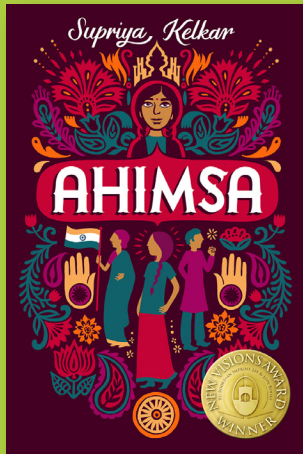


TEACHER'S GUIDE



LEE & LOW BOOKS

Ahimsa

written by Supriya Kelkar

About the Book

Genre: Historical Realistic Fiction

***Reading Level:** Grade 6

Interest Level: Grades 5–8

Guided Reading Level: Z

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Themes: Conflict Resolution, Protest, Courage, Colonialism, Friendship, Freedom, Education, Socioeconomic Status, Discrimination, Collaboration, History, Family, India, World War II, Hindu Interest, Muslim Interest, Asian/Asian American Interest

SYNOPSIS

In 1942, after Mahatma Gandhi asks Indians to give one family member to the freedom movement, ten-year-old Anjali is devastated to think of her father risking his life for the freedom struggle.

But it turns out he isn't the one joining. Anjali's mother is. And with this change comes many more adjustments designed to improve their country and use "ahimsa"—non-violent resistance—to stand up to the British government. First the family must trade in their fine foreign-made clothes for homespun cotton, so Anjali has to give up her prettiest belongings. Then her mother decides to reach out to the Dalit community, the "untouchables" of society. Anjali is forced to get over her past prejudices as her family becomes increasingly involved in the movement.

When Anjali's mother is jailed, Anjali must step out of her comfort zone to take over her mother's work, ensuring that her little part of the independence movement is completed.

Inspired by her great-grandmother's experience working with Gandhi, New Visions Award winner Supriya Kelkar shines a light on the Indian freedom movement in this poignant debut.



BACKGROUND

Author's Note from Supriya Kelkar:

“Anjali’s story takes place in the fictional town of Navrangpur, a Hindi-speaking town I envisioned two hundred miles northeast of what is now known as Mumbai. India is a large, diverse country with twenty-three official languages and hundreds of dialects, written in several different scripts. The Indian words used in this novel are Hindi. Along with the many languages spoken in India, there are a multitude of cultural practices and experiences that can vary from region to region and family to family. So while many of the moments described in this book were experienced by my family members, they may differ from the experiences of another person from a different part of India.

Although this story is fictional, several of the events and concepts mentioned in it are not.

The British first came to control parts of India in the 1700s, under the East India Company. However, in 1858, control of the East India Company’s majority of India was transferred over to the British Crown, or ‘the Raj,’ was it was commonly referred to in the Indian subcontinent.

Mohandas K. Gandhi, also known as Mahatma Gandhi, began his civil disobedience campaign against the British in the early 1900s in South Africa, and later became one of the most influential leaders of the independence movement in India through various methods of passive resistance.

The spinning wheel mentioned in this book was one such method. By getting Indians to go back to the use of the spinning wheel, Gandhi felt the village economy could be boosted. If villagers once again spun cotton rather than the industrial mills, which had become the norm under British rule, then the sizing, dyeing, and weaving industries would also be sustained. The ability to be self-reliant could help India break free from the Raj as well.

Gandhi burned foreign-spun clothes decades before this story takes place, but he later regretted it, writing that he had been ‘burning cloth utterly regardless of the fact that [the famine-stricken at Khulna] were dying of hunger and nakedness.’

Gandhi used to spin fiber into thread every day in his ashram. In fact, the spinning wheel had so much importance as a symbol of Indian self-sufficiency that an

earlier, pre-Independence version of the Indian flag had the spinning wheel in the center of it. This spinning wheel was later changed to a multispoked wheel representing the wheel of dharma, also called the wheel of Ashoka, an ancient Buddhist emperor who ruled over the majority of the Indian subcontinent and renounced violence. But even though the spinning wheel is no longer on the Indian flag, by law, the flag must be made of hand-spun or hand-woven wool, cotton, or silk khadi.

In addition to the khadi movement, Gandhi had many other innovative ways of dealing with the British. He protested the British tax on Indian salt by leading a two-hundred-forty-one-mile march to the Arabian sea over twenty-two days to grab a handful of salt from the banks, and fasted several times for various reasons, including in protest of Hindu-Muslim violence. Gandhi often emptied waste from toilets and made all new inhabitants at his ashrams remove the waste from the dry toilets and bury it in the pits.

Gandhi left the Indian Congress Party a few years before World War II to work on helping the poor. When World War II broke out, though, some Indian leaders thought it was an opportune time to heighten the effort for India’s independence. Gandhi once again returned to the fight and helped start the Quit India movement in 1942. In response, the British government imprisoned him and most of the Indian Congress. By 1945, things began to change, and the negotiations for India’s independence began. The centuries-long hard work of the freedom fighters had finally paid off, and on August 15, 1947, India finally gained its independence.

India is now the world’s largest democracy, but its independence came at a cost to the people, as the subcontinent was divided into two nations when the British agreed to leave: India and Pakistan. The division led to a violent start to two nations, with Hindus and Muslims fleeing in both directions across the border between India and Pakistan. In 1948, Gandhi was assassinated by Nathuram Godse, who felt that Gandhi was partially responsible for splitting India and allowing the creation of Pakistan.

The Hindu caste system mentioned in this novel was designed thousands of years ago to classify the population into four categories. At the top was the Brahmin, or scholarly caste, some of whom were priests, to which Anjali’s family belonged. Next was the warrior caste, then



the caste consistent of traders and other landowners, and then the laborer caste. Those who weren't categorized into these four groups formed a fifth caste, the Dalits. Although the caste system was constitutionally abolished in 1950, many people still face discrimination and hardship due to the stigmas associated with their caste.

While not all freedom fighters were social reformers, some did believe there was a dual struggle: an internal one, battling the social injustices in India, and an external one, against the British—because when independence was eventually gained, the country's social problems had to be solved. In this story, burning clothes and making khadi is part of Ma's contribution to fighting against the British, while helping all Indians in her community become equal was part of her contribution to India's homegrown issues.

For other freedom fighters, social causes (including Dalit politics) and the politics of independence were considered separate entities. The movement to gain equal treatment for Dalits continued well after India gained its freedom from the British.

The fictional character of Keshavji lived at Gandhi's ashram, where many Dalits had lived. Although Gandhi is often portrayed as a saint, it is important to remember he was a real person who was not perfect, and who sometimes made racist, prejudicial statements we would never condone today. As such, many Dalits did not and do not agree with all of Gandhi's ideas or think he had their best interests in mind. They felt and feel that Gandhi wanted them to assimilate, but Dr. Bhimrao Raji Ambedkar, also known as Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, wanted to emancipate them.

Dr. Ambedkar, the father of the Indian constitution, was a Dalit. His father served in the army, and Dr. Ambedkar was the only Dalit boy in his school. He had to sit by himself on the floor in the corner at school, and no one was allowed to talk to him. In his teens, he was the sole Dalit student at a government school. This time he was allowed to sit on the back bench. Once, a teacher asked him to solve a question on the chalkboard. That was where the upper caste children's lunch boxes were kept, and they rushed to grab their tiffin containers before the mere presence of Ambedkar could 'pollute' them. The adversity continued into his later school years as well, when Ambedkar was not allowed to learn Sanskrit because it was the language of the Hindu texts. Despite these cruel hardships, Ambedkar continued to study, and in 1908 he went to college and

then got his postgraduate work at Columbia University and got his Ph.D.

Dr. Ambedkar became a political leader and fought for the rights of the 'Depressed Classes.' In 1938, he walked out in protest of the Bombay Legislative Assembly when Congress accepted Gandhi's usage of 'Harijan,' which he considered condescending. Dr. Ambedkar renounced Hinduism because of the caste system, and he and millions of Dalits became Buddhists. Buddhism, a religion founded in ancient India, has no caste system. After independence in 1947, Dr. Ambedkar went on to become the Chairman of the Drafting Committee for the new constitution.

The Rani of Jhansi, the queen young Anjali made a drawing of, was a real queen who was seen as a symbol of rebellion against the British in the 1800s. Although there are conflicting reports as to how active she actually was in the fight, some historians agree that while initially she was forced by the Indian Sepoys to join their rebellion, later she fought the British on her own accord.

Decades later, in the 1940s, it wasn't uncommon for women to be involved in the freedom movement. The character of Shailaja is inspired by my great-grandmother, Anasuyabai Kale. She was a brave, determined woman who came from humble roots yet was able to contribute a lot to the freedom fight, all with the support of her progressive husband. Anasuyabi Kale worked with Mahatma Gandhi, was imprisoned for her civil disobedience, fought for women's rights, met with Dr. Ambedkar, and managed to get seven political prisoners—who were sent to the gallows—off death row. After independence, Anasuyabi Kale went on to become a two-term Congresswoman.

She, and all the Indians, young and old, male and female, who participated in the Gandhian movement for independence, proved that anyone can change the world for the better when they set their minds to it, and they can do it without violence. What a great testament to the power of ahimsa.”



★ **VERDICT:** “A historical, timely, and informative story that is full of heart and belongs in most library collections.”

—*School Library Journal*

★ “Kelkar’s first middle-grade book is filled with female empowerment, hope, family, and the power of nonviolent resistance. Readers will empathize with this heartbreakingly charming debut about the universal struggle of overcoming fears and biases in order to make the world a better place.”

—*Booklist*

“A simple and yet compelling story about love and tolerance . . . Read out Ahimsa to your children. It’s an important lesson delivered through a delightful story.”

—*Vidhu Vinod Chopra, director of the films 1942: A Love Story and Eklavya: The Royal Guard*

16. What does Chachaji yell at Mohan for? What does Anjali’s mother do afterwards?
17. When Anjali and Ma are in the rickshaw, what does Anjali notice about the children in the street?
18. What does Ma announce at the meeting that she and Anjali are going to do?
19. Who is Keshavji? What does he say at the meeting in the khadi store?

Chapters 10–18

20. What does Diwali mean to Anjali?
21. Who is receiving Anjali and Ma’s sweet treats on Diwali? Where do Anjali and Ma go to give them the treats?
22. How do Dalit people react when Ma gives them food? What do they say to Anjali and Ma?
23. What does Anjali see Mohan make? What does she realize about the necklaces her friends wear?
24. What does Mohan say about Gandhi to Anjali? What does he think of Gandhi?
25. What does Baba tell Anjali about Emperor Akbar?
26. What does Baba say about why Chachaji lives with Anjali and her family?
27. What does Baba say about what Mohan said about the word “Harijan”? What does Anjali think about who is right and who is wrong?
28. What do Anjali and Ma start doing in the basti?

29. Who else comes to the basti to help Anjali and Ma teach? How does he act with the students at the basti?
30. What does Mohan say to Anjali at the basti about the prasad? What name does he want to be called?
31. What does Anjali make Ma realize about the prasad and the people who live in the basti?
32. What does Keshavji say Gandhi fasted for? What does he say about the Dalit people?
33. Who is Dr. Ambedkar and what does he say about Gandhi’s stance about Dalit people?
34. What do Anjali and Ma start doing at home with the outhouse? Who else cleaned outhouses that fought for freedom in India?
35. Who do Anjali and Ma see in front of their neighbor’s house? What do they tell him and then what do they realize?
36. What do Anjali’s friends say to her when she tells them that she’s going to tutor the Dalit children after school?
37. What does Anjali tell the grocer about her school? What does she say to defend herself?
38. What does Mohan agree to do after he sees Anjali interact with the grocer?
39. What does Ma say about her tutor and how she became educated?
40. Where do Mohan and the other Dalit students have to sit when they are allowed to attend Anjali’s school?



41. What had Anjali been hearing about Muslim leaders in India? What did some Muslim people want?

42. What does Ramu tell Baba about the riots?

Chapters 19–27

43. In what ways does Anjali think Hindus and Muslims are different? What do Hindus believe? What do Muslims believe?

44. What does Anjali sneak out of her house to do?

45. What group of people does Anjali see after she sneaks out of the house? What do they do?

46. What does Anjali do after she sees the storefront on fire?

47. Who defends and protects Anjali during the riots? What does he do?

48. What does Irfaan say to Anjali after the riots on his way to the Mosque? What does Anjali say in response?

49. Why can't Anjali go to school? What does Baba say to her?

50. What happens to Ma after the meeting with Keshavji?

51. What explanation do the police give to Ma for the reason they arrested her?

52. Where do Anjali and Mohan go together? What are they trying to do?

53. How does Mohan compare Anjali to her mother? What does he say?

54. What does Ma tell Anjali in jail?

55. What happens to Mohan? What does Mohan say to Anjali after she tries to get him help?

Chapters 28–35

56. Who does Anjali realize that she needs to ask for help from?

57. What does Captain Brent say to Anjali after she asks him to help her mother get out of prison?

58. Who does Anjali see at the Holi celebration? What do they say to Anjali?

59. Who does Anjali see in the basti? What does Anjali tell Masterji that she wants to do?

60. Why does Anjali need Irfaan when she's with Nandini?

61. Who comes to the school that Anjali was surprised to see? What does she say to her? What does Suman want?

62. Who does Anjali see at the funeral procession? What was the reason for his death?

63. What store does Captain Brent announce is going to be shut down? Why does he say it's going to be closed?

64. What happens after Captain Brent proclaims that the khadi shop will close?

65. After Anjali sees Captain Brent being attacked, what does she do? What word does she yell to everyone? Who else joins her in yelling "ahimsa"?

66. What does Captain Brent bring to Anjali's house?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3; and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3; and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What does the title *Ahimsa* mean to you after reading? Why do you think the author chose this particular title?

2. How does Anjali's mother inspire her throughout the book? How does Anjali's perception of her mother as a freedom fighter change?

3. Why was the Dalits' equality important to India's freedom? How do Anjali and Ma work with the Dalits? How does their work with the Dalits change over the course of *Ahimsa*?

4. Why does Keshavji pause when Ma confesses to him at the basti that they already handed out prasad? Why is this an important moment in *Ahimsa*?

5. How does Anjali realize that what she and Ma did in the Dalits' basti was inappropriate? What do Anjali and Ma come to understand about Dalit people? How does Mohan help Anjali realize her privilege in the world, and how does he help change her vision of the freedom struggle?

6. Why do some of the Dalit people not agree with some of Gandhi's motives? What are some of the



reasons Dalit people do not believe in all of Gandhi's actions? Why did they feel that way about Gandhi? Does it change your own perception of Gandhi? Why or why not?

7. Why does Keshavji say he's a Buddhist and not a Hindu? What does Keshavji's decision to be a Buddhist have to do with Gandhi and the freedom struggle? Why is this important to understanding the freedom movement?
8. How does the cloth on the loom represent Anjali's mistakes? Why does Keshavji use this a metaphor, or symbol, for her mistakes during the freedom struggle?
9. How are spinning cotton and making clothing important to the freedom movement? Why were these acts essential to the freedom movement?
10. How does cleaning the outhouse make Anjali's beliefs change? How does cleaning their family latrine change her stance on life and Dalit people? What feelings and emotions does she grapple with during this experience, from cleaning the family latrine to taking the excrement to the depository?
11. How does Mohan make Anjali think about her own self in the world? How does the conflict between his need to work and his need to be educated make her think about her role in the freedom movement? What does it make her think about people in different castes?
12. How does Anjali defend the Dalit students from her classmates when they are finally allowed to attend Pragati, Anjali's school? Why does Anjali make it her goal to allow the Dalit students to enter her school? Why does their education matter so much to Anjali?
13. How does Anjali help Ma overcome Ma's doubt about the freedom struggle after the riots? How does Anjali inspire her mother to continue to fight for freedom? What do Anjali's actions say about how her character has changed from the beginning of the book to after the riots?
14. Why does Anjali decide to continue the freedom struggle despite her mother's imprisonment, Mohan's beatings, and Irfaan's anger? How does Anjali continue to fight for freedom, despite the many obstacles that get in her way?

15. Overall, why does Anjali's family believe that helping Dalit people will serve the freedom movement and India's quest freedom from Britain?

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

1. What is one big thought that you have after reading this book? Think about different character changes, the setting, and the historical context. What did you learn from reading *Ahimsa*?
2. What do you think Supriya Kelkar's message to the reader is? Think about possible motivations behind Supriya Kelkar's intentions to write the book. What do you think she wanted to tell her readers?
3. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to your own life? What do Anjali's experiences, thoughts, and feelings mean to you? Have you fought for anything you believed in that was meaningful to you, like Anjali?
4. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *Ahimsa*? Why did you make those connections?
5. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to what you have seen in the world or on the news? Why did *Ahimsa* make you think of that?
6. What kinds of conflicts are presented in *Ahimsa*? Discuss Anjali's conflicts within herself, with peers, and conflicts in the world. Compare and contrast the different conflicts within the text. Also have students discuss other conflicts such as: Indian and British colonial powers, Hindus and Muslims, and castes with different castes.
7. What do you think of the terminology of "Dalit" versus "Untouchable" versus "Harijan"? Compare and contrast the different terms that are used to discuss this caste in India. What do these different terms mean and how are they important to Mohan and the other people in his basti, and the Indian freedom struggle in general?
8. What do you think of Gandhi's influence in the book? How does Mohan's and Keshavji's thoughts of Gandhi conflict? How does it change your perception of Gandhi?



ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
 - Review each chapter and have students summarize what is happening in the chapter, first orally, then in writing.
 - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about a character or central figure in the story they admire or connect to the most.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

English Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1-3; Craft and Structure, Strands 4-6; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7-9; Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)
(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3; Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6; Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9; Range of Writing, Strand 10)
(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3; Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

1. Have students compare and contrast Ma's and Anjali's development over the course of *Ahimsa*. Students should create a Venn diagram that has Ma on one side, Anjali on the other side, and the comparisons in the middle. How are their quests for freedom similar? How are they different? How are their personality traits similar? How are they different? Why is it important to analyze both Ma and Anjali? Based on this exercise, students should answer the following question in an essay: Do Ma and Anjali have similar character growth? Why or why not?
2. Have students examine Anjali's character in terms of helpful and harmful traits. According to *The Reading Strategies Book* (<http://www.heinemann.com/products/e07433.aspx>), students can think about Anjali in terms of traits that are helpful, or traits that are problematic and that keep getting her in trouble. Consider providing students with a sentence starter to get them thinking about her character, "Often my character seems to _____, but sometimes _____." How do these character traits influence the story? How does Anjali's harmful traits and helpful traits contribute to her character development in *Ahimsa*?
3. Have students read the *Washington Post* (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/parenting/wp/2017/10/13/author-of-ahimsa-talks-about-social-justice-activism-and-parenting/?utm_term=.88918af855330) interview with Supriya Kelkar. Then, come up with additional questions to ask Supriya Kelkar. Have students think about different questions that are important to ask during an interview. What do students want to know about writing a story for young readers? Consider



reaching out to Supriya Kelkar for a Skype interview for face-to-face interaction (www.supriyakelkar.com).

4. Have students examine Anjali's character in the context of the historical setting. Ask students to research and compile a list of what's happening in the book in terms of historical context. Then, have students answer the question: How would this book be different if it didn't happen during this time period?
5. Have students examine the character of Mohan and write several journal entries from the perspective of Mohan. Have students select a section of the story that features Mohan and Anjali's interactions. Have students write journal entries from the point of view of Mohan and have them examine several questions: How is Mohan feeling during this interaction? How do you think he feels towards Anjali?
6. Have students analyze the historical contexts in *Ahimsa*. *The Reading Strategies Book* (<http://www.heinemann.com/products/e07433.aspx>) suggests that students create a chart that has a column for "environmental condition" and "definition." Underneath "environmental condition," create rows for "social," "economic," and "political." In the right column, define what those mean (i.e. "social" is interactions between people). Have students brainstorm on sticky notes the different social, economic, and political conditions during the time period of 1942.
7. Have students generate a list of Anjali's mistakes and how she learned from them. Anjali and her mother both make mistakes throughout the book on their journey of learning about how to be Indian freedom fighters. Have students track Anjali's mistakes throughout the book and how she learns from them in a T-chart. At the completion of the chart, have students reflect on what Anjali's mistakes say about her as a person. Is it okay to make mistakes and learn from them? Why?
8. Have students write a pair of letters when Anjali's mother is in jail. One letter should be from the perspective of Anjali to her mother, and the other letter should be from the perspective of Ma to Anjali. What do you think Anjali would say in her letter to Ma? What about in Ma's letter to Anjali? Have students take on the perspectives of these characters through letter writing.
9. Have students identify a place where Anjali's character changes in the book. Why do students think that was a point where Anjali's character changed? How does Anjali feel before the change, what causes the change, and then how does she feel after? Create a graphic organizer with a column on the left that says "before," a column in the middle that says "Event—what happened that caused the change," and then a column that says "after."
10. Conduct a historical fiction unit featuring *Step up to the Plate*, *Maria Singh* by Uma Krishnaswami (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/step-up-to-the-plate-maria-singh>) and *Ahimsa*. Have students research the historical time periods of both of these LEE & LOW titles. How are the characters similar? How are they different? How are their families similar? How are their families different? What did students learn about the fight for independence from Britain in India in both of these books?
11. Encourage students to watch the book trailer for *Ahimsa* (<http://mrschureads.blogspot.com/2017/09/book-trailer-premiere-ahimsa-by-supriya.html>). For ideas, check out this Creating Reading Excitement with Book Trailers lesson plan by ReadWriteThink.org (<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/book-report-alternative-creating-c-30914.html>).
12. Have students write in more detail about question #14 in Extension/Higher Level Thinking: why does Anjali's family believe that helping Dalit people will serve the freedom movement and lead to India gaining freedom from the British? Encourage students to think about independence in terms of caste equality: fighting for freedom and independence gives people the motivation to fight for caste equality so that independence means something to all.
13. Have students read this quote from the Author's Note, "While not all freedom fighters were social reformers, some did believe there was a dual struggle: an internal one, battling the social injustices in India, and an external one, against the British—because when independence was eventually gained, the country's social problems had to be solved." Have students identify and the internal and external struggles and write about why those conflicts were happening.



Social Studies/Geography

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3; Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9; Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3; Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6; Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9; and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

1. Have students create a timeline of the British rule in India until independence. Have students conduct research online about important events in India's history that led up to independence. Who were important figures in India, besides Gandhi, that helped lead India to eventual freedom? What were important events that happened before the year of 1942? What about after?
2. Create a month-by-month timeline of India in 1942. Have students find out more information about exactly what happened in the year of 1942 in India and what events transpired that led up to final independence.
3. Have students research the caste system in India. Divide groups and have students research each caste. Have students present to small groups about each caste (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishvas, Shudras, and Dalit people). Even though the caste system was abolished in India in 1950, why do you think people associated with different castes still experience discrimination? Do students think that a caste system exists in the United States? Why or why not? What is the evidence behind a hypothetical caste system in the United States? Columbia University's website on Dr. Ambedkar has a timeline of the caste system for reference (<http://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/mmt/ambedkar/web/timeline.html>).
4. Have students research the food dishes that are mentioned in *Ahimsa*. Many culinary Indian dishes were mentioned in *Ahimsa*. What were some of the food dishes that were mentioned? Have students identify the different foods that were discussed in *Ahimsa* and find photographs and compile recipes to create an *Ahimsa* cookbook for the class. What were the typical ingredients (spices and herbs) used in these dishes?
5. Have students research other Indian freedom fighters, besides Mahatma Gandhi. Supriya Kelkar emphasizes that many other people besides Gandhi were a part of the important fight for India's independence from Britain. Have students investigate other freedom fighters in groups and prepare presentations for the class that include photographs, videos, or other documentation as to how these people helped the quest for Indian independence.
6. Have students research more about the riots and conflict between Hindus and Muslims. When did their conflict begin? Why did it begin? Have students research more about these particular religions, their beliefs, and presence in India. How did this conflict influence the Partition of 1947? How and why did the conflict change over time?
7. Have students compile a list of resources and then sort them according to Primary Sources and Secondary Sources. Explain to students that a primary source provides direct evidence, like a photograph or an actual speech, about an event. Explain to students that secondary sources describe and analyze primary sources, and are not first-hand accounts of actually being at the event, like a newspaper or magazine article. Show students a variety of resources from the Quit India movement or the freedom struggle. Have students sort the resources based on Primary and Secondary Sources. Have students reflect afterward: why is important to have both primary and secondary sources in your research?
8. Have students identify themes in *Ahimsa* and connect them to present-day issues. Provide students with a graphic organizer that has "Themes in *Ahimsa*" in the left-hand column and "Present-day Issue" in the right-hand column. Explain to students that they need to list themes from *Ahimsa* and present-day issues that relate to that theme. Once the graphic organizer is complete, have students select one theme and one present-day issue and write an essay explaining the connection between the two in more detail. Why did they pick this theme to focus on, and what are the implications in our society today? Consider modeling the theme of "gender" in *Ahimsa* and connecting it to women's equality in the workplace. Brainstorm with students how and why these two themes connect, and then have students write an essay about a different theme from their organizer.
9. Have students read an excerpt from Gandhi's "Do or Die" India speech (<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/speech-brought-india-brink-independence-180964366/>) and write a reflection afterward: "Here is a mantra, a short one, that



I give to you. You may imprint it on your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to it. The mantra is ‘Do or Die.’ We shall either free India or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery. Every true Congressman or woman will join the struggle with inflexible determination not to remain alive to see the country in bondage and slavery.” In the reflection, have students think about Gandhi’s message and Anjali’s and Ma’s motivations in the book. How are they similar? Why do you think the “Do or Die” slogan was so important to people in the freedom struggle after reading *Ahimsa*?

Science/STEM

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3; Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9; Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3; Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6; Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9; and Range of Writing, Strand 10)
(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

1. Have students research more about the process of making khadi. What was a charkha used for? How did they weave khadi cloth? How was the fabric dyed (or not dyed)? What kinds of machines were needed to make the clothes? Why were those particular machines used?

Arts/Performing Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)
(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

1. Have students write a reaction to one of the photographs from the “Quit India” movement. (<https://www.indiatimes.com/news/india/10-iconic-pictures-of-the-quit-india-movement-that-will-take-you-back-to-indias-struggle-for-independence-243973.html>) Why did the students pick that particular photograph? What called out to them? How do they think it relates to what they read about in *Ahimsa*?
2. Have students research traditional clothing worn in India. In *Ahimsa*, there are many references to

typical styles of dress. Have students print out photographs of the different clothing mentioned in *Ahimsa*, and have students write captions underneath the photographs explaining the different garb.

3. Have students do a cover study of *Ahimsa*. Have students think about the different symbols that are present on the cover and create a graphic organizer with columns according to each of the symbols (i.e. the flag, flowers, the wheel, and more). Underneath each symbol, have students explain what they think it means and why it’s important to the story.

Home-School Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)
(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

1. Provide students with Supriya Kelkar’s additional titles list at the end of *Ahimsa*. If accessible, have students and families research other middle-grade titles featuring India.
 - *Gandhi: A March to the Sea* by Alice B. McGinty
 - *Grandfather Gandhi* by Arun Gandhi and Bethany Hegedus
 - *Be the Change: A Grandfather Gandhi Story* by Arun Gandhi and Bethany Hegedus
2. Have students interview a family member about something that they are passionate about and fought for. Have students ask family members if they ever protested against something because of their beliefs. How did they feel? What inspired them to protest?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Supriya Kelkar was born and raised in the Midwest. She learned Hindi as a child by watching three Bollywood films a week. After college, she realized her lifelong dream of working in the film industry when she got a job as a Bollywood screenwriter. She has credits on one Hollywood film and several Hindi films. *Ahimsa*, inspired by her great-grandmother's role in the Indian freedom movement, is her debut middle-grade novel. Supriya still lives in the Midwest with her husband, their three children, and a very hyper dog. (www.supriyakelkar.com)

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Book Information for

Ahimsa



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Interest Level: Grades 5–8

Guided Reading Level: V

Accelerated Reader® Level/
Points: N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

THEMES: Conflict Resolution, Protest, Courage, Colonialism, Friendship, Freedom, Education, Socioeconomic Status, Discrimination, Collaboration, History, Family, India, World War II, Hindu Interest, Muslim Interest, Asian/Asian American Interest

RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/ahimsa>

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.