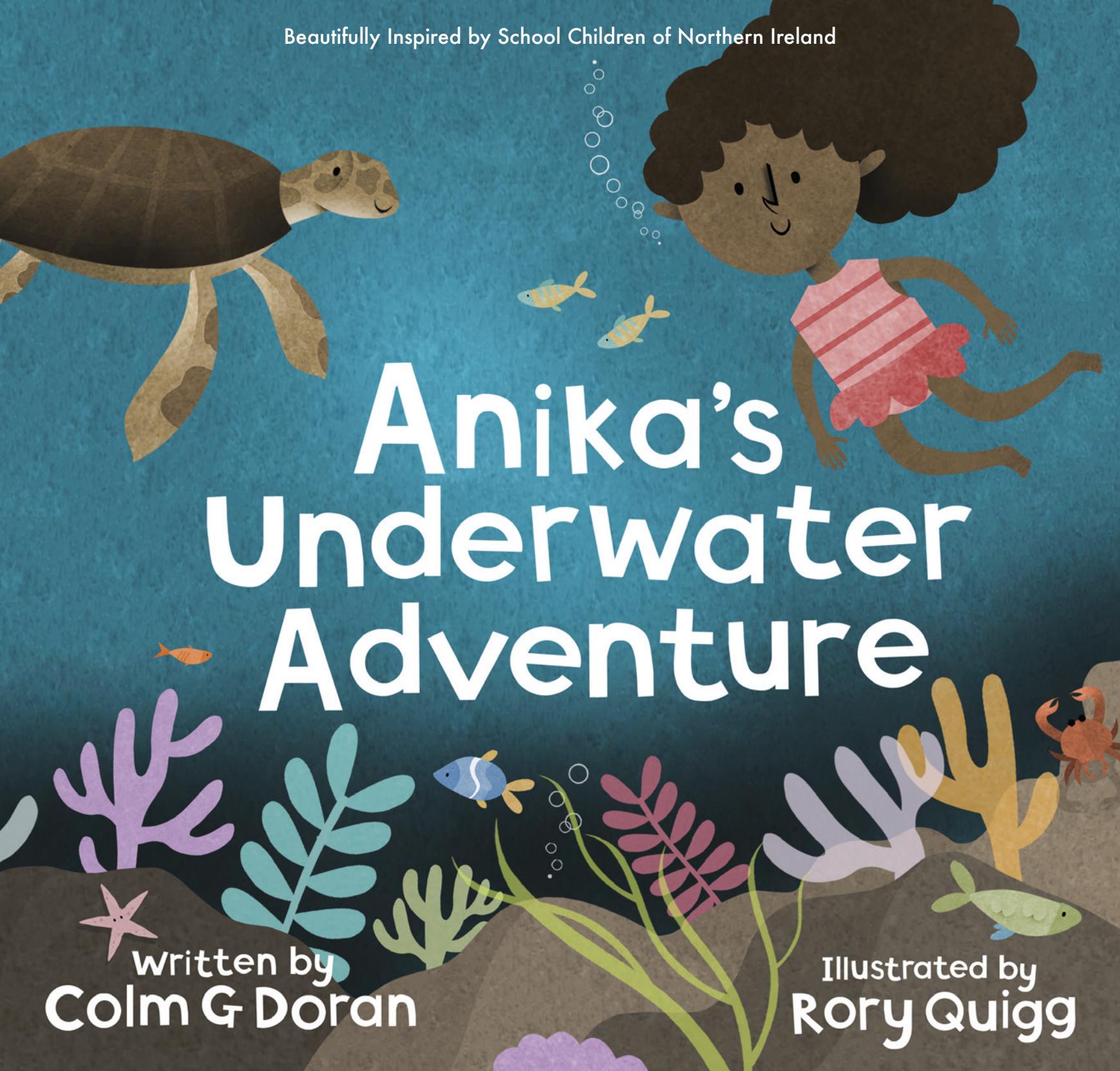


Beautifully Inspired by School Children of Northern Ireland



Anika's Underwater Adventure

written by
Colm G Doran

Illustrated by
Rory Quigg

Thank you!

...to all our Little Contributors

This storybook was commissioned by the Education Authority of Northern Ireland and created by Three's Theatre Company.

Schools Involved Botanic Primary School, Fane Street Primary School, Holy Rosary Primary School, Millington Primary School, St Brides Primary School

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With special thanks to Shannon Yee

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Anika was bored.

Usually she liked school. She liked her friends. She liked her bright, colourful classroom. She even liked her teacher Mrs Brown, even though sometimes she was cross.

But today her school jumper made her feel warm, and she was hungry and it was ages until break time.

Mrs Brown was talking about nouns. "Who can tell me what a noun is?" she asked.

Everyone started to shout out at once. "That's enough children! Hands up please, if you know the answer," said Mrs Brown.



Shea said a noun was a person –
like a firefighter or The Queen.

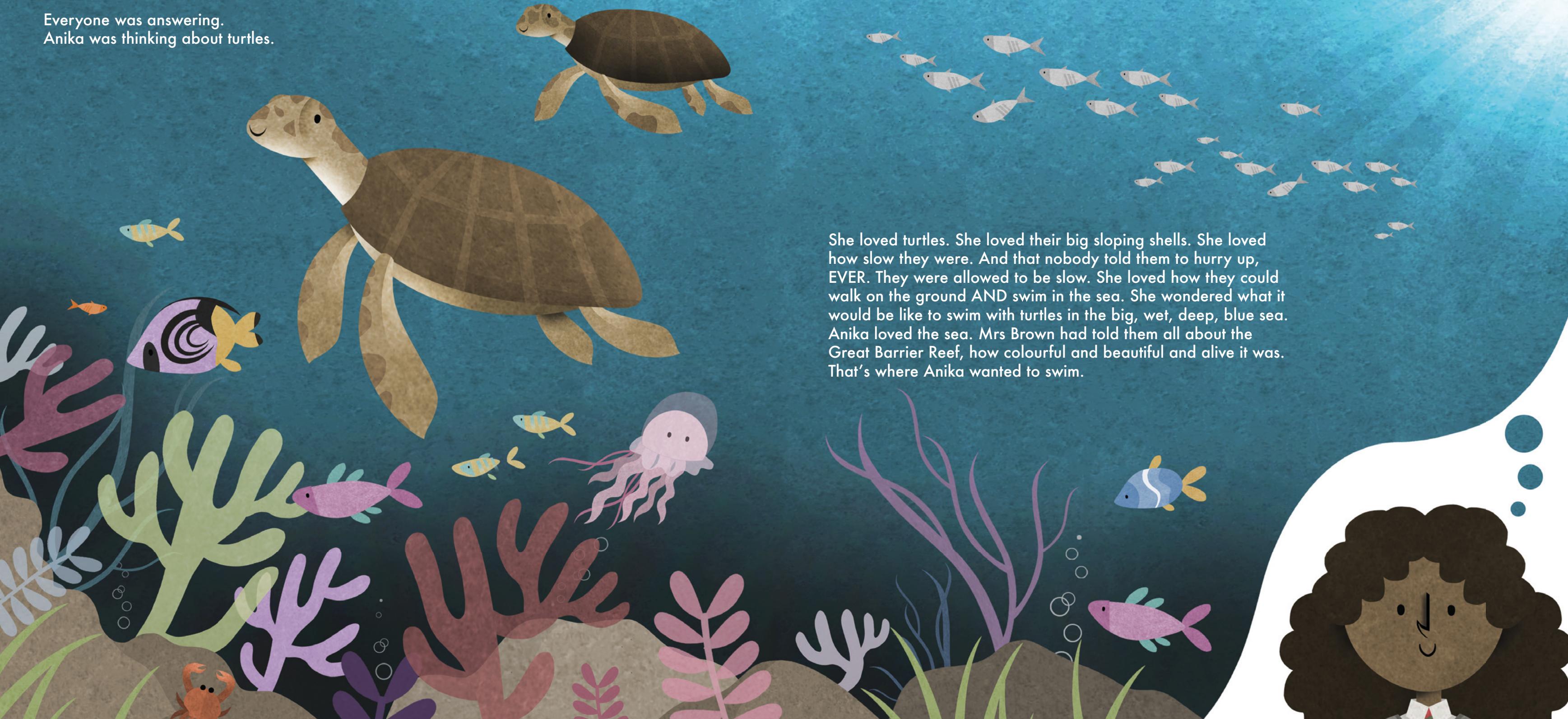
Muhammad said a noun was a place – like Italy
or The Moon.

Rose said a noun was a thing – like a football or a really
cool pair of boxing gloves.

"And what about animals?" Mrs Brown asked.
"Can animals be nouns too?"

"Tigers can be nouns Miss!" Zebras too!
Snakes Miss! And Spiders!"

Everyone was answering.
Anika was thinking about turtles.



She loved turtles. She loved their big sloping shells. She loved how slow they were. And that nobody told them to hurry up, EVER. They were allowed to be slow. She loved how they could walk on the ground AND swim in the sea. She wondered what it would be like to swim with turtles in the big, wet, deep, blue sea. Anika loved the sea. Mrs Brown had told them all about the Great Barrier Reef, how colourful and beautiful and alive it was. That's where Anika wanted to swim.

“Anika!”



Mrs Brown was looking straight at her...
“Huh...Yes Miss?”

“I asked you a question and you weren’t paying attention.” said Mrs Brown,
“You mustn’t daydream Anika, you must pay attention.”

“Sorry Miss!”

“Alright children, line up for breaktime!”



When she got home from school that night Anika's Dad told her they were having her favourite for dinner – Fish and fufu. Anika loved it because she got to help her Dad in the kitchen. When her Dad had everything else prepared, Anika helped to make the fufu – the same way her Nne Nne had shown her Dad when he was Anika's age. Anika's Dad would put the semolina flour into the pot and once he poured the hot water in, she had to stir really quickly so the fufu would be smooth with no lumps.



"Are you ready to stir?"
asked her Dad.

"Yes!" said Anika, all excited.



'Nne Nne' is 'Grandma' in Igbo, one of over 500 languages in Nigeria

But as her Dad poured the water into the pot and it splashed against the yellowy semolina flour, it reminded Anika of waves flowing across a sandy beach. Little dots of the flour floated on the waves, making Anika think of the tiny little fish in the sea, and the bigger lumps were like the dolphins, or sharks or giant sea turtles, and the even bigger lumps at the edge of the pot were like the huge rocks that the waves would crash against...



said her Dad. "You're not stirring!"

Anika started to stir quickly, turning her ocean into fufu.

"You have to pay attention Anika, you have to focus!" said her Dad.

That evening Anika went to her gymnastics class. She joined up after watching Simone Biles on YouTube. This week they were doing step-kicks with pointed toes. Her teacher Frau Schafer, who was short and round with spiky hair, signaled to each girl when it was her turn by shouting "NOW!" quite loudly.



Simone Biles is an African American Olympian who has won four gold medals in 2016 and is considered to be one of the best gymnasts in the world.

As Anika watched the girls turning and kicking across the floor, their legs stretched out and feet gracefully pointed in the air, she couldn't help but think how much easier all of this would be underwater...

A vibrant underwater illustration featuring four seahorses as the main characters. One yellow seahorse on the left has a small white starfish on its back. Next to it is a pink seahorse wearing round black-rimmed glasses. To the right of the pink one is a green seahorse with a striped pattern. A small orange fish swims near the bottom center. The background is a dark teal ocean floor with various colorful sea plants like coral, kelp, and anemones in shades of pink, purple, blue, and yellow. Bubbles rise from the bottom.

In the Ocean the girls would be seahorses,
effortlessly gliding along the ocean floor, floating
through the water together, their bright colours
shining, without a care in the world.

Frau Shafer would be a blowfish, Anika decided.
With her round red face and spiky hair...

“Anika!”

...NOW! NOW!” Her teacher shouted.
“Oh, you missed your signal to go! Pay Attention girl!”
“Sorry!” said Anika.





Art Competition

The next day at school Mrs Brown told the class there was to be an Art Competition. Everyone had to draw a picture of their favourite place in the whole world. The winner would be announced in front of the whole school at Assembly on Friday and the winner's picture would be framed and would hang in the Entrance Hall of the school for everyone to see!



The whole class was excited.
Pencils, pens, crayons and paints started
to appear on all the desks.

Abeo was drawing all the rides in Disneyland.
Sean was drawing the sky-scrapers of Dubai.
Jack was drawing a petting zoo.





Anika knew exactly what she
was going to draw...

And over the next few days she drew...



And drew...

And when she wasn't working on her masterpiece, she was
thinking about it.

When she was eating dinner with her Dad and her sister, she
was thinking about her picture.



When she was in the park
playing frisbee with her friend
Rose, she was thinking about her picture.



When she was eating dinner with
her Dad and her sister, she was
thinking about her picture.

Even when her Dad took ages
braiding her hair with pretty
ribbons into cornrows for school,
she was thinking about her picture.

Braiding hair has
been a part of African
cultures since 3500BC.
Historically, braid patterns
would indicate a person's
tribe or community.
Braiding is done for special
occasions, and is a form
of art. It also is a practical
way to care for hair.



Finally, it was Friday. Anika and her class, along with the whole school were in the assembly hall. Everyone was nervous. Who was going to win?

Anika had seen her classmates working on their pictures and she was impressed. Abeo's Disneyland rides looked a little bit like spaghetti but the colours were really vibrant. Sean's sky-scrappers were massive! And Rose's petting zoo with all its furry animals was the cutest thing Anika had ever seen. There were paintings of a big tower in Italy, a huge Mosque in India, a massive football pitch – even outer space. Anika wasn't sure if her picture would be good enough...

Mrs Brown was at the front of the hall next to her was the winning picture underneath a big piece of red cloth.
'And the winner of the Art Competition is....'

Everyone held their breath. Mrs Brown pulled away the red cloth revealing the picture beneath...

"Anika! With her 'Underwater Adventure.' Give her a round of applause everyone!"

The whole hall clapped and cheered. Anika was stunned. She couldn't believe it – that was her picture at the front of the hall...

Her ocean, with huge giant turtles, and dolphins, and sea horses and the beautiful coral reef, the colours she had chosen for the tropical fish, her yellowy sand and even a blow-fish that looked a little bit like her gymnastics teacher. It was all there. And she had drawn herself in too, next to one of the turtles. Well it was her favourite place afterall. This is the place she would go to when she was bored, the place she would daydream about.



**"well done
Anika!"**

said Mrs Brown "that will have taken a lot of concentration. It's so imaginative!"



Anika realized that she had thought all of this up on her own, it wasn't somewhere she had been, she had imagined it. How it would all look and feel. So maybe it was important for her to spend time imagining, maybe that was something she was good at... and she didn't have to feel sorry about it.



A few days later her Dad called Anika downstairs, Oh no.
She wondered what she had forgotten to do...Had she left
her books all over the floor, or her coat lying on the stairs?



There in the hallway was her Dad and her sister, and behind them hanging on the wall was a copy of Anika's painting. Framed and hanging right next to the front door. "Everyone will be able to see it that way!" Her Dad said, beaming at her.

"We were thinking for our summer holiday this year,
we might go somewhere special... to scuba dive!
How does that sound?"

Anika was delighted.

The End.





'Anika' means 'goodness' in Yorùbá, one of the principal languages of Nigeria.

Annika loves to daydream, but
it keeps getting her into trouble.
Until one day, her imagination
comes in very useful...

