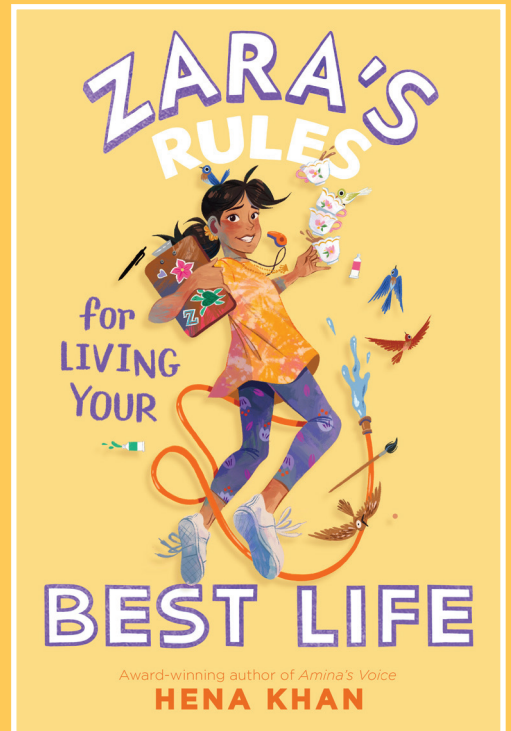




ZARA'S RULES'S Series

BY HENA KHAN



A READING GROUP GUIDE



BOOK 1

Zara's Rules for Record-Breaking Fun

HC: 9781534497597

PB: 9781534497580

eBook: 9781534497603

Ages 7–10

Grades 2–5

Lexile ® 640L

F&P Text Level Gradient™ M

Awards and Honors:

*An NCTE Charlotte Huck Outstanding Fiction Honor Title!

About This Book

Zara Saleem enjoys being known as the Queen of the Neighborhood: the person who comes up with the best ideas and makes sure everyone has fun. Things change when a new family moves in and Zara finds her role challenged by the popularity of the new girl, Naomi. Worried that her friends are forgetting her, Zara decides that the way to win back their loyalty is to break one of the records in her uncle's old *Guinness Book of World Records*. It takes several failed attempts for her to realize that cooperation, not competition, is the way to be a true leader, and that sharing her crown is much more fun than ruling alone.

Before You Read

Discuss the differences between a leader and a ruler, paying attention to the verb at the root of each word (*lead* and *rule*). Think of an example of someone you believe is a good ruler and/or leader. What qualities are important in a ruler? What qualities are important in a leader? Is it possible to be a ruler and a leader at the same time?

Discussion Questions

1. Mr. Chapman nicknames Zara the "Queen of the Neighborhood" because she rules "with grace and fairness." What do you think it means to rule with grace and fairness? Why do you think this nickname means so much to Zara?
2. When Zara and Zayd's neighbor Mr. Chapman moves to Florida, they eagerly anticipate the arrival of a new neighbor. What kind of neighbor do they hope moves in? What kind of neighbor are they worried they might get? (See chapter 1.) Imagine what your perfect neighbor would be like and describe them.
3. Initially, Zara views Naomi as her competition. Why does she view Naomi as a threat? Do you think Naomi is trying to exclude Zara? How does the fact that Zara thinks Naomi is competing with her impact the way she interacts with her new neighbor? What do you think would have happened if Zara had not been worried about Naomi taking her place as the Queen of the Neighborhood?
4. Zara believes that Gloria and Jade "were so quick to ditch me and pick Naomi." Why do you think Zara felt excluded? Find evidence that suggests that Zara's perception was inaccurate, and that Gloria, Jade, and Naomi tried to include Zara.
5. Why does Zara want to try to break a Guinness World Record? What does she believe will happen if she is successful?
6. What challenges does Zara encounter as she tries to break the world records for using a hula hoop, chalk drawing, and tap dancing?

7. Describe Zara’s family. How can you tell that the Saleem family cares about and values one another? How can you tell that Zara and Zayd have a close relationship? (See chapter 8.)
8. What causes the conflict between Zara and her little brother? Why are they able to repair their relationship? Think about a time that you had a conflict with a sibling or a friend. How did you resolve the conflict?
9. Why doesn’t Zara tell her friends that she is trying to break a record? What happens when they eventually find out? What does Zara realize about including others and friendship?
10. When Jade complains that Zara has “a million rules for every game we play,” Zara responds by saying, “I make rules so we don’t fight.” Whom do you agree with, Zara or Jade? How could Zara and Jade balance the need for rules with a desire for freedom from rules?
11. Later in the book, Zara realizes that she has made mistakes in the way she reacted to Naomi’s arrival: “And it hits me that I might have brought cookies over to welcome her family on the day they moved in, but I have not been very welcoming ever since.” What does it mean to be welcoming? What specific things could Zara have done differently?
12. What does Zara mean when she reflects: “I realize I’m sharing the crown. But, surprisingly, it makes me feel a lot lighter than I expected.” (See chapter 14). Think about an area of your life where you are a leader. How can you “share your crown” with others? What do you think might happen if you do?

Extension Activities

1. When the Goldsteins move in, Mrs. Saleem bakes a plate of nankhatai: traditional Pakistani cookies. Mrs. Goldstein reciprocates with a plate of rugelach: traditional Jewish cookies. Food is an important element of cultural identity, and most cultures and nationalities have a special type of cookie, pastry, or other sweet treat. Research a culture or nationality, and share a recipe for their traditional cookie or pastry, or other handheld dessert. You may want to create a cooking video demonstrating how to make the cookie. You can also work with your classmates to create an international cookie cookbook or international cookie celebration.
2. After mishaps caused Zara to abandon her attempts at the world records for tap dancing and chalk drawing, she makes a plan and tries to prepare for her next record-breaking attempt. Later she realizes that there are rules and guidelines for attempting to break an official world record and documenting your attempt. Working either alone or with a group, research Guinness World Records (<https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/>). If you wanted to break one of the current world records, which would you choose? Develop a step-by-step plan that you would need to follow in order to break the record.
3. Zara’s grandparents are from Pakistan, and the Saleem family include aspects of Pakistani culture including language (Urdu, chapter 3), holidays (Eid, chapter 17), food (halal, chapter 6; biryani, chapter 16; korma, chapter 17), and music (bhangra, chapter 9) into their family life. Research one aspect of Pakistani culture mentioned in the book to learn more about its origin. Create a visual (such as a poster, brochure) to share your research with the class.
4. Zara and her friends decide to create the *Brisk River Book of Neighborhood Records*: their own version of the *Guinness Book of World Records* (chapter 18). Using their book as a guide, work together to create a book of classroom records, and celebrate your achievements with an awards ceremony.
5. One of the things that helps Zara resolve conflict is trying to imagine the situation from the other person’s perspective. Choose a section of the book and rewrite it from another character’s perspective. For example, you could imagine Zara and Naomi’s first meeting from Naomi’s perspective (chapter 2) or Zayd’s bicycle accident (chapter 10) from Zayd’s perspective.



BOOK 2

Zara's Rules for Finding Hidden Treasure

HC: 9781534497627

PB: 9781534497610

eBook: 9781534497634

Ages 7–10

Grades 2–5

Lexile ® 670L

F&P Text Level Gradient™ M



About This Book

In this second book in Hena Khan's Zara's Rules series, Zara is thrilled to get a brand-new bike, but that excitement turns to disappointment when someone steals her bicycle from a nearby park. What's worse is that she had forgotten to lock it, so her parents insist that she earn the money she will need to replace the bike. Luckily, her best friend, Naomi, helps her start a business turning their families' unwanted trash into treasure with a mobile neighborhood yard sale. The only problem is that Zara and her grandmother Naano find it difficult to part with anything. How can you keep the memories if you get rid of the objects that inspire them?

Discussion Questions

1. Zara and her friends like to play at Radley's Park. Read the description of the park found in chapter 1 and then write a description of your favorite park or playground. What was your favorite thing to do at a playground when you were younger? What do you like to do now?
2. How does Zara feel when she realizes someone has stolen her bike? Have you ever lost or had something stolen from you? Compare how you felt (or imagine you would feel) to how Zara feels.
3. Why do Zara's parents think that Zara is at fault for having her bike stolen? Do you agree that Zara is responsible for what happened? Explain your answer.
4. Why don't Zara's parents help her buy a new bike? Do you think Zara's parents are doing the right thing when they require her to earn money to purchase a new bike?
5. Examine the conversation in chapter 4 between Zara and Naomi about how to earn money in the context of entrepreneurship.
 - a. In business, to make a profit, you need to be able to secure the product you want to sell (*supply*), and people need to want or need the product (*demand*). The cost of making or acquiring the product also needs to be less than the amount you sell it for to make a *profit*. Your profit margin is the difference between the price you sell an item for and the amount it costs to produce. The steps you take to inform customers about your product and make it appealing are a part of *marketing*. How do these concepts impact Zara and Naomi's decisions about their business?
6. Before starting their business, Zara comes up with three rules (chapter 4). Explain why each rule is important. Are there any rules you think they should add to their list?

7. When Zara asks her mother to pack samosas in her lunchbox, her mother comments that “times have changed,” noting that when she was Zara’s age, she did not want any Pakistani foods in her lunchbox (chapter 7). Why do you think Zara’s mother was hesitant to express her cultural identity at school? Why is it important for people to feel free to express their cultural identity? How can you show others that you respect and appreciate their cultural traditions?
8. Why does Naano get upset when Zara’s mother tells her she needs to clean out her storage area and throw things away? Are you more like Zara’s mother or Naano regarding how you feel about getting rid of objects you no longer use?
9. What experience helps Zara’s mother understand why Naano holds on to things?
10. What mistake does Zara make when gathering her mother’s unwanted items to sell? How does she fix the mistake?
11. Read the paragraph describing the handmade pillow covers in chapter thirteen and explain the difference between their *monetary* value (how much money an item is worth) and their *sentimental* value (the personal and emotional attachment to an object). What possession of yours has the most sentimental value? What memory makes it valuable to you?
12. What experience helps Naano realize that she does not need to hold on to objects to hold on to memories?
13. Look at the apology that Zara’s mother gives Naano in chapter 14. What does she do in addition to simply saying “I am sorry”? How do both her words and actions make this an effective apology? What can you learn about how to apologize from Zara’s mother’s example? Read Zara’s apology to Naomi in chapter 13. Explain how her apology follows her mother’s example.
14. How does Zara finally earn the money she needs to purchase a new bike? What bike does she end up choosing to buy? Had Zara not worked to make her own money, do you think she would have purchased the bike she did? How did working change her perspective on what is valuable?

Extension Activities

1. Zara and Naomi create a business to earn extra money. While they decide to sell a product, a business can also provide a service (like babysitting). Working alone or with a friend, develop a plan for a business you could start and present your plan to a group such as your class, friends, or family. If you need additional resources, Wikihow has a tutorial on how to create a business plan: [https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Business-Plan-\(for-Kids\)](https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Business-Plan-(for-Kids))
2. Zara and Nana Abu share a love of gulab jamon, a dessert made of fried dough balls in a sweet syrup. Interestingly, most cultures have a version of fried dough (a video showing the different iterations of fried dough can be found here: <https://www.insider.com/fried-dough-delicacies-from-countries-around-the-world-2021-3>). Choose a fried dough recipe and have an adult help you make it at home. After trying the food, record your thoughts of the cooking process and the taste in a video, voice recording, short essay, or comic strip. What was familiar about the food you tried? What was unfamiliar? Why do you think fried dough is a food that so many cultures have in common?
3. At Michael’s bar mitzvah, Zara’s mother notices the similarities between the synagogue and their family’s mosque and comments, “We truly are all brothers and sisters” (chapter 11). Later Zara, Naomi, and Jade discuss the things that a bar/ bat mitzvah, Ameen ceremony, and sweet sixteen party have in common. Using the library and internet resources, research the ways different cultures celebrate coming of age, and choose

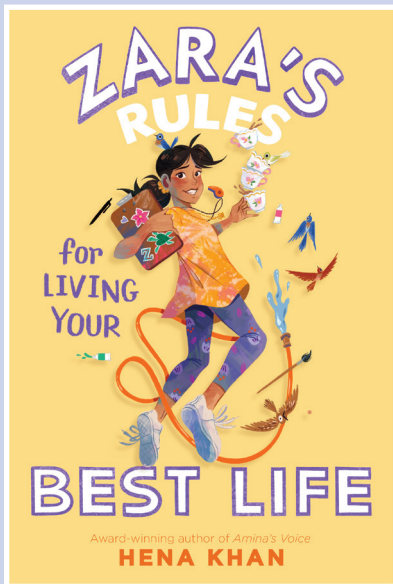


a cultural tradition to highlight. Create a visual aid to share information about your selected tradition with your classmates, friends, and/or family.

- Both Zara and her Naano have a sentimental attachment to objects that connect to important memories. Think about something you own that is emotionally valuable to you and write a descriptive essay, sales ad, or commercial about the object. Make sure to use imagery (words that appeal to the senses) to describe the object. You should also use your preferred method to explain the memories that make the object personally valuable.
- Zara and Naomi discuss the Marie Kondo method of organization in chapter 10. Marie Kondo is a consultant who helps people organize and declutter their homes. One of her strategies is only to keep objects that spark joy and cultivate gratitude. Read more about Marie Kondo's method (<https://konmari.com/>), then use her process to organize your backpack, locker, or desk. Make sure to take before-and-after pictures of the organized area. Afterward, reflect on the process. How did you feel before you got started? How did you feel while you were organizing? How did you feel once you finished? Was the process harder or easier than you expected?

- Inspired by a photo slideshow from Michael's bar mitzvah, Zara creates a slideshow of family memories and an accompanying photo album as a gift for Naano and Nana Abu's fortieth wedding anniversary. Collect photos of your family to create a slideshow highlighting your life or the life of a grandparent or parent. Use a timer to create a slideshow that displays twenty photographs for fifteen seconds each, and share your project with your class, friends, family, or club, explaining the significance of the photos you selected.





BOOK 3

Zara's Rules for Living Your Best Life

HC: 9781534497658

PB: 9781534497641

eBook: 9781534497665

Ages 7–10

Grades 2–5

Lexile ® 650L

F&P Text Level Gradient™ N



About This Book

In *Zara's Rules for Living Your Best Life*, Hena Khan presents the third installment in a series about Zara Saleem, a girl who approaches life by creating plans and rules to solve any problem she encounters.

In this case, the problem is a spring break that seems doomed to failure when her mother informs her that she and her brother will have to spend each day with their grandparents instead of their neighborhood friends. To make matters worse, Zara's once energetic grandfather is staying in his pajamas watching television and napping all day now that he has retired. The solution is clear: she needs to get them active and engaged in activities they enjoy. To help her grandparents live their best lives, she'll need to create Camp Zara.

Discussion Questions

1. Where would you travel to if you could plan your perfect spring break? What would you want to do if you planned your ideal spring break but had to stay at home?
2. Zara's "number one neighborhood rule for having fun" is that everybody must be included. Why would including everyone make things more fun? What challenges might there be to including everyone in an activity? How could you creatively solve those challenges?
3. Zara is disappointed to learn she won't be able to spend spring break with her friends. Her mother explains that she will be allowed to stay home alone when she is twelve. Most states do not have a law stating the recommended age for a child to stay home unsupervised, and those that do list ages ranging from six to fourteen. Discuss what you think is the right age to be allowed to stay home alone. Explain the reasons for your answer.
4. When Zara and Zayd arrive, Naano has their favorite breakfast foods, like parathas and halwa, prepared. When you visit family members, are there particular foods or treats they like to serve? Why do you think food is a common way for people to express their love?
5. Describe Zara and Zayd's first day with their grandparents. What is disappointing about the day? What causes Zara to be concerned about her grandfather, Nana Abu?
6. When Naomi tells Zara about all the fun things she is doing in day camp, how does Zara respond? Do you think it was hard for her not to be jealous? What idea did Zara come up with by listening to Naomi and being happy for her?
7. Consider Zara's Rules for Camp Zara. (Chapter 6) Explain why each rule would be important. Would you change or add anything to these rules?

8. After the first day of Camp Zara has limited success, who does Zara call for help? Who is the trusted adult that you can call on when you need help or advice about a challenge you're facing?
9. In chapter 10, Naomi tells Zara about her bad experience on the zip line at camp. How does she plan to confront and overcome her fear and anxiety? Describe an experience where you were afraid to do something or tried something new. How did you feel before you tried this new thing, and were you able to complete the activity? How did you learn to navigate your fear and discomfort?
10. What does Zara realize about her grandfather's interests and skills during their high tea celebration? What idea does this give her?
11. What does Zara call "the best day of spring break so far"? (Chapter 14) What made this such a good day?
12. Explain how Nana Abu's birdhouse leads to his family learning about the Senior Center. Why do you think Nana Abu and Naano are hesitant about visiting the Senior Center? How does Zara help them overcome their hesitancy?
13. Naano and Nana Abu take Zayd and Zara to the masjid, or mosque, for Jum'ah prayers. In Islam, Friday prayers are communal, meaning people come together to pray and worship. Early in chapter 17, Zara describes their visit to the mosque with her grandparents. In addition to prayers, what else happens while she is there? Why do you think communal activities, where people come together and meet in person, are important?
14. What helps Naano and Nana Abu feel comfortable at the Senior Center? What can this teach you about helping people feel like they belong and are needed?
15. What would Nana Abu and Naano's life have been like if Zara and Zayd had not stayed with them over spring break? What do Naano and Nana Abu learn from their grandchildren? What did Zara and Zayd learn from their grandparents?

Extension Activities

1. *Zara's Rules for Living Your Best Life* begins with Naomi suggesting building a marble roller coaster as a spring break activity. Rube Goldberg is an artist and inventor whose creations have inspired Rube Goldberg competitions that involve using everyday materials (like marbles) to build elaborate machines. Read more about Rube Goldberg here (<https://www.rubegoldberg.org/>), then work with a team to create your own Rube Goldberg machine.
2. In chapter 1, Hena Khan describes the neighborhood clubhouse, which the children made from a converted toolshed. Design your own ideal clubhouse by creating a floor plan of the space. The Glazer Children's Museum has a short video that explains the basics of floorplan design: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hl_ZMJt9PQw. What would you include in your clubhouse, and why? Who would be invited, and what would you do in your clubhouse?
3. Naano and Nana Abu sometimes speak Urdu, the language they spoke in Pakistan. While Zara does not speak Urdu, she says, "I understand Naano well enough to figure out she's saying something like, 'I'll show you fun'" (Chapter 4). Make a list of all the Urdu words and phrases you find in the book and create an Urdu-to-English dictionary. First, use context clues to guess what the words mean, and then look up the translation to see if you are correct.
4. Naano teaches Zara and Zayd to play a card game from Pakistan called Rung, or Court Piece. (Chapter 5) Research Pakistani children's games and pastimes to discover new things to play with your friends. Start by looking up instructions for how to play Rung. There are even sites that let you play online!



5. As an activity for Zara and Zayd, Naano plans a high tea. High tea is a tradition in many parts of the world. Originating in England, it is popular in countries including America, India, Pakistan, Hong Kong, and even Dubai. Research the rules of etiquette, menus, and traditions that afternoon tea celebrations have in common, then work with your friends or classmates to plan a special afternoon tea celebration.
6. Most communities have at least one senior center. Brainstorm ways that your class can connect with your local senior center. You can send cards or letters to celebrate holidays, help with a service project, or learn more about a previous decade via Zoom or in person with a senior.
7. Find out more about your family history by interviewing an older family member or person in your life. Find out what their interests are and ask about their favorite memories. Then write an essay about the person that you interviewed. At the end of the essay, answer this question: "If you could spend one day doing any activity with your person, what would you want to do and why?"



HENA KHAN is a Pakistani American writer. She is the author of the middle grade novels *Amina's Voice*, *Amina's Song*, *More to the Story*, and the *Zara's Rules* series and picture books *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns*, *Under My Hijab*, and *It's Ramadan*, *Curious George*, among others. Hena lives in her hometown of Rockville, Maryland, with her family. You can learn more about Hena and her books by visiting her website at HenaKhan.com.

Other Published Works by Hena Khan

Amina's Voice

Amina's Song

More to the Story

Zayd Saleem, *Chasing the Dream* series

Power Forward

On Point

Bounce Back



Guide prepared by Amy Jurskis, English Department Chair at Oxbridge Academy.

This guide has been provided by Simon & Schuster for classroom, library, and reading group use. It may be reproduced in its entirety or excerpted for these purposes.