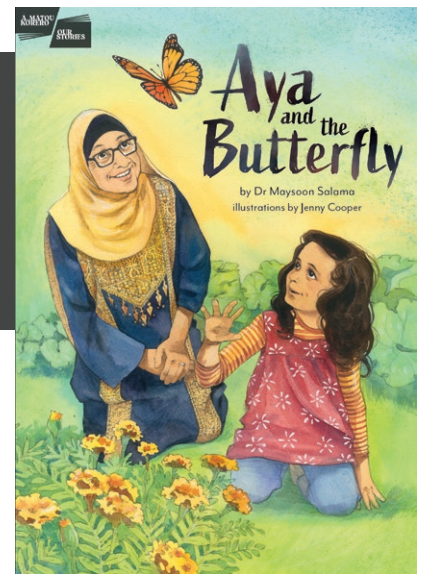


# Kaiako Support Material

**Aya and the Butterfly**  
by Dr Maysoon Salama  
illustrations by Jenny Cooper



**Aya and the Butterfly** is one of a series of picture books intended to support, reflect, and celebrate the Muslim community of New Zealand. The series focuses on wellbeing, resilience, diversity, and inclusion and is intended for use with children in early learning settings and at Level 1 of The New Zealand Curriculum.

*Aya and the Butterfly* is written by Dr Maysoon Salama, who lost her son Atta in the mosque attacks on 15 March 2019. Dr Salama wrote the story for her granddaughter (Aya) and for other children dealing with loss and trauma. It is intended to help children to come to terms with grief, cope with change, and build resilience.

When sharing the story with children, your purpose and approach will vary depending on the group you are sharing it with. However, the first time you read *Aya and the Butterfly*, it's likely that you will focus on conveying the storyline, making connections, and building understanding. Later, you can go deeper into the perspectives of the characters and the story's message.

Aya's father's death is implied, but this is not the story's focus, and the children do not need to know how it happened. They do need to know that sometimes we have to say goodbye to the people and things we love. In the face of such overwhelming loss, we must let ourselves remember and feel sad, but we must also learn to let go and carry on living – and have hope.

Your learning community will have its own ways of thinking about, talking about, and making real the values and messages in this and the other stories. You could incorporate the following ideas in your talk and your planning around the story.

## Curriculum links

Whether you work in an early learning or school setting, this book offers rich opportunities for learning across the curriculum.

In terms of **Te Whāriki**, the book connects most strongly to the principles of **Relationships | Ngā Hononga**, **Empowerment | Whakamana**, and **Holistic development | Kotahitanga** and the strands of **Wellbeing | Mana atua** and **Belonging | Mana whenua**.

In terms of **The New Zealand Curriculum**, the book connects most strongly to the key competencies of **managing self**, **relating to others**, and **participating and contributing** and to the following sub-strands of the Health and Physical Education Curriculum: **personal growth and development**, **personal identity**, **relationships**, and **identity, sensitivity, and respect**.

## Read *Aya and the Butterfly*

Prepare for the reading by practising reading it aloud, checking your use of voice and gesture, and thinking about the prompts you might use. Learn the words for feelings in your children's home languages so you can include them in the talk.

Briefly introduce the story. *This story is about a girl who is feeling very sad. Let's find out what happens ... we'll stop and talk as we go.*

As you read, use questions and think-alouds to prompt connections and foster empathy.

- *What do you notice about this family? Who is in the picture? Who might be missing?*
- *Look at Aya's face. She definitely doesn't want to grow tomatoes. I wonder why.*
- *Why do you think Grandad has his arm around Aya?*

Encourage the children to go beyond the book by sharing their own thoughts, feelings, and stories about change and loss. Make sure they understand that loss is something permanent.

- *This story makes me think about when ... What does it make you think about? How did you feel?*
- *What do you do when you feel sad? What can make you feel better?*
- *Grandad says that crying is good because it lets the sadness out. Is that how you feel?*

Be mindful that some children may have their own experience of loss or grief and may be sensitive to reading the story. Monitor and tune-in to any changes or responses in the children as they may be very subtle.

Be aware that a child's response to a loss may not seem appropriate or proportionate, but their feelings and behaviours are normal to them. It's important that children feel accepted and validated. They need to learn to name and describe their feelings and to recognise and acknowledge those feelings in others too.

## Talk about the story

Discuss the story's message, drawing on the sense of connection and empathy the children have established.

- *What did you find out about Aya's father from reading the story? How did you find that out?*
- *Why do you think Grandad suggested growing swan plants? Why does he want her to be patient? What did he want Aya to learn?*
- *Grandma says that the butterfly has to leave. Why do you think that might be?*

Support the students to think about ways of caring for people who are going through loss and grief.

- *What are some other ways that Aya's family can help her feel safe and cared for?*
- *We are a whānau too. How can we help each other when one of us is feeling very sad?*

Children may wonder what a mosque is and why Aya's grandmother and aunt are wearing headscarves. Explain that different religions have different beliefs, practices, and symbols.

- *Aya's family are Muslim. Many Muslim women show their beliefs by covering their heads with a special scarf, called a hijab. Do you know what people of other religions do to show their beliefs?*
- *A Muslim person might go to the mosque on a Friday. What other places do people go to express their faith?*

Grief or loss can be experienced in many forms. It could be, for example, losing a friend who has moved away, having a parent with mental health needs who is absent for a period of time, or a pet that has died.

Help the children to understand that grief changes. At first, it can feel overwhelming and might seem as if it will last forever. Explain that although sadness comes with loss, and it will always be there, we can also think about the joy that the loved one brought to our lives and feel happy about the memories that were built together. Over time, we can start to feel hope and begin to smile again.

## Take action to build resilience in the face of loss, change, and grief

Reread the story, prompting the children to notice how Aya's feelings change from sadness and loss to an increasing resilience. As you read, you or the children could write the feeling words down or sketch a face to show them. If you are sketching, use feedback from the children to get the face right. Next to this, sketch what is happening to the plants and butterflies.

Depending on the group, it may be appropriate to talk about family members who have passed away. A Māori tradition during Matariki is to make manu aute (kites) that connect to those who have passed. The children may enjoy using natural materials to design and make their own manu aute.

Alternatively, the children could make a beautiful butterfly kite. Have them fold a piece of paper in half and draw half a butterfly. (You could support this by providing a simple template.) When the children cut out the outline, they will find a whole butterfly, which they can paint. Give them string, tape, and tissue paper to make the tail. As the children fly their kites, talk about how beautiful they are. Discuss where the butterflies might fly to and where they might lay eggs to make new butterflies!

Start an inquiry into monarch butterflies. Introduce the term “metamorphosis” and look at the life cycle inside the back cover. Talk about how each time a butterfly changes its form, something is lost but something else is gained. The children could plant swan plants and keep their own photographic record of the changes, or they could draw a life cycle. Put this on a wall chart headed “Things change”. They could add other examples of living creatures that go through metamorphosis, such as frogs or dandelions.

Use photos to talk about how people change as they get older, including physical changes and changes in what they know and can do. Have them draw pictures of themselves to show how they have changed. Ask them to add labels to their pictures, saying what was gained or lost, and put the pictures on a wall chart headed “People change, too”.

Discuss Aya’s family and give tamariki the opportunity to write a pepeha in which they introduce themselves, their culture, and members of their family, including those who have passed. Invite the children to draw pictures of their whānau and bring in a family photo to create a whānau book.

Invite a Muslim member of the community to come to class and explain why she wears a hijab or why he wears a prayer hat – and to show how it’s worn. Encourage the children to ask questions so that they can understand what makes the hijab or prayer hat important to Muslim people.

Talk about all the things people do to remember somebody or something they loved and have lost. For example, we might talk about them, write about them, look at photos, listen to their favourite songs, or plant a tree. Sometimes people even plant memorial gardens. Give the children seeds to plant and nurture. Watch the seeds grow and have the children draw pictures to show how their seedling changes over time. When the seedlings are ready, the children could plant them in a garden to remember a person or thing they have lost.

## Where to go to for more information

**Te Whāriki Online** draws together research, digital resources, and examples to support early learning Kaiako, helping to implement a rich curriculum. See especially the sections on “Identity, language, and culture” and “Self-management and regulation”. <https://tewhariki.tki.org.nz/en/weaving-te-whariki/identity-language-and-culture/>

**He Māpuna te Tamaiti** is intended to support children’s social and emotional competence, engagement, and learning. <https://tewhariki.tki.org.nz/en/teaching-strategies-and-resources/self-management-and-regulation>

**Change, Loss, and Grief** is part of The Curriculum in Action series. While this resource was produced some years ago, it still has valuable information about child development and how to support children to deal with change and loss. <https://health.tki.org.nz/Key-collections/Curriculum-in-action/Change-loss-and-grief>

**For Each and Every Child** is a bilingual picture book explaining the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in child-friendly language. <https://www.unicef.org.nz/teaching-resources>

**InMotion Matariki Education Resource – Ururangi** has information and ideas on making manu aute. [www.inmotion.org.nz/ururangi](http://www.inmotion.org.nz/ururangi)

**Sparklers** offers a range of activities to support children’s wellbeing, including suggestions for how to explore and deal with feelings. <https://sparklers.org.nz/>

**Education Gazette** vol. 99, no. 3 (February 2020) has several items about the response of schools and early learning settings to the Christchurch mosque attacks:

- **An Outpouring of Support and Solidarity:** <https://gazette.education.govt.nz/articles/an-outpouring-of-support-and-solidarity/>
- **Becoming Culturally Responsive:** <https://gazette.education.govt.nz/articles/becoming-culturally-responsive/>
- **The Paper Doll Project:** <https://gazette.education.govt.nz/articles/the-paper-doll-project-2/>

The following sources give information and advice about supporting children who are dealing with grief:

- **KidsHealth: Death and Grief:** [www.kidshealth.org.nz/tags/death-grief](http://www.kidshealth.org.nz/tags/death-grief)
- **Skylight:** <https://www.skylight.org.nz/>
- **What's Up? – Kids:** [www.whatsup.co.nz/kids/](http://www.whatsup.co.nz/kids/)
- **The Dougy Center:** [www.dougy.org/](http://www.dougy.org/)
- **Are We There Yet? How to Teach Children about Death and Grieving:**  
<https://www.rnz.co.nz/programmes/are-we-there-yet/story/2018665319/how-to-teach-children-about-death-and-grieving>

**The Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand** is a federation of several regional New Zealand Muslim Associations. Its site includes contact details for Islamic centres in New Zealand.

<https://fianz.com/>

<https://fianz.com/islamic-centres/>

**The Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand** was formed in 1990 with the aim of meeting the needs of Muslim women throughout Aotearoa.

<https://islamicwomenscouncilnz.co.nz/>

<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/women-together/islamic-womens-council-new-zealand-iwcnz>

**An-Nur Early Education and Care Centre** offers an example of how centres can engage in similar educational activities and value and celebrate their culture.

<https://www.facebook.com/AnNurEarlyChildhoodEducationAndCareCentre>