Scope archives**Texts about adjusting to challenging new situations:**

- Fiction: [“How to Make S'mores”](#)
- Fiction: [“Freddie in the Shade”](#)

Texts about perspective and the question of what makes something special:

- Poem: [“Ode to Family Photographs”](#)
- Fiction: [“Voilà”](#)