Children’s Books with Muslim and Related Cultural Themes

Some Background Information

In 2006, around the fifth anniversary of the attacks on Sept. 11th, I was asked by School Library Journal to write an article that would address the need for literature about Muslims to create cross cultural understanding. Towards that end, I wrote an article called Muslims in Children’s Books and compiled this book list. You can find the article here: http://www.slj.com/2006/09/opinion/muslims-in-childrens-books/

Over the years I have added to this booklist as more books about Muslims become available and time allows. These are books that I approve of, so it is by no means a complete list of all the books out there.

I designed this booklist for teachers, librarians, conscientious parents and anyone with an interest in Islam and Muslims. The format of each entry is: Author’s last name in capitals, Author’s first name, title of the book, illustrator of the book, publisher and year of publication followed by a brief description of the book. For brevity’s sake I’ve left out subtitles and have occasionally shortened the names of co-authors.

I’ve divided the booklist into sections: Contemporary picture books; Historical and Non-Fiction Picture books; Contemporary novels and short story collections; Folktales; and Non-Fiction.

Any suggestions for additions or comments regarding this book list can be sent to me at rukhsana@rukhsanakhan.com.

I hope you find this list useful and I hope this list leads to greater cross-cultural understanding. With all the turmoil going on in this world, heaven knows we need it!

Sincerely,

Rukhsana Khan
Contemporary Picture Books

A simple Eid story.

A poignant story about bereavement through the eyes of a strong Arab heroine.

A look at the Arab custom of Girgian during the middle nights of Ramadan.

A little girl enjoys playing imaginatively with her mother’s religious headscarf.

A Muslim girl helps her friend ride his bike.

An effortless blend of parallel cultures, written by a child.

Set in North America, a South Asian girl feels self-conscious after putting henna on her hands.

A lovely classroom-friendly introduction to the Muslim month of fasting!

A charming story about a man getting ready for Eid who needs his pants hemmed.

Set in Egypt, a boy learns to spell his name.

Sami deals with the realities of war in Beirut.

A young boy deals with leaving his war torn homeland and coming to America.

Curious George discovers Ramadan.

A vibrantly illustrated story about a Pakistani-American’s experience with Ramadan and Eid.

A beautiful book that captures the colorful world of Islam for young readers.

Muslim Children’s Booklist compiled by Rukhsana Khan  
[www.rukhsanakhan.com](http://www.rukhsanakhan.com)
KHAN, Rukhsana. *Big Red Lollipop*. illus. Sophie Blackall. Viking. 2010. A Pakistani-American girl has to take her little sister to a birthday party she’s been invited to.

KHAN, Rukhsana. *King for a Day*. Illus. Christiane Kromer. Lee and Low. 2014. A disabled boy in Pakistan has one day he rules: the day of Basunt, the kite festival.


MCCARNEY, Rosemary. *Because I am a Girl*. Second Story Press. 2014. This photo essay profiles several girls around the world who are making a difference.


MUNSch, Robert & Saoussan Askar. *From Far Away*. illus. Michael Martchenko. Annick. 1995. This is a collaboration based on the story of Askar, who left Beirut at age five.


Muslim Children’s Booklist compiled by Rukhsana Khan

[www.rukhsanakhan.com](http://www.rukhsanakhan.com)
A boy uses calligraphy to deal with the horror of war in Iraq.

**Historical/Non-Fiction Picture Books**

A fact-filled book about Muslim contributions to our lives today.

A lyrical look at Ramadan.

A look at the Islamic festival of Eid ul Adha and the Hajj pilgrimage.

A biography of the first Muslim African-American basketball star.

An excellent picture book biography of Islam’s Prophet.

An informative book about the month of fasting.

Set in America it follows a young Muslim through this special month.

Contains wonderful songs and text (by the former rock star Cat Stevens).

A wonderful, concise biography of Muhammad (peace be upon him).

A beautifully illustrated book that examines Islamic architecture.

The story of a Muslim scholar of the Middle ages who discovered how we see.

An intriguing look at the famous Muslim traveler Ibn Battuta.

A story of how Muslims in Paris saved hundreds of Jews during the Holocaust.

A biography of the legendary African American leader written by his daughter.


**Contemporary Novels and Short Story Collections**

ABDEL-FATTAH, Randa. *Does My Head Look Big in This?* Orchard Books. 2007. A humorous novel about an Australian girl who starts to wear hijab.


ELLIS, Deborah, WALTERS, Eric. *Bifocal*. Fitzhenry & Whiteside. 2007
Despite problems, this novel provides excellent analysis of today’s political realities.

Sequel to Parvana’s Journey, about Parvana’s friend’s continued adventures.

A young Afghan girl is separated from her family during war in Afghanistan.

EMERICK, Yahiya. *Ahmad Deen and the Jinn at Shaolin*. Amirah. 1996.
Ahmad Deen travels to China and finds a mystery.

A young girl and her brother arrive in Canada as immigrants.

A Muslim girl tries to appease the kids in her classroom.

A collection of religious celebration stories about six kids from five different faiths.

A collection of short stories and poems about Islam from a child’s perspective.

A novella about an Iraqi refugee dealing with the aftermath of the Boston bombing incident.

A novel set in post-Taliban Afghanistan, about a girl who gets abandoned by her father.

A historical novel about a young Kurdish girl’s flight from Iraq under Saddam Hussein.

A heart-wrenching story of boys wanting to play soccer set in Israeli occupied Gaza.

A novel about an exchange visit to Malaysia.

A romantic novel about a young American girl who goes with her family to Palestine.

A wonderful collection of poems that give voice to Middle Eastern perspectives.


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[www.rukhsanakhan.com](http://www.rukhsanakhan.com)
A split tale of a girl in 2008 and a boy in 1985 suffering during the conflicts in Sudan.

A Pakistani teen is forced into marriage by her parents.

YA graphic novel memoir of a half French half Arab boy’s hilarious adventures in the Middle East.

Features a framed story from the storyteller Duwairig.

Linked to the previous title, again Duwairig frames a story of court intrigue.

An amazing novel set in a Bedouin society in the year 1302.

**Folktales**

A story about the childhood of the famed king of Mali.

A collection of folktales and wisdom culled from the Muslim world.

The animals in paradise tell stories of how they helped various messengers of God.

A collection of fables about animals set in the Arab culture.

Set in Morocco, the story deals with the craft of storytelling.

A lush retelling of the Persian poem based on the thirteenth century Sufi Farid ud-Din Attar.

A retelling of the classic Persian folktale.

A collection of stories about Mullah Nasruddin (a.k.a. Nasruddin Hoja, Joha or Hoca).

A lush retelling of the famous story from the Arabian Nights.

More stories of Sinbad from the Arabian Nights.

**Nonfiction**

*1001 Inventions and Awesome Facts about Muslim Civilization.* National Geographic. 2012. A valuable resource from the iconic institution.


AL-HASANI, S. *1001 Inventions: ...Legacy of Muslim Civilization.* National Geographic. 2012. An in depth look at the way Islamic civilization has influenced modernity.

BARAKAT, I. *Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian childhood.* Farrar Straus Giroux. 2007. A memoir of a Palestinian woman set during the six day war with Israel.


KNIGHT, Khadija. *Islamic Festivals.* Heinemann Library. 1997. A very good resource that includes information beyond the festivals.


A biography of the iconic activist written by the Newbery award-winning author.

An autobiography of the iconic basketball star.

An in-depth look at the magnificent fourteenth century pre-colonial African empire.

A look at the contributions of Islamic scholars to STEM subjects.

A comprehensive set containing the history of Arabic Sciences and Mathematics.

A children’s biography of the activist.

A biography of the famous boxer.

An informative look at Muslim issues from a political angle.

A comprehensive look at the way this 10th century Muslim created modern scientific method.

A detailed guide to Islam.

A memoir from the Muslim chaplain at Guantanamo Bay wrongfully accused of treason.