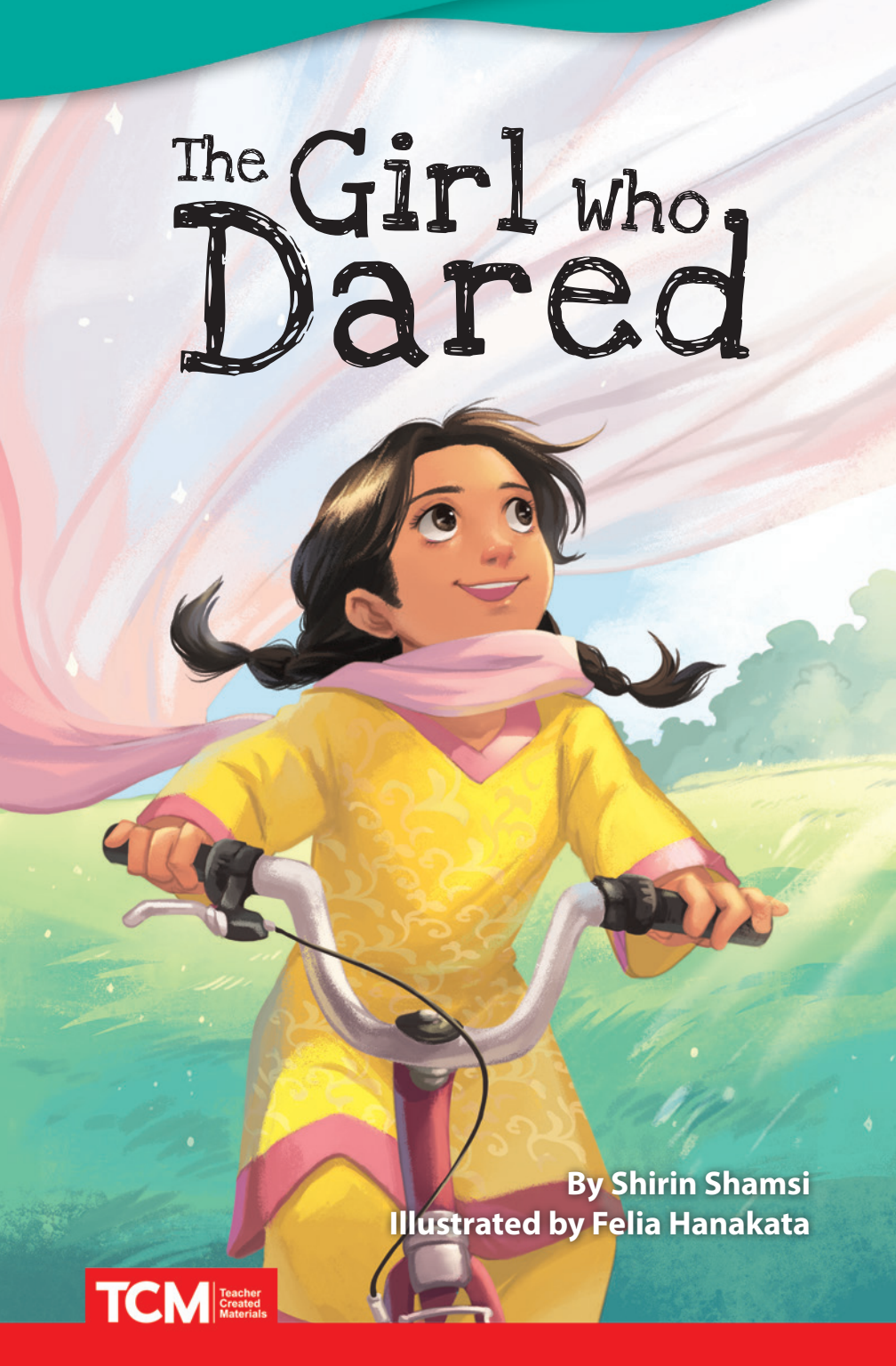
The Girl who Dared



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TCM Teacher Created Materials

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CHAPTER ONE



The Bike

Rukia stepped outside. She moved quietly toward the shed. No one would choose to leave the cool house for the humid outdoors. No one but Rukia, who yearned for adventure. The wooden door creaked as she pulled it open. She sighed with relief to see no one was there as she opened the

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wooden door wide. Looking over her shoulder once again, Rukia made sure there was no one watching. Ami was resting with the baby. Papa was away with Rukia's older brother, Atif. Babu had gone to fetch her five-year-old brother, Noni, who was at a friend's house.

Rukia grabbed the servant's bike from the shed and wheeled it out. She paused to carefully close the door, and then she was off. Rukia rode the bike down the lane of the family *haveli*. The enclosure spread out as far and as wide as her eyes could see. Her family had lived here for as long as the banyan trees grew, perhaps even longer.

As the afternoon sun burned down on her, Rukia smiled, turning her face up to greet its blazing warmth. She did not care if her face turned dark as roasted almonds, for she felt free as a bird. Everyone in the house was sleeping, as it was far too hot to venture outside. She and Atif would ride

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bicycles together in a few years, racing through the streets, even at night. But for now, this was the only time Rukia could get away with riding a bike. She gripped the handlebars tightly. She leaned forward and whizzed down the slope of the dirt path.



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It was a bumpy ride, but Rukia did not mind. Her face glowed as her smile spread from ear to ear. Her shawl flapped behind her in the wind like the sails of a ship as the bike breezed down the lane. Rukia's cares evaporated in the wind, and she closed her eyes and imagined all the things she would do if she were free like a boy. She could do anything. No one could stop her.

Rukia's shawl caught in the wheel. Before she could stop herself, the bike toppled over. She landed clumsily in a heap in the dirt. As she rubbed her bruised knee, tears of frustration filled her eyes. She was glad no one saw her covered in dirt. This dirt, this earth, was part of India. In a few days, with the signing of documents by some men in an office, it would become a new land—the Republic of Pakistan. She would live in a new country without even leaving her home.

Rukia looked at her home, the

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haveli, as it loomed tall in the distance. Trees surrounded it, and flowers bloomed in terra-cotta pots along the wide veranda. The heavy scent of jasmine filled the air. Rukia took a deep breath. She felt safe here, though there was unrest in the country. Rukia shook the dirt off her clothing. She picked up the bike and made her way back before everyone awoke.

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Book Club Questions

1. How do you think Rukia's life is different from yours?
2. Why is the setting important to this story? Why do you think the author chose this setting?
3. Do you think it is wise for Rukia's mother and father to leave her behind? Why or why not?
4. What do you think the word *Bety* means? Who uses it in the story?
5. Do you think Rukia is brave? Why or why not?
6. How do you think life is different for boys and girls in Rukia's world?

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