

# Excerpt terms and conditions



This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

*Dramatic Publishing*

# Does My Head Look Big in This?



*Drama By*  
*Jeff Gottesfeld and Elizabeth Wong*  
*Based on the award-winning young adult novel*  
*by Randa Abdel-Fattah*

# Does My Head Look Big in This?

**Drama.** *By Jeff Gottesfeld and Elizabeth Wong. Based on the award-winning young adult novel by Randa Abdel-Fattah. Cast: 10m., 10w. (can be as small as 3m., 7w, 3 either gender, with doubling suggestions).* High school is tough enough without throwing a hijab into the mix! Amal is a typical American suburban teenager at a typical American high school. She has a crush on a boy, dreams about her first kiss, and loves shopping, Twitter and Facebook. Funny and irreverent, Amal has a comeback for everything and everyone. Then one day, Amal surprises herself, her parents, her friends and school administrators when she shows up at school wearing a hijab headscarf. Amal is an American Muslim who had made the biggest decision of her life: to wear the Muslim head covering full time! She makes this decision based on her desire to properly practice her faith, in spite of parental warnings and the ostracizing and bullying that follow. She faces the fallout of her decision with humor and intelligence. This coming-of-age play explores the complicated emotions and issues that American Muslims, and especially American Muslim teenagers, face. An ideal tool for teaching tolerance, the story of *Does My Head Look Big in This?* raises three questions: What's it like to be a Muslim teenager in America today? How do distortions about any faith gain so much power? What are the emotional consequences for a teen forced to defend his or her faith? *Simple area staging. Approximate running time: 75 minutes. Code: DF1.*

Cover: iStock. © Juanmoninol.  
Cover design: Susan Carle.

ISBN 10: 1-58342-818-6  
ISBN 13: 978-1-58342-818-4



9 781583 428184 >

[www.dramaticpublishing.com](http://www.dramaticpublishing.com)



*Dramatic Publishing*

311 Washington St.  
Woodstock, IL 60098  
Phone: (800) 448-7469  
(815) 338-7170



Printed on recycled paper

# **Does My Head Look Big in This?**

Drama by

**JEFF GOTTESFELD**

and

**ELIZABETH WONG**

Based on the book by

**RANDA ABDEL-FATTAH**



**Dramatic Publishing Company**

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

\*\*\* NOTICE \*\*\*

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website: [www.dramaticpublishing.com](http://www.dramaticpublishing.com), or we may be contacted by mail at: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., 311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL, 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play which are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.
---

©MMXIII by JEFF GOTTESFELD and ELIZABETH WONG

Based on the book *Does My Head Look Big in This?*

by Randa Abdel-Fattah

Published by Scholastic Inc.

Hardcover ISBN: 978-0-439-91947-0

Paperback ISBN: 978-0-439-92233-3

Printed in the United States of America

*All Rights Reserved*

(DOES MY HEAD LOOK BIG IN THIS?)

For inquiries concerning all other rights, contact:

The Drummond Agency

P.O. Box 572 Woodend Vic 3442, Australia

Phone: +61 3 5427 3644

ISBN: 978-1-58342-818-1

## IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to Jeff Gottesfeld and Elizabeth Wong as the dramatizers of the play and Randa Abdel-Fattah as the author of the book in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The names of Jeff Gottesfeld, Elizabeth Wong and Randa Abdel-Fattah *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on Jeff Gottesfeld, Elizabeth Wong and Randa Abdel-Fattah, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with  
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., of Woodstock, Illinois.”

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writers thank the following individuals (institutional affiliations listed for identification) for their assistance. We could not have created this work without you. Our gratitude is unending.

Chris Sergel III, Dramatic Publishing Company  
Linda Habjan, Dramatic Publishing Company  
Bill Craver, Paradigm Agency  
Lana Daoud, NewGround: A Muslim-Jewish Partnership  
for Change  
Munira Syeda, Council on American-Islamic Relations  
(Los Angeles)  
Rabbi Reuven Firestone, Center for Muslim-Jewish  
Engagement  
Hasna Maznavi, BoomGen Studios  
Mona Khalil, Esq., United Nations  
Prof. Vincent Cheng, University of Utah  
Sheila Drummond, The Drummond Agency (Australia)

And especially Randa Abdel-Fattah for writing her brilliant novel.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

### SPECIAL NOTE ON ACTION

Whenever Amal steps out of the action to talk to the audience, scenes freeze or actors enter/exit behind her until she rejoins the action.

### NOTE ON LANGUAGE

Arabic transliteration is in italics. Translations or clarifications are in [brackets]. Alternate lines, for directors who prefer them because of community standards, are in brackets and italics like this:

*[ALT: alternative lines]*

### SETTING

Scenes flow from one to another. All locations can be suggested by rehearsal cubes, etc. Cast members should move set pieces, cubes, etc., to create new locations.



## AUTHORS' NOTES

That a Jewish-American writer and an Asian-American writer would spark to Randa Abdel-Fattah's remarkable novel about a contemporary Muslim girl at a suburban high school is a sign of hope. That Randa would want the two of us to do the adaptation to the stage is a sign of more hope. We fervently wish that when you come to the end of the play, you (and your audiences!) will feel even more hope.

# Does My Head Look Big in This?

## CHARACTERS

*(10m., 10w., or as small as 3m., 7w., 3 either gender with doubling suggestions.)*

### THE KIDS

AMAL ABDEL-HAKIM: 16, cute, pop-culture savvy, charismatic.

LEILA KHAN: 16, shy, sweet, centered in her faith.

EILEEN TANAKA: 16, adorable, boisterous, a goofball.

SIMONE WASHINGTON: likeable, curvy, self-conscious.

ADAM KEANE: scholar-athlete, earnest, school heartthrob.

JOSH GOLDBERG: good-natured, a gamer, love struck.

TIA TAMOS: Amal's tormentor, classic mean girl.

STUDENTS (1–3): Amal's classmates.

### THE ADULTS

MOHAMMED ABDEL-HAKIM: 40s, Amal's DAD, a doctor; a good Muslim in love with his wife, born in Palestine.

JAMILA ABDEL-HAKIM: 40s, Amal's MOM, a dentist, obsessed with exercise, born in Palestine.

MRS. VASELLI: 70s, crotchety, grumpy neighbor, originally from Greece, speaks poor English, more than meets eye.

LEILA'S MOTHER: 40s, conservative, parochial, from rural Pakistani village, speaks shaky English.

MR. PEARSE: 30s, civics/debate teacher, hipster wannabe.

MS. WALSH: 50s, bureaucratic school principal with a heart.

BUS DRIVER: any age, angry and fearful.

BUS RIDERS (3): any age or gender.

RADIO TALK SHOW HOST: an offstage voice, harsh.

## **DOUBLING SUGGESTIONS**

LEILA KAHN may double as LIGHTING TECHNICIAN.

EILEEN TANAKA may double as STAGE MANAGER.

SIMONE WASHINGTON may double as ANNOUNCER.

JOSH GOLDBERG may double as DIRECTOR (an offstage voice).

ADAM KEANE may double as the SOUND TECHNICIAN.

LEILA'S MOTHER may double as BUS DRIVER and MS. WALSH.

JAMILA ABDEL-HAKIM (MOM) may double as MRS. VASELLI.

MOHAMMED ABDEL-HAKIM (DAD) may double as MR. PEARSE, JERK (in shopping mall) and RADIO TALK SHOW HOST.

BUS RIDERS may double as STAGEHANDS and STUDENTS.

## **CHARACTER NOTES**

Multicultural casting is encouraged. All kid characters are 16 years old and are American by birth. The only characters with accented English are Mrs. Vaselli and Leila's Mother.

AMAL ABDEL-HAKIM: She narrates her own story. We have no sense she is Muslim until much further into Act I.

# Does My Head Look Big in This?

## ACT I

AT RISE: *We open in a television studio—apparently The Ellen DeGeneres Show. [In all cases, pop culture references—including this show—can be adjusted/updated at the discretion of the director]. The studio is abuzz with pre-show activity. The play’s actual audience is cast in the role of the live studio audience.*

DIRECTOR *(always an offstage voice)*. Ready sound check.

*(ANNOUNCER stands at a microphone with a big foam wind guard.)*

ANNOUNCER. Check check check. Testing one, two, three.

DIRECTOR. Thank you. Please stand by. Lights?

LIGHTING TECH. Ready!

DIRECTOR. Sound?

SOUND TECH. Ready!

DIRECTOR. Roger that.

*(ANNOUNCER gives the thumbs up. Stands ready. A STAGE MANAGER with headset trots in to stand in front of the audience with a bullhorn to warm up the crowd.)*

STAGE MANAGER. Is everyone ready for a great show? I said, everyone ready? Who here is ready for a great show?

*(The audience reacts. The STAGE MANAGER winces.)*

STAGE MANAGER (*cont'd*). That's terrible. You need to fire it up. So, when Ellen comes out, everyone leap to your feet, give her a crazy big super-loud round of applause.

DIRECTOR. Need a level on the Audience.

STAGE MANAGER. OK, Audience, the director needs a level. Ready for some fun? Let's practice. Everyone on your feet for ... Ellen DeGeneres!!! Big applause! Big applause, please!

*(Multiple STAGEHANDS hold up "Applause!" signs. STAGE MANAGER gets the audience clapping, whooping, whistling, etc.)*

STAGE MANAGER (*cont'd*). You guys gotta do better than that.

DIRECTOR. Places everyone. We're going live.

STAGE MANAGER. Quiet on the set! Here we go. In five, four, three ...

*(The STAGE MANAGER silently counts off the two and one on his hand. We hear signature Ellen theme music. STAGEHANDS hold up "Applause!" signs.)*

ANNOUNCER. Live from Los Angeles, it's an all-new Ellen! She's got *The Hunger Games* hunk Josh Hutcherson and he's here to take the heartthrob challenge. Plus student debate-club queen Amal Abdel-Hakim, and no topic is off limits. The network's giving this remarkable 11th-grader her own prime-time show! And now let's welcome ... Ellen DeGeneres!

*(ELLEN is played by AMAL, who dances onto the set to rowdy audience appreciation and music. She wears cute sneakers, vest and a loose tie. She tosses a big hat in the air and tries to catch it on her head. Shrugs with failure or*

*struts with success, then quiets the crowd with the aid of her STAGEHANDS.)*

ELLEN. Have a seat. I appreciate it so very much. That was great. I send it [the love] right back to you. Oh! (*Puts the hat on her head if it's not there already.*) Tell me—be brutal. Does my head look big in this? So our first guest is an amazing young woman. Still just 16, her new talk show debuts tomorrow night! Please welcome, Amal!

*(Upbeat music! “Applause!” signs; STAGEHANDS encourage the audience to cheer. But no AMAL. Music scratches to an old-fashioned screechy halt.)*

ELLEN (*cont'd*). Amal! Come on out! Don't be shy. We won't bite!

*(No AMAL. The panicked STAGE MANAGER runs to ELLEN.)*

ELLEN (*cont'd*). Where's my guest?

*(The STAGE MANAGER merely shrugs.)*

ELLEN (*cont'd*). What is going on here?!

*(STAGEHANDS strip the set and ...)*

ELLEN (*cont'd*). Hey! You can't do that!

*(... spin her chair while she's still in it!)*

ELLEN (*cont'd*). What the—! Hey stop! You're making me dizzy!

*(The STAGEHANDS run off. ELLEN steadies herself, then sheepishly addresses the audience.)*

AMAL (*to audience, sheepishly*). I'm not Ellen. Hi. I'm Amal. I guess I'm not ready to be a talk show host, though my friends say that's what I'm destined to do. Really I'm in the 11th grade. School starts tomorrow. I'm totally psyched because I actually like school, sick I know. I'm stoked to get back with my friends, but I'm real nervous about seeing Adam. Adam Keane. Why am I nervous? If you knew Adam, you wouldn't be asking that question.

*(As AMAL talks, enter AMAL's MOM and DAD, wearing matching track suits, back home from a good hard run. DAD is out of breath. MOM removes earbuds. For the record, she removed her own hijab as soon as she came inside. We do not see it now.)*

AMAL (*cont'd, to audience*). My folks just got home. Excuse me.

*(AMAL joins the action.)*

MOM (*to her husband*). Next time, we don't do the hill.

DAD. Nonsense. (*Panting, wheezing.*) If you want. We can go. Again. Over the hill.

MOM. Over the hill is right.

*(MOM gives DAD a saucy look. DAD, still bent over, lifts and waggles his head, giving her his best cheesy grin.)*

DAD. I'll show you who's over the hill. Just let me catch my breath first.

*(He winks at her, while MOM wags her finger like he's a naughty boy.)*

AMAL (*to audience*). That is just so wrong. My mom and dad actually flirt. I taste a little vomit every time I catch

them doing that goofy lovey-dovey eyes-like-laser-beams thing they do. My dad is a doctor. Mom, a dentist. Two nerds who fell in love pulling all-nighters in the college library. I'm glad I wasn't there to see it. Get it? I wasn't born yet. Oh come on, that's funny.

*(AMAL rejoins the action as her MOM takes off a running shoe.)*

MOM. Amal! Your father says we're going out. Sure you don't want to come?

*(Behind MOM's back, DAD gestures "No way!" to his daughter.)*

AMAL. I uh, I promised my friends I'd meet them at the mall. So no, thanks.

*(DAD gives AMAL the thumbs up. MOM's taken off the other shoe.)*

MOM. Are you sure, honey?

AMAL. I'm sure! Dad has been planning this dinner for weeks. You guys don't need a chaperone. Right, Dad?

DAD. Up to you, honey.

AMAL *(goes to give her parents a hug, brightly)*. Happy anniversary! *(Takes a few steps away quickly, but then turns.)* Dad?

MOM. Spend your own money. Stop getting handouts from your father. It's why you worked in my office all summer. Use your own money. Really.

DAD. Get thee to your makeup, woman! Or we'll be late to our reservation. And I don't want to hear a word tonight about calories.

MOM. Fine. Just don't spoil her.

DAD. May I spoil you?



MOM (*flirty*). Of course!

(*MOM exits with her shoes in hand.*)

DAD. Amal, did you—

AMAL. I did. Here you go.

(*AMAL hands DAD a long jewelry case wrapped with a pretty bow.*)

DAD. Good girl. Here.

(*He slips AMAL some money.*)

AMAL. Thanks Dad. It's a pearl necklace. Mom is going to get real upset at how much you spent on it.

DAD. Really? Oh good.

(*He presses more money into her hand.*)

AMAL. That's too much.

DAD (*waves her off*). Treat the girls to an ice cream.

AMAL (*to audience*). I so have Dad wrapped around my little

...

DAD. Cramp! Cramp! Cramp!

(*He exits hopping. AMAL shakes her head.*)

AMAL (*cont'd, to audience*). I'm so pumped to go to the mall. I'm meeting three of my BFF's [Best Friends Forever]—Eileen, Leila and Simone. I get about 10 feet from the door, when I hear my name being butchered.

(*As AMAL talks to the audience, enter MRS. VASELLI. She redefines crotchety. Her thick accent underscores that she grew up in Greece.*)

MRS. VASELLI. Amelia! Amoreena! Come here!

AMAL (*to audience*). That's Mrs. Vaselli. Our next door neighbor since forever. She's a million years old and can't talk in a normal tone of voice. Plus, she has mega brain farts [*ALT: freeze*] when it comes to remembering my name.

MRS. VASELLI. Alicia! Amazonia! Are you hard of hearing?!

AMAL (*cont'd, to audience*). I hear fine. I just don't want to talk to her.

MRS. VASELLI. Amy! Amara! Don't ignore me! Hey you!

AMAL (*to audience*). Hey you, my personal favorite. (*Re-enters the action.*) I'm a little slow, Mrs. Vaselli. And I'm Amal. Not Amelia, not Amanda, Amy, Amira, Amoreena or Amoral.

MRS. VASELLI. Cheeky girl! I am finding cigarette butt! Many butt! Stop throwing butt on my lawn!

*(She holds up a used cigarette butt.)*

AMAL. I don't smoke, Mrs. Vaselli.

MRS. VASELLI. Do not lie, Amy! I know your butt when I see it!

AMAL. Bye, Mrs. Vaselli. I'm going to the mall.

MRS. VASELLI. You clean [*ALT: pick up*] butt when you come back!

AMAL (*calls back to her*). I will, Mrs. Vaselli. (*To audience.*) It's always a quality interaction with Mrs. Vaselli.

*(As AMAL speaks, LEILA KHAN, a BFF in fashionable hijab, settles in at the mall food court with drinks, snacks.)*

AMAL (*cont'd, to audience*). The mall is crowded as usual. I don't see Eileen or Simone, but I see Leila. You can always count on Leila to be on time. She goes to a private Muslim school. We've known each other since forever. She's really, really smart. Her mom is really, really conservative.

*(AMAL re-enters the action. LEILA offers her a soda.)*

LEILA. I got you diet.

AMAL. Don't talk to me about diets. My mother is obsessed. Low-carb diet, banana diet, grapefruit diet, lemon juice diet, wheatgrass tabbouleh diet. She's got my dad doing it too. Plus now they are exercising. Running around the block in matching track suits and going to Weight Watchers.

LEILA. Your poor dad. But that's nothing next to my mom. She's consulting some old-school match-matcher to marry me off.

AMAL. We're in 11th grade.

LEILA. It's a nightmare. Ya Allah! If only she was obsessed with dieting!

*(Enter SIMONE WASHINGTON and EILEEN TANAKA, AMAL's classmates. They carry snacks/drinks of their own.)*

AMAL. Hey!

*(AMAL and LEILA wave them over.)*

AMAL *(cont'd, to audience)*. Meet Eileen and Simone. They go to public school with me. Eileen's parents are from Japan. They don't helicopter. They cruise-missile. Eileen gets grounded if she gets an A minus. As for Simone, it's no better. Her mom's another member of the food police. She says no boy will ever like Simone unless she drops 20 pounds.

*(AMAL re-enters the action as SIMONE and EILEEN take seats.)*

SIMONE. Did I hear someone mention a diet I haven't tried yet?

EILEEN. I read in Cosmo that hypnosis works. You are getting sleepy ... so very sleepy.

AMAL (*deep cop-like voice*). Step away from the Twinkie!

SIMONE. Now, flap your arms like a chicken—

LEILA. And bark like a dog.

(*They laugh, do chicken gestures, bark.*)

EILEEN. Leila, is your mom still trying to marry you off?

(*LEILA nods.*)

LEILA. It got so bad that my principal actually had to call her. But she did most of the talking.

SIMONE. What did your mom say to him?

LEILA. That life was better in Pakistan.

SIMONE. What's better in Pakistan?

LEILA. According to her, everything. I do one thing wrong, she threatens to ship me back to Pakistan. Oversleep? Pakistan. Spill milk? Pakistan. Global warming? Pakistan!

EILEEN. My folks don't make threats. They just look monumentally crushed and say, "We are so disappoint." (*Sic.*) I'm sure I'll just wake up in some boot camp, digging holes.

SIMONE. All my mom does is buy diet books and make me watch Dr. Oz.

AMAL. Josh Goldberg likes you.

SIMONE. He does not.

EILEEN. Yes he does.

LEILA. Eileen, who's Josh?

EILEEN. A cute boy and he likes Simone.

SIMONE. He does not.

AMAL. Simone, you're just afraid he can't see past your outside to your inside. Oooh, I like that. I'm gonna post that.

SIMONE/EILEEN/LEILA. Cool!/Take a pic to go with./ Family photo for Facebook!/I'll come over there.

*(AMAL whips out her cellphone. She gets up and in between the girls; they do a reverse snapshot, adjusting themselves, wiping their teeth, primping to look cuter and thinner before the snapshot.)*

AMAL. Ready? Simone, hold still. You do not have a double chin. *(Takes the photo. Then immediately shows the girls.)*

Approve or disapprove? I think we look cute. I say approve.

SIMONE/EILEEN/LEILA. It's good./Send it to me./We look cute./Post it.

AMAL *(tapping on her cellphone screen)*. Boys can see past your outside to see your inside. Believe it. Attach picture. Done!

EILEEN. You think Adam will “like” your post?

SIMONE. Are you kidding? I bet he'll comment on it and “like” it.

AMAL. Adam Keane? Are you kidding? He's like, unknowable. And untouchable.

*(Random people have been crossing through the food court behind them. They don't see one of them—a teen or adult JERK—who slow downs, grins and approaches.)*

JERK. Hey girls! What do we have here? It's the United Nations!

AMAL. We're not interested.

*(He glares at LEILA.)*

JERK. Well, I'm not interested in a terrorist meeting in the middle of the food court.

AMAL. Excuse me?

LEILA. Guys, let's just go—

AMAL *(to LEILA)*. Let's not. *(To JERK.)* I think you're lost. “Idiots Anonymous” is that way.