

Nothing ever happens in the sleepy village of Bani Rashid, which is why Jamal is so excited when an explorer from Europe takes an interest in his home town. At first, Jamal tries to impress Mr Moneta – until it becomes clear that this visitor wants to do more than just admire the statues that Jamal sits beneath and tells his secrets to.

Jamal realises that he needs to prevent Mr Moneta from taking the Smiling Stones away ... and from discovering an amazing lost chamber of riches hidden beneath Bani Rashid. But how can a penniless village boy defeat a man the size of a giant? A battle of wits has begun, but as the heat of the summer grows, there can only be one winner ...

Also available:



MARS / Grey B



Rising Stars
Reading Planet

ISBN 978-1-5104-4482-9



www.risingstarsreadingplanet.com

THE SMILING STONES

LEILA RASHEED

The Smiling Stones

Leila Rasheed

A note from the author

I grew up in a country with beautiful ancient ruins, similar to Egypt's. I loved exploring them; it was like an adventure playground! When I learned that, in the 1800s, people like Moneta had come and taken their favourite bits of ancient places away, I wondered how the children who lived near the ruins had felt about it. If it was me, I would have hated to lose familiar, beloved parts of my world. That's where the idea for this story came from.

Now try this!

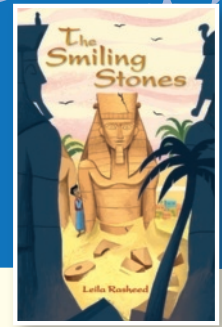
Find out more about Giovanni Belzoni, whom the character of Moneta is based on. Where did many of Belzoni's discoveries end up being kept after they were taken from Egypt?

Create a poster to advertise the wonders of Bani Rashid, with Jamal as your tour guide. Make sure it persuades visitors to come to see the Smiling Stones and the amazing chamber of riches hidden beneath this quiet village!

Write a diary entry from the point of view of Tizemt. What happened to her on the day that she met Jamal?

The Smiling Stones

Leila Rasheed



Book overview

Jamal, the young narrator of this story, lives in the village of Bani Rashid, in Egypt, over 200 years ago. When archaeologist Mr Moneta arrives and takes an interest in the village and its Smiling Stones, Jamal is keen to help him. But Jamal soon discovers that Moneta intends to move the giant stones to England. With the help of a friend, Tizemt, he plans to stop him. Moneta is finally defeated by the sun, the wind – and his own greed.

This story is written in the first person. It has many tension points. The actions of the main characters provide opportunities for discussion about what is 'fair' and 'unfair', and children will be able to make inferences and predictions.

The book links with *A Guide to Ancient Egypt*, also at Mars Band.

Key words

Discuss these key words with children to test understanding before reading or as you read.

defeated, military, antiquities (all p4), **the Pasha, sand dunes** (both p5), **salaams** (p10), **dowry** (p12), **ifreet** (p16), **cartouche** (p19), **tinder box** (p21), **excavation** (p22), **beaded with sweat** (p28), **garnets, lapis, centuries** (all p37), **oasis** (p46), **taken its toll, uncanny** (both p56)

Reading and SPaG* objectives

This text and the suggested activities will support children to:

- ★ draw inferences such as characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justify with evidence from the text
- ★ predict what might happen from details stated and implied in a text
- ★ discuss words and phrases that capture the reader's interest and imagination.

Before reading

Introduce children to the book by looking at the front and back cover.

- ★ Point to the book title. Ask: *Can stones smile?* (A sculpture/statue of a face can smile.) Discuss the title and the cover illustration. Note the alliteration: 'Smiling Stones'.
- ★ *Where and when is the story set?* Look for clues in the cover illustration, the blurb and the foreword on page 4. (In Egypt; in history/over 200 years ago.)
- ★ Have children read any other books about Egypt/Egypt's history/the Egyptians? The illustration on the cover may remind them of a pharaoh or king from Egypt's past, e.g. they may have heard of Tutankhamun.
- ★ Read together the cover blurb. Ask: *What type of story is this? Have you read any other stories like this?*

During reading

Read the foreword aloud to the class, discussing any unfamiliar words or ideas, e.g. 'inspired by'. Read the labels on the map. Say: *Perhaps we will find out about these places in the story.* Ask children to read aloud Chapter 1 with you.

- ★ Ask: *Who is telling the story in this book?* (Jamal, the main character)
- ★ Focus on what you have learned about Jamal in the first chapter. Discuss words you could use to describe his character. (E.g. thoughtful, worrier, curious) Ask: *Why does Jamal call the smiling stone his 'friend'? What does this tell us about Jamal? Why could no one answer Jamal's questions about the stones?* Use evidence from the text.
- Ⓥ Ask: *What was the first thing Jamal noticed about Moneta?* (his 'giant' size) Find evidence in the text that points to his large size ("There's a giant!" / the camel was bent like a hammock/'The man was broad like a bull hippopotamus'/'his legs nearly touched the ground'/the earth shook when he jumped down) Discuss the similes 'bent like a hammock' and 'broad like a bull hippopotamus'. Show visuals, if children are unsure, of what a hammock or a bull hippo looks like. Look out for more similes later in the story. Complete PCM1.



★ Get children to echo-read the second paragraph on page 8 and discuss the effectiveness of this description.

★ *What is Jamal feeling at the end of the chapter, and why?* (E.g. pleased, hopeful, excited)

In Chapter 2, we find out what motivates the main characters. Read in small groups, with children taking turns to read a page each.

★ Ask: *What does Moneta want?* (Moneta wants men to help him dig under the stones.) *What is his problem?* (The men won't work without permission from Jamal's father.) Help children find evidence from the text to support their answers.

★ *Why does Jamal's father say hiring labourers is very difficult?* (He wants things to stay as they are because he thinks the chief won't like it – refer back to page 10.)

★ *What does Jamal want?* (He wants to find out more about the stones and meet people from all over the world.) *Do you think Jamal is right?* Ask children what they think Jamal will do. *What would you do?*

S Look at the words 'carefully' and 'cautiously' on page 16. Point out that the suffix *-ly* is added to the adjective to form an adverb. There are other examples: *closely* (page 15), *quickly* (page 17), *suspiciously* (page 18). Note exceptions, e.g. if the root word ends in *-y* (*happily*).

In Chapter 3, Jamal's father gives permission for the labourers to help in the excavation. Read aloud with the class. Choose pages for children to echo-read.

★ *Why was Jamal scared when he saw the shadow of the ifreet?* (page 21)

★ *Is the magic lantern 'magic'?* (No, it's a trick, see page 21)

★ On page 22, ask: *What made Jamal's father change his mind and agree to help?* Find evidence in the text. (Moneta offers his father coffee – Jamal's idea!)

★ *What sort of man is Moneta?* Think of adjectives to describe him, e.g. powerful, clever, manipulative, persistent, persuasive, etc. *How did Jamal feel at the end of this chapter?* Look for evidence. Predict: *Will Jamal's dreams of becoming a guide come true?* Encourage children to share their thoughts.

The excavation reveals an ancient city in Chapter 4, and Jamal finds treasure in Chapter 5. Children could take turns to read a page each, in pairs or small groups.

P Point to the possessive apostrophes after the plural words on page 28: 'lions' bodies' and 'falcons' heads'. Ask: *Where would the possessive apostrophe be if there was one lion/one falcon?* (a lion's body/a falcon's head)

★ Ask children to predict what the tree trunks might be for (page 28). Tell them they will find the answer later!

★ On page 29, Maryam tells Jamal she hopes to go to England one day. *"Why not?" ... "Anything could happen,"* she says. *Does Jamal agree with her?*

★ *Was it fair or unfair of Moneta to take the gold leaf from Jamal?* Ask children to share their views.

V Discuss the use of powerful verbs in the description on page 32. Look at the illustration of Rameses on page 33. Ask: *How does this text and image make the reader feel?* Children could share their views.

★ At the end of page 34, ask: *Does Jamal agree with Maryam – is Moneta a trickster?* Discuss.

★ On page 38, Jamal wants his village to be tiny and forgotten once more. *Why? What was Jamal's first ever real secret?*

★ On page 40, ask: *Why was Jamal lucky? How did the gold give Jamal power?*

In Chapter 6, Jamal arrives in Cairo and here he meets Tizemt. Turn to the map on page 4 to find out where Cairo is. Encourage children to read in small groups, taking turns to read a page each.

★ Point to the author's repeated use of the word 'so' at the end of the first paragraph on page 42. Re-read this text as one sentence, taking out 'so', e.g. 'Cairo was big, noisy, smelly, dusty and scary.' Ask children which version they prefer, and why.

★ On pages 42–43, ask: *Why had Jamal lied to the sailor, when he knew it wasn't right to lie? Is it ever right to lie?* Discuss.

★ *Why was Jamal reminded of his sister when he spoke to Tizemt?* Look for evidence in the text. (She knows things. She calls him 'squirt' on page 46, which is what his sister calls him.)

★ On page 49, ask: *Why did Tizemt say that Moneta must be stopped?* (Because her people use the statue to find their way in the desert.)

P Discuss the punctuation of the dialogue on page 50. Remind children that inverted commas are placed around words that are spoken, and punctuation of the speech appears inside the inverted commas. But the words: 'said Tizemt'/'I asked her'/'I said' are not actually spoken so they are placed outside the inverted commas.



With the help of Tizemt, Jamal puts his plan into action in Chapter 7. In Chapter 8, we see the fall of Moneta. Read aloud to the class, with children joining in. Select paragraphs for echo-reading.

- S** Look at the word 'furious' on page 53. Point to the suffix *-ous*. Ask: *What is the root word?* (fury) There have been other examples with the *-ous* suffix in the story: famous (root: fame) and dangerous (root: danger). Do children know any others? (e.g. courageous)
- ★ On page 58, ask: *Why did Abdul run away?* (He saw that Moneta was as confused as anyone.) *Did Moneta run? Why not?*
- ★ Discuss what Jamal meant by saying, on page 62: "... I had seen the fall of a great king – but it hadn't been the one everyone had expected to fall." (It was Moneta who had fallen, not King Rameses.)
- ★ Ask: *Why did Maryam write to Jamal to tell him about the singing statue?* (E.g. To explain that the screaming noise from their statue could have come from the wind blowing through the crack in the stone.)
- ★ Complete PCM2 to find out what children have understood.

Reading for pleasure

As part of your discussion at the end of the book, encourage children to discuss whether they liked the book. You could rate the book as a class alongside other books you've read.

- ★ Ask: *What did you like about the book?* Prompt children to think about the main characters and the plot.
- ★ *Was there anything that you would change about the book? What would have happened if Jamal had told Moneta about the secret chamber?*
- ★ *Can you think of any other fiction stories, set in ancient times, that you've enjoyed?*

Follow-up activities

Re-read page 23 of the story. Jamal hears the faint voices of the villagers discussing Moneta and his plans to dig beneath the Smiling Stones. Ask children to work in groups of three or four to act out what the villagers are saying. *What are their hopes and fears?* Use the dialogue for inspiration.

Children could write an alternative ending for the story – one in which Jamal tells Moneta (or his father or sister, if they prefer) about the gold, jewels and other treasures he saw in the secret chamber. *How would this change the story ending?* Children could act out/write out their ideas as a storyboard.

Children write a character profile of one of the characters from the book, using the following sub-headings: appearance, personality, likes and dislikes, dreams for the future. Encourage them to re-read relevant passages in the book to help with ideas.

The Smiling Stones

Name: _____ Date: _____

Smiling Stones similes

The words underlined in the sentences below are similes from the story. What does each of these similes mean? Tick the answer you think is best.

1 The River Nile looks like a line of silver or gold along the horizon.

The river was very precious.

The river was straight and gleaming.

The river was wide and deep.

The river was raging.

2 Moneta's deep voice was like the distant rumble of cannon fire.

His voice was shrill and scary.

His voice was deep and rough.

His voice was hoarse and croaky.

His voice was loud and booming.

3 Machines with levers jutting out like the legs of a giant beetle.

The machines each had six levers.

The machines had lots of levers sticking out.

The machines had long legs.

The machines had wheels.

4 My friend was like a ship's towering mast tangled in the rigging.

The ropes were from a ship.

The ropes were very thick.

The ropes were loose.

The ropes were wrapped around him.

5 The sun's rays were like burning hands.

The sun was high in the sky. The sun was behind the clouds.

The sun burned the skin it touched. The sun was shining.

The Smiling Stones

Name: _____ Date: _____

True or false

Read the statements below. Decide whether each is 'True' or 'False'. Find evidence from the story to support your answer.

Statement	True?	False?	Evidence
The story is set in Africa.			
Jamal dreamed of travelling the world.			
Jamal wanted to find out more about the stones.			
Moneta wanted to share the gold leaf with the workers.			
The Pasha could buy machines in return for the stones.			
Moneta was defeated by the ifreet in the end.			