



Twin Flames

written by Olivia Abtahi

About the Book

Genre: Young Adult

Format: Hardcover, 368 pages

ISBN: 9781643790435

Reading Level: Grades 7–12

Interest Level: Grades 7–12

Guided Reading Level: Z+

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: Biracial / Multiracial, Conflict resolution, Courage, Cultural Diversity, Diversity, Families, Fantasy, Fiction, Folktale / Folklore / Traditional Literature, Friendship, Identity / Self Esteem / Confidence, Overcoming Obstacles, Siblings, Teen Interest, YA interest

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/twin-flames/

SYNOPSIS

Twins Bianca and Leila could not be more different from each other. Being both Argentinian and Iranian in a small town has always been hard, but with Leila shunning her heritage and Bianca embracing it, the two walk very different paths. They run in different circles of friends, and barely talk anymore. Leila's a homebody who loves to craft and plans on marrying her high school sweetheart. Bianca's more anti-establishment and plans to get out of Dodge as soon as humanly possible.

But on their eighteenth birthday, the neighbor's barn mysteriously burns down. When Leila encounters a monster—a djinn—arising from the fire, suddenly she gains strange powers and can no longer touch iron.

What do these djinn want with Leila—or other people in town, for that matter? Can the twins learn to rely on each other—and their cultures—to banish them? It'll take a sisterly reconciliation for the girls to find out and to save their hometown in this New Visions Award-winning fantasy adventure.

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

BACKGROUND

Islamic Mythology

In *Twin Flames*, Bianca looks up what djinn are after they have an encounter with one. In her search, readers learn that "According to the Quran, angels were made of light, humans were made of clay, and djinn were made of smokeless flame. Djinn have a natural aversion to iron." There are many kinds of djinn; Ifrit made from fire, si'lat who can shape-shift, mareeds who are powerful and can grant wishes for a price. Plus dozens of others depending on whether you're from Indonesia or Iraq or Iran. Go to pages 72-75 revisit the information Bianca finds out about djinn.

Iranian Revolution

Baba was forced to flee Iran after the Iranian revolution. Living under theocratic rule had become very difficult. In *Twin Flames*, Bianca and Leila learned that many others also fled to avoid being drafted for war. We recommend consulting the following resources to learn more about the Iranian revolution 40 Years Later: Iran after the Islamic Revolution from American University, (<https://www.american.edu/sis/news/20190408-40-years-later-iran-after-the-islamic-revolution.cfm>), Visualizing a Revolution from UChicago Library (<https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/collex/exhibits/graphics-revolution-and-war-iranian-poster-arts/visualizing-revolution/>) and The Iranian revolution—A timeline of events from Brookings (<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-iranian-revolution-a-timeline-of-events/>).

Religion

The twins Bianca and Leila observe both Zoroastrian and Christian holidays. Baba is Persian and Mama is Argentinian. To learn more about Zoroastrianism, consider consulting the following resource Zoroastrianism from History.com (<https://www.history.com/topics/religion/zoroastrianism>). To learn more about Christianity, consider consulting the following resource Christianity from History.com (<https://www.history.com/topics/religion/history-of-christianity>).

Twin Flames Book Trailer

Preview the trailer from *Twin Flames* with students before reading to get them excited for the book. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTtmAbR69Wo>

In Conversation with Editor Elise McMullen-Ciotti, Author Olivia Abtahi, & Author Isabel Quintero

To learn more about Olivia Abtahi's process for writing *Twin Flames* and about the books, consider watching this conversation before reading <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AlsM8ayOo28>.

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- What do you know about twins? Do you know any twins in your life? What is a common misconception about twins?
- How does community play an important role in your life?
- Have you ever had to fight for something or someone? Why or why not? How did it feel? How did you show up?
- How is magical realism similar yet different from the genres with which you are already familiar? What mythological stories or tales have you read about?
- What are your dreams? What do you want for your future?
- Have you ever been in a difficult situation where you didn't know what to do? Who did you go to for help? What plan did you come up with to address the situation? How did this situation make you feel?
- What strategies or coping mechanisms do you use when you are feeling overwhelmed? How do they help?
- Ask students to think about what their family and friends mean to them. How is family important to you? How do you interact with your family members? How is your relationship with your siblings similar or different to relationship you have with your friends? What do your friends mean to you?
- What does it mean to be powerful? How can you exercise power in different ways? What are ways that power is abused? What people hold power? How can power affect others?
- Why is bilingualism important? If you are bilingual (or speak more than two languages), what does it mean to you? If you are not bilingual, why do you think those languages are significant to that person?
- As a hook for readers, consider having students view the book trailer for *Twin Flames* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTtmAbR69Wo>).

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Book Walk: Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, author's dedication. Display the book and read aloud the title.

Book Title Exploration: Talk about the title of the book. Ask students what they think this book will most likely be about. What do students think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that? Discuss the cover illustration and have students talk

about how the picture might relate to the title of the book.

Read Author's Biography: Read about Olivia Abtahi (<https://www.oliviaabtahi.com/>). What do you think the process is like to write a book? Why do you think she wrote this book?

Encourage students to stop and jot in their notebooks when they: Learn new information, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or see new words.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- the culture and traditions of the characters in the story
- the importance of self-discovery and self-acceptance in this story
- how friendship and community play a role in your life
- the complexities of families, friends and sisterhood
- how Leila and Bianca change over the course of the story

Encourage students to consider why the author would want to share this story with young people.

VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: 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, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Content Specific

Shab-e Yalda, chlamydia, Atlas, gluten, homestead, sachets, sleep paralysis, claustrophobic, manga, accelerant, linoleum, satanic, patriarchy, conspiracy, "cottage core", tahdig, aptitude, ramrod, djinn, tasbih, brusque, banal, cashmere, chide, mundane, exorcise, mandolin, chasm, specter, esfand, golem, horde, tanour overn, Shab-e Yalda, Zoroastrian, Tasbihs, sabzi khorda, talismans, chassis, Nazr, cardamom, fenugreek, kashk, lavashak, pyres, estekan, sulfurous, theocratic rule, vagrants, Formica, cosmopolitan, tendril, mid-evil trebuchet, rapt, amorphous

Academic

Deigned, daintily, conflagration, hallucination, grimacing, disintegrated, solemnly, apoplectic, incredulous, frugality, pompous, scoured, writhed, grotesque, entice, sauntered, consorting, parse, repulsed, putrescence, gleefully, unmoored, discombobulating, abandon, mundanity, swashbuckling, glumly, jaunt, buoyed, dissident, chided, callused, pungent, vestibule, reconciling, dilapidated, pockmarked, disdainful, roiled, satiated, albeit, decimating, capitulate, depressurizing, lurched, tyrannical, baleful, proverbial, incapacitated

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

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

Part I

1. What does it mean to be an identical twin?
2. Describe Leila and Bianca. What are they like?
3. How do the twins celebrate their birthday? What gifts do they receive from Baba? What interrupts their birthday celebration?
4. What does Leila wish for on her birthday? What is Leila worried about? What does Leila enjoy doing? What does June's sister say about the fires?
5. What is suspicious about the fire at the Elmhurst's barn? What about the other fires in Ayers? What rumors does Bianca hear at school about the fire?
6. Why does Bianca not like Spanish class? How does Señora Thompson make Bianca feel?
7. Why does Leila feel like she was born in the wrong century? Why is Nandani a tricky subject for Leila? How does Leila change when she is with Foster?
8. What happens when Bianca hears a loud male scream from behind her house? What is happening with the iron jewelry she is wearing? What happens to Leila? Foster?
9. What does the flame creature tell Leila? What does she discover he is? How is Leila different now?
10. How does Leila look after the djinn possesses her?

Part II

11. What does Bianca find when she searches for "demons made of fire"?
12. How are the twins bonded now after the incident near the barn?
13. What does Mama share with Bianca when she tells her that life is a game and that she needs to remember the rules?
14. How does Leila feel knowing a djinn is watching her now? What happens when she tries on the iron ring? How does she feel different?
15. What does Bianca realize as she is shopping for gifts in downtown Ayers? How does this make her feel about her community?
16. What is Leila wrestling with? What does the djinn do?

17. What do Bianca and Leila argue about? What do they finally confess to one another? How does the argument end?
18. What does Leila do to find comfort after the argument with her sister? Why is Leila upset with herself?
19. What happens at the winter party? What does Bianca do? How does Leila help? What do the twins realize?
20. What does Bianca realize after they teleport to Sydney? What does Leila realize after teleporting to Sydney?
21. What does Christmas dinner look like at the Mazanderani household? What foods do they have? Who helps Mama with the dinner? Who do they have over at their house for dinner?
22. How do Bianca and Leila feel after their family Christmas dinner? What does Leila tell Foster?
23. What happens when Leila is helping Baba in the garage?

Part III

24. Why did Baba summon a djinn?
25. What does Bianca see is happening in the garage? What does Leila explain to Bianca? What does Bianca notice about Leila?
26. How does Bianca react to Leila transforming in her argument with Baba? What happens?
27. What was Leila feeling when she was yelling at Baba? What is her or the djinn that was reacting that way?
28. How does Leila feel after attacking Bianca? What does she begin to think about herself?
29. How does Bianca wake up differently? How does Bianca react? What happens when Bianca grabs on to Leila?
30. What powers does Bianca now have? How does Bianca feel about what her father has done?
31. Who is finally revealed to be driving the white BMW? What does she look like? What accusations does she throw at Bianca and Leila? Who shows up during their interaction with the lady in the BMW?
32. Why is Leila so shocked to see Zahra? How are they helping Zahra? What does Leila realize as they are fighting the djinn?
33. Where does Leila teleport them to? What does Zahra reveal to Bianca and Leila about her family?
34. Where does Zahra ask Leila to teleport them? What happens to Bianca as soon as they arrive to their destination?
35. Why does Zahra say she has failed her first djinn hunting job? What does she talk to her dad about?
36. What is Bianca wondering about Leila? What memory pops up in her head as she is witness-

ing Leila try to flirt with Zahra? How does Bianca feel about this?

- 37.** How does Leila feel about NYC? How does Bianca feel about the city?
- 38.** What do Bianca and Leila do despite Zahra not allowing them to leave back to Ayers? What happens when they do get back?
- 39.** Why does Leila finally feel relief? What thoughts is she allowing herself to have?
- 40.** In what condition is Ayers when they return? What happens when the girls return to their house?
- 41.** What does Cyrus tell the girls about why their dad chose Ayers to settle down in?
- 42.** What happens when Cyrus recognizes Zahra's bloodline?
- 43.** What deal do they make with Cyrus?
- 44.** What happens when the jet lands at the abandoned airport? What are Leila's and Bianca's reaction?
- 45.** How does Eshan react when Zahra tells him that Cyrus is involved?
- 46.** What does Eshan explain to Leila and Bianca about their father's decision? How do they react?
- 47.** Why does Eshan think that the twins have planted a trap? Who shows up at their door?
- 48.** Where does Leila teleport them? Why did she teleport there? How does Bianca help Leila?
- 49.** How do Leila and Bianca prepare for battle? What do they strategize?
- 50.** What is on Bianca's bucket list? What is on Leila's bucket list?
- 51.** What does Leila make Bianca promise if Cyrus wins? Why does she ask her that?
- 52.** How does Zahra show up to battle? How does Zahra help the girls at the beginning of the battle? What mental photograph does Leila make? Why?
- 53.** What happens when Cyrus finally appears in the battle? What realization do they make about the djinn?
- 54.** How does Bianca overpower the djinn? How does she help her friends who have been possessed?
- 55.** What happens when Bianca tries to overpower Cyrus? What does she do to Leila? How does Leila break her fall?
- 56.** Who is in the field as djinn? What does Cyrus say? What does Leila do with her father?
- 57.** Where do Bianca and Leila get their last name from? Where has Leila teleported them? Why has she teleported them there? What does Baba tell Leila?
- 58.** How does Bianca feel about being possessed by Cyrus? What is she observing about the people in the field? What happens to Cyrus?
- 59.** How do June, Steve and Shivani help after Cyrus has been defeated?

60. How is Baba settling in Iran? How does Leila help her family? What does Mama tell the twins?
61. What is Bianca doing one year later?
62. What is Leila doing one year later?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 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 *Twin Flames* mean to you after reading? Why do you think the author chose this title?
2. How is Bianca the narrator different from Leila the narrator? What do you think accounts for these differences? Are there similarities? If so, what are they?
3. Describe the relationship between Bianca and Leila. How does their relationship evolve throughout the story?
4. How does Leila's character change and evolve from the beginning of the book versus the end of the book?
5. How does Bianca's character change and evolve from the beginning of the book versus the end of the book?
6. Describe the Persian birthday traditions the twins participate in on their birthday. Is this similar to how you celebrate your birthday? What traditions do you have on your birthday or special occasions?
7. Señora Thompson picks at Bianca's Spanish and tells her to speak "in good Spanish". How does this make Bianca feel? Why do you think Bianca responded the way that she did? How would this make you feel? What can one do in a situation like this?
8. Leila is dealing with a lot. Her boyfriend cheated on her and she is possessed by a djinn. What brings her comfort in difficult moments? How does this help her cope? What brings you comfort during difficult moments?
9. What did you learn about djinns? What other mythological creatures would you like to learn about? What connections can you make to other mythological creatures in other cultures?
10. The twins and Zahra stop at a local Halal in NYC to stock up on djinn fighting items. Why is Bianca shocked at her experience in there? What are her interactions? What foods do she see and smell?
11. Describe the importance of the evil eye, iron, esfand and the Quran in fighting djinn. What other tools or items do they use in fighting the djinn? Provide examples from the story where each item helped fight off a djinn.
12. How do the Mazanderani family deal with living in a small town with limited diversity? How do they seek community? What do you think it is like for them to live in a small town like Ayers?
13. What does Mama mean when she says "...remember that it is a game and that she needs

to remember the rules.”? Why did Mama say that to Bianca when they are talking about her getting sent to the principal’s office? What is a sacrifice that immigrants make when they come to the United States? What lesson is she trying to teach Bianca?

14. Why does Leila feel the pressure to assimilate to the culture in Ayers? How does she try to blend in? What does she often wish for? Have you ever felt the pressure to assimilate?
15. Why does Leila feel relief when she allows herself to think about thoughts she had been trying to repress? What had she been trying to ignore? How does she help calm herself down? How does she practice self-acceptance? What advice could you give someone struggling with self-acceptance?
16. What caused the wedge between Leila and Bianca? How does Bianca feel when Leila gains power? How does Bianca feel when she gains power?
17. How are Bianca and Mama similar? How are Leila and Baba similar? Provide examples from the story.
18. How do the twins respond when they learn about the deal Cyrus made with Baba? What does Baba explain to Bianca and Leila? How does this impact Mama? How does the author show us that Baba will forever be a changed man?
19. What does the Mazanderani’s family new normal look like? How are Mama and Baba coping with this? How are Bianca and Leila coping with this? How do they work together as a team? Have you ever had to face a difficult moment with family? How did you get through it?
20. What does family mean to you after reading this story? Have any of your perceptions or feelings toward family members changed after reading this book? How do Bianca’s and Leila’s relationships with their family members inspire you to act toward your own family and friends?
21. What do you think of the ending of *Twin Flames*? How does this make you feel? What is Leila’s life like? What is Bianca’s life like? What does the relationship with their family look like? Are they pursuing their dreams? How do they feel?

Reader’s Response

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

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader’s response journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. Select one of the characters from the book and analyze the character. How does this character contribute to the story? What characteristics do they have? Students may select Bianca or Leila or any of the characters (regardless of their real or perceived importance to the storyline).
2. Imagine you were hired to write a “what happens next” book about one of the main characters in the book. Write a draft of your ideas, including a graphic organizer to help outline your ideas.
3. Identify at least one cultural connection you found in the book and compare it to something

in your life. Why did you chose this connection?

4. Tell a story about a lesson you learned from your family. You might pick a story about identity, culture or family as shared in the book.
5. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *Twin Flames*? Why did you make those connections?
6. 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, such as on television or in a newspaper? Why did this book make you think of that?
7. What is one big thought that you have after reading this book? What is your takeaway from this book? What would you tell a friend about this book?
8. What do you think author Oliva Abtahi's message is to the reader? Think about possible motivations behind Oliva Abtahi's intentions to write the book. What do you think she wanted to tell her readers?

Multilingual Learners 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)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are multilingual learners (ML).

1. Assign ML 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 the sections of the book in order and have students summarize what is happening in each section.
 - 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 what they think Olivia Abtahi's message is in *Twin Flames*.
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 the vocabulary. Expose Multilingual 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 a 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.
6. Have students take note of all the Persian words and their meanings mentioned in *Twin Flames*.

7. Consider consulting <https://www.multilinguallearningtoolkit.org/> for more ideas on how to support Multilingual Learners.

Social and Emotional Learning

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

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

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. Throughout the story Leila struggles to understand herself and identity. Why is it important to give yourself the time and energy to discover who are you and what you want? Make a list of all the things about yourself that you love and what you want for your future.
2. Have you ever felt pressure to be someone you are not? What does this pressure feel like and what strategies do you use to overcome the feeling?
3. How can we affirm the people we love, how they love themselves, and who they love? Why is affirmation and support important?
4. How does *Twin Flames* show family and family dynamics? What are the different ways people show respect and care for one another in families? Students can brainstorm ideas on chart paper that presented and accessible for the whole class.
5. Coping mechanisms are the strategies people often use in the face of stress and/or trauma to help manage painful or difficult emotions. Coping mechanisms can help people adjust to stressful events while helping them maintain their emotional well-being. What coping mechanism do Bianca, Leila and other characters in the story use to manage their difficult feelings and circumstances? What are your coping mechanisms?
6. Despite not having immediate family in Ayers, the Mazanderani family seek out their community and friendships. Why is community so important? Why are friendships so important? How did you seek out your community? How did you find your friends?
7. Encourage students to identify passages where characters manage and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways. In a chart with four columns, write: What was the cause of the conflict? What was the consequence of the conflict? How does the character(s) resolve the problem? What are additional ways the character(s) could have solved the problem? What advice would you give? Students can brainstorm ideas on chart paper that are presented and accessible for the whole class.

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)

- **Challenge students to explore the characters more deeply with writing tasks that require perspective-taking.** When Bianca was trying to snap her friend June out of Cyrus's control, she told her how much her friendship meant to her. Write a letter from one character to another (i.e. from Bianca to Leila, Leila to Bianca, Bianca to June, Leila to Shivani). As a guiding question, have students to think about why their relationship or friendships is important to them. Have students read/share their letters with the class.
- **Identify three major themes of the story.** Use details from the novel to support each theme in an analytical essay about *Twin Flames*. How do these themes influence the message of the story? How are these themes critical to the evolution of the characters? Why did you select these themes to write about?
- **Have students identify a place in the story where Bianca's and Leila's character changes in *Twin Flames*.** Why do students think that was a point where they changed? How do they feel before the change, what causes the change, and then how do they feel and act after? Create a graphic organizer with a column on the left that says "Before," a column in the middle that says "During," and a column on the right that says "After." Afterward, have students write an essay using evidence from the text to support their findings about Bianca's and Leila's character change.
- **Assign students different characters from the book and have them brainstorm about a guiding question: what and how can this character teach us?** Students can think about different characters to examine as a whole class and then break into smaller, specific character groups. Encourage students to think about how characters have made mistakes and have done good things in the book, and ultimately what they learned from that character. Have students share out their findings: How is this character important to the book, and what lessons did they teach us over the course of the story? How did their actions develop the narrative, and why are they crucial to understanding the meaning of the book?
- **Write a letter to your future self or to your younger self.** What advice would you give? What are your hopes for that version of yourself? For your future self, have students think about what questions they would want to ask themselves. For their younger self, students can think about things they would have done differently or advice they would have given themselves. Have students refer to the dialogue that Leila and Bianca have

with themselves throughout the book, and model their letter off of the writing style in *Twin Flames*.

- **Write an alternative ending to the story that is different from the one the author wrote.** Ask students to think about the following questions: What would you change about the ending? What would you change about the characters? Why did you write the ending in this way?
- **Have students come up with a list of questions to ask author Olivia Abtahi.** What do students want to know about the process behind writing a book? How did she come up with their idea to write *Twin Flames*? What was it like to write the book? Why did she base the book off similar things that happened in her own life? Consider contacting Olivia to learn more about school and library visits (<https://www.oliviaabtahi.com/>).
- **Examine the different literary elements that author Olivia Abtahi uses throughout *Twin Flames*.** Have students come up with a list and select portions of the text that showcase a specific literary device (i.e. foreshadowing, flashback, metaphor, etc). How do literary elements look different in a novel? How does the artwork help convey the literary elements, such as foreshadowing or a flashback? Afterward, students can select one literary device and write about how that was impactful when reading *Twin Flames*. How do literary devices make the story engaging, and how do they contribute to the story overall? Discuss how the artwork and literary elements work together to support the story's themes and messages. See PBS's "Literary Elements and Techniques" video for more information about how to teach about literary devices (<https://ny.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/litel18-fig/literary-elements-and-techniques-figurative-language/>).

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, 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)

- **Interview a family member about family history.** Create a T-chart that compares your family's culture and traditions by generation. What was it like for your parents? Grandparents? Your generation? Are there similarities? Stark differences? Be aware of sensitivities that students may have about discussing family history.
- **Create a *Twin Flames* recipe book.** Have students explore the different Argentinian and Persian food the Mazanderani family prepares throughout the story. Students can research the different foods made and create recipe cards for those foods.
- **Encourage students to do their own investigation of the different djinn that appear in *Twin Flames*.** Have students refer to pages 72-85 to find the names of the different kinds of djinn. Students can create a one pager and present their findings to the class.
- **Baba had to leave Iran due to the revolution.** Have students conduct their own research on what Iran was like before the revolution. Prompt students to think about the following questions in their research: Who was the leader before and after the revolution? What religion

was observed before and after? What type of government did they have before and after? How was it different for men and women living in Iran before and after the revolution? Have students create a t-chart to organize their information of Iran before and after the revolution. Consider consulting the following resources for their research (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-47032829>) and (<https://intpolicydigest.org/before-and-after-iran-1979/>).

- **Many Iranians had to leave Iran due to the revolution and flee to other parts of the world.** Have students research US-Iran immigration and create a timeline that outlines dates and facts about US-Iran immigration. Have students use the resources listed in the background information.
- **Virginia's Latino population is mainly Mexican and Salvadoran (pg 34).** Have students conduct research on the demographic breakdown of their state and hometown. What did they discover? What is their initial reaction to the data? Allow students to search other states or cities they are familiar with. Once students are done with their research, consider grouping students to discuss their findings. The United States Census has a map available for students to use in their search 2020 Census Demographic Data Map Viewer (<https://maps.geo.census.gov/ddmv/map.html>).
- **Have students conduct research on the Appalachian Mountains in Virginia, Iran and Argentina.** How is living in the Appalachian Mountains of Virginia different than Iran and Argentina? How is the geography different in each place? Are they similar? What languages are spoken in each place? Students can use the chart below and fill in the information they find. Once students are done with their research, they can discuss their findings as a class.

Virginia	Iran	Argentina
Geography:	Geography:	Geography:
Religion:	Religion:	Religion:
Language:	Language:	Language:
Cuisine:	Cuisine:	Cuisine:

Arts/Performing Arts

(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)

- **Citing textual evidence, select a theme portrayed in the novel, *Twin Flames*.** Create

a visual presentation with illustrations, drawings, and any other creative materials to reflect how this theme is developed over the course of the text.

- **Have students illustrate a feeling one of the characters experienced in the story.** What do they want to convey? Students can think about a particular scene that stood out to them from *Twin Flames* featuring the character of their choosing. What kinds of materials do they want to use? Have students share their pieces with a partner, small group, or whole class.
- **Have students reimagine the cover to *Twin Flames*.** What would they change? What would they keep? If time allows, have students illustrate a new book cover.
- **Have students illustrate the scenes where Bianca and Leila transform after their encounter with the djinn.** For reference, Leila transforms on pages 52-54 and Bianca transforms on page 207-211.

School-Home 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)

- **Ask students to create portraits of their close friends through drawing, collage, or photograph.** In writing, students should describe what actions and qualities they admire about their friend/s. Students can write in prose or submit a poem or song.
- **Interview a family member about the history of their family.** Why is it important to understand your family history? Why is it important to know the different parts of the world where your family is from? If students do not know their family history, have them interview someone about the history of your town or city.
- **Encourage students to think about recipes that they like making at home with their families.** Bianca and Leila help Mama with cooking for Christmas dinner, and they are involved in the different processes of making the dinner. Bring in a recipe from home or consider making it at home and having the class enjoy it during the school day.
- **Leila enjoys cooking, sewing and gardening among other things which she will sometimes do with Baba.** What things do you enjoying doing at home during your free time? What do you enjoy doing with your family? Students can bring in items or pictures to share with their classmates about their favorite hobbies to do at home.



Ordering Information

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By Mail:

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Olivia Abtahi

Born to an Iranian father and Argentine mother, Olivia Abtahi is a melting pot of distinct cultures. She is a graduate of NYU Film School and VCU Brandcenter, from which she holds a BFA and MaSC. Her debut novel, *Perfectly Parvin*, was published in 2021, receiving the SCBWI Golden Kite Honor, YALSA Odyssey Honor, and numerous starred reviews. She currently lives in Denver, Colorado, with her husband and children. When she isn't writing, you can find her hiding behind a sewing machine. Find her online at oliviaabtahi.com.

REVIEWS

"Full of lessons regarding sisterhood and self acceptance, this cinematic fantasy will appeal to fans of the genre who like their adventures with a grounded emotional core." – **Booklist**

"Abtahi engages readers with a host of interesting dichotomies throughout. . . A multicultural fantasy that's packed with action and heart." – **Kirkus Reviews**

"Drawing heavily from Zoroastrian and Islamic mythology, Abtahi uses richly detailed prose to spin a tale about identity, heritage, and self-acceptance. Bianca and Leila's alternating third-person perspectives depict Argentinian and Iranian cultural touchstones. . . A heartwarming story of sisterly connection alongside monsters, romance, and page-turning action." – **Publishers Weekly**

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