

The Book After Maghrib

1. Engaging Orientation

After Maghrib prayer, the masjid became quiet.

The rows slowly broke apart. Men whispered salām. Socks shuffled softly across the carpet. The lights glowed warmly above Hamza’s head, and the smell of oud floated through the air.

Flip, flip, flip.

An elder opened a thick book on a small wooden stand.

Hamza stared at it.

The cover looked serious. The pages looked heavy. The words looked far too grown-up for a Year 5 boy who wanted dinner, dessert and his tablet.

Baba sat beside him and smiled. “Stay for Ta‘līm, Hamza.”

Hamza sighed. Boredom sat beside him like an unwanted guest.

“Do I have to?” he whispered.

Baba nodded gently. “Just listen for one lesson you can use today.”

Hamza folded his arms. The minutes crawled like tired ants.

He wanted his tablet. He wanted his snacks. He wanted home.

The elder cleared his throat and said, “Today, we will read from **Riyad-us-Saliheen**, *The Gardens of the Righteous*, by Imam al-Nawawi.”

Hamza looked again at the book.

A garden? he thought. *It looks more like a brick.*

2. Backstory

Baba leaned closer.

“When I was your age,” he whispered, “I also found Ta‘līm difficult.”

Hamza turned to him. “Really?”

Baba smiled. “Very difficult. I used to stare at the clock. I used to twist my sleeve. I used to wonder when we could go home.”

Hamza grinned. “That sounds like me.”

“My father told me something I never forgot,” Baba continued. “He said, ‘Ta‘līm is like watering a plant. You may not see it grow straight away, but the roots are drinking.’”

Hamza looked down at the carpet.

Baba’s voice became softer. “He told me that *Riyad-us-Salibeen* means *The Gardens of the Righteous*. Every ayah and hadith is like a seed. Some seeds grow into salah. Some grow into kindness. Some grow into patience.”

Hamza looked at the open book again.

Maybe it was not just an old book.

Maybe it was a garden waiting to open.

3. Conflicts and Resolutions

Conflict 1: Hamza feels bored

The elder began by reciting the meaning of an ayah from the Qur'an:

Allah says in **Surah adh-Dhariyat 51:56** that He did not create jinn and humans except to worship Him.

Hamza shifted in his place.

Worship, he thought. *I already prayed Maghrib. Isn't that enough?*

Then the elder read a hadith from *Riyad-us-Saliheen*. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was asked which deed is most beloved to Allah. He said prayer at its proper time, then kindness to parents.

Hamza glanced at Baba.

The ayah became a small key in his mind.

Maybe worship was not only standing in prayer. Maybe it was also learning, listening and becoming better.

Resolution 1: Hamza listens for one lesson

Baba whispered, "See? One lesson already."

The reminder settled like rain on dry soil.

Hamza sat a little straighter.

He stopped looking at the clock. He stopped thinking about his tablet. He started listening.

The open book became a door.

Conflict 2: Hamza does not understand sincerity

Next, the elder read another ayah. In **Surah al-Bayyinah 98:5**, Allah teaches that people were commanded to worship Him with sincerity.

Then the elder read the first hadith from *Riyad-us-Saliheen*: "Actions are judged by intentions."

Hamza frowned.

His intention was a dusty window.

If I am sitting here, isn't that enough? he wondered. *Was sitting enough?*

He sat. He listened. He nodded. But he still felt confused.

Resolution 2: Hamza understands ikhlās

Baba noticed his face.

“Ikhlās means doing something for Allah,” Baba whispered, “not so people praise you.”

The explanation was like a light switching on.

Hamza looked at the book. Before, he had been sitting only because Baba told him to. Now, he tried to sit for Allah.

His intention became a clean cup filled for Allah.

Quietly, he made a small du‘ā in his heart.

Ya Allah, help me listen properly.

Conflict 3: Hamza struggles to sit still

After a few minutes, restlessness buzzed inside Hamza.

His feet tapped like tiny drums.

Tap, tap, tap.

He twisted his sleeve until it looked like a tight rope. He whispered to his cousin. He shifted and squirmed on the soft carpet.

Then the elder reminded everyone of **Surah al-Ahzab 33:21**, where Allah teaches that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is an excellent example.

The elder also mentioned a hadith from *Riyad-us-Saliheen* about good character: the most complete believers are those with the best character.

Hamza looked at his tapping feet.

Resolution 3: Hamza shows adab

Good manners became a straight path in front of him.

He remembered that sitting respectfully was also part of adab.

He stopped tapping.

He stopped whispering.

He started listening.

Hamza held his hands together and sat as still as a quiet tree.

For the first time, he felt proud of something small that nobody else could see.

Conflict 4: Hamza feels angry

A boy sitting nearby smirked at him.

“You look like an old man,” the boy whispered.

The rude words stung like a bee.

Anger rose like fire in Hamza’s chest.

His mouth opened. His heart went *thud, thud, thud*. He wanted to say something sharp back.

Then the elder read the meaning of **Surah an-Nahl 16:125**, where Allah teaches Muslims to invite to His way with wisdom and good instruction.

After that, the elder read a hadith from *Riyad-us-Saliheen*: a man asked the Prophet ﷺ for advice, and he said, “Do not get angry.”

Hamza froze.

Resolution 4: Hamza controls his anger

Patience poured water over the fire.

Hamza took a slow breath. His breath moved in and out like waves returning to shore.

He could shout, but he chose calm.

He could argue, but he chose kindness.

“You can sit with us too,” Hamza whispered.

The boy blinked, surprised.

Hamza turned back to the book. His anger had not won.

Conflict 5: Hamza is tested at home

Later that night, Hamza sat at the kitchen table finishing his homework.

His little sister, Maryam, reached for a cup.

Clink.

The cup tipped over.

Water splashed across the table and spread towards Hamza's page.

"My homework!" Hamza shouted, jumping up.

Maryam stared at him with wide eyes.

The lesson knocked on his heart.

He remembered **Surah an-Nisa 4:36**, where Allah commands worship of Him and kindness to others, including family and those around us.

Then he remembered the hadith from *Riyad-us-Saliheen*: "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him speak good or remain silent."

His anger jumped up like a startled cat, but Hamza caught it before it scratched anyone.

Resolution 5: Hamza speaks good

Kind words became a bridge between them.

Hamza took a breath.

"It's okay," he said softly. "Let's clean it."

Maryam's face relaxed.

His voice softened like warm milk.

Mama smiled from the sink. "That was kind, Hamza."

Hamza looked at the wet table, the cloth, his sister and his homework.

The spilled water had been a test.

The Ta'lim lesson had followed him home.

4. Meaningful Conclusion

The next evening, after Maghrib, the same circle formed in the masjid.

The same elder sat near the front.

The same wooden stand held the same open book.

But Hamza was not the same.

He did not rush away. He did not complain. He sat beside Baba before being asked.

Flip, flip, flip.

The pages turned like soft bird wings.

Hamza smiled.

The book was no longer a heavy stone. It was a garden path. Each ayah was a seed. Each hadith was a drop of rain. Each reminder was a small light for the heart.

He remembered his boredom.

He remembered his intention.

He remembered his manners.


He remembered his anger.

He remembered Allah.

Baba looked at him and whispered, “Ready for Ta’lim?”

Hamza nodded.

“Yes,” he said. “I’m listening for one lesson.”

And this time, he truly was. 

Techniques that have been used throughout the story:

Technique	Quote
Imagery	
Simile	
Metaphor	
Symbolism	
Onomatopoeia	
Alliteration	
Sibilance	
Repetition	
Anaphora	
Listing	
Dialogue	
Direct speech	
Internal thought	

Rhetorical question	
Contrast	
Tension	
Characterisation	
Setting	
Motif	
Circular ending	
Islamic allusion	
Intertextuality	
Personification	
Sensory description	
Emotive language	
Moral lesson	