

Task for *Sonam and the Silence*

Teacher-in-role script

Some **optional** materials (all can be mimed):

- Large open space
- Flowing skirt
- Scarf
- Cardboard box
- Shovel
- Ukulele/guitar/musical instrument

Assume the role of Sonam. Put on a flowing skirt and pretend to play as you make your way to be seated in front of the children.

“As-salamu alaykum, friends! That means ‘peace be upon you’ in Arabic. What country are you from? How do you greet people?”

Invite students to respond. Next, create the illusion of a small home. You could do this simply by knocking on a door to check if your (Sonam’s) mother is there, or by pulling back a curtain to peep in. Escort your students into this small space so that they are quite close.

“Come, come – I am so excited to have visitors. Follow, follow me! This is my home. Me, my mother, my older brother, and my younger brother and sister live here. Is this the same as your home? Is it different? Oooh, how I would love to visit Australia one day, but sadly I am not allowed to work or earn money to travel. It is simply not fair.”

Escort students out of the ‘house’ and back into your open space.

“Come, come – my favourite game is hide and seek. Would you care to play with me? Because I have so many lovely friends today, I will need a few more seekers! Who would like to assist me?”

Crouch down and touch the floor.

“Now, this surface is very dangerous and rough, so you must walk very carefully as you make your way to your hiding position. If we find you, come back to this meeting place. I will count backwards from **10 in Arabic** while you hide.”

10	<i>ashra</i> (ahsh-ahr-rah) (عشرة)	5	<i>hamsa</i> (hahm-sah) (خمسة)
9	<i>tis'a</i> (tihs-anh) (تسعة)	4	<i>arba'a</i> (ahr-uh-bah-ah) (أربع)
8	<i>tamaniya</i> (theh-mah-nee-yuh) (ثمانية)	3	<i>talata</i> (theh-lah-theh) (ثلاثة)
7	<i>sab'a</i> (sehb-uh-ah) (سبعة)	2	<i>itnan</i> (ihth-naan) (إثنان)
6	<i>sitta</i> (siht-tah) (ستة)	1	<i>wahid</i> (waah-heet) (واحد)

Reconvene out-of-role. Ask students to share the games they play at home. Did they enjoy playing with Sonam? If Sonam came to visit Australia, what would they play with her first?

“Oh, did I tell you? I am seven today. Oh no, oh no, oh no. It’s my big brother. Shhh.”

Place a scarf reluctantly on your head. Pretend to work, then get dizzy and block your ears.

Ask students what happened to Sonam. What would they say to her if they had the chance?

Play a short snippet of [strong wind blowing through trees](#). Start running toward the ‘mulberry trees’. If possible, share a mulberry with students (cranberry would work well as a substitute).

“Wow, can you see that beautiful mulberry tree in the distance? What else can you see? Is that... an old man? What, what is he holding? Let’s get closer. Does anyone know what it might be?”

Play some [rabab music](#). Act mesmerised. Use a ukulele as a substitute for a rabab.

“This, I have never heard before. Is this...? Could it be... ah, what is it when you hear a sound that makes you want to dance? Ahhh, *music*! This is music? But it is forbidden. I must not listen – but I cannot stop! It is beautiful. Shhh – the old man is speaking.”
(Pause and pretend to lean in and listen.) He says, ‘When something is forbidden is when you need it most.’ What does this mean, friends? I will treasure it forever.”

Disappear to hide the rabab and return emptyhanded. Lie on the floor, lifeless and sad.

What happened that made Sonam go from being so happy to being miserable? Lead students to a discussion about Sonam’s brother removing the rabab. Encourage them to make connections – has anyone (e.g. parent, sibling, thief) ever taken something from them that they cared deeply for? How did it make them feel? Invite students to stand if they think Sonam’s brother did the right thing by taking away the rabab. Then invite them to stand if they think Sonam’s brother did the wrong thing. In each case, why?

Pretend to react to an explosion. You could play some distant battle ambience, but refrain from doing so if any students have experienced war or conflict. Act scared and shudder.

“QUICK! Take cover! My world is noisy, but it feels so silent. I CAN’T TAKE IT ANYMORE!”

Ask students what it is that Sonam can’t take.

Place a cardboard box on the floor and cover it with a brown or green sheet. Grab a shovel and pretend to dig until you hit something hard. Pull the box out from underneath the sheet.

Ask students what could be inside the box.

“Oh, my goodness! My rabab! I can see the music! It is red, bright blue, and I even see some soft green. What music can you see? Friends, I am so happy to have journeyed with you. All of a sudden, my world does not seem so silent. Khodafez (goodbye).”

Say to students:

“Wow! Wasn’t that so special? Travelling all the way to Kabul in Afghanistan to meet Sonam. What did you enjoy most about that learning experience? Are there any questions you have for Sonam? I can email them to her for you!”