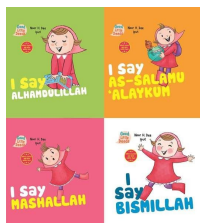


Hijabi Librarians: Favorite Books of 2020

This list represents some of our favorite Children's and Young Adult books that we read and were published in 2020. We chose these works based on their thoughtful and nuanced treatment of Muslims and Islam, and the intersections of identity. We are glad to see more books this year compared to 2019 and have included some independently published books on this year's list. We considered over 80 titles children's, young adult, and adult titles with YA appeal in creating this list.

Note that we do not include fantasy and sci-fi titles by Muslim authors whose worlds and characters do not reflect explicit Muslim identity (this does not indicate that they were not some of our favorites of the year). As stated on our [release calendar](#) there is power in speculative fiction/fantasy/scifi world building in general in exploring issues related to the real world and we highlight them on the calendar and plan to in future, separate posts. What were your favorites of 2020?

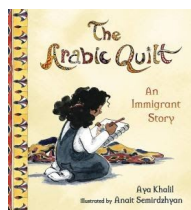
Board Books



***I Say Collection with Nabil and Noura by Noor H. Dee. illus. by Iput. Islamic Foundation. 2020. Tr \$34.95 ISBN 9780860377825**

Birth-K - This collection of board books follows siblings, Noura and Nabil, as they introduce commonly used Islamic phrases. In each book, the children discuss the meaning of a phrase as it is used in everyday occurrences and actions. The last page of each book includes the phrase written in Arabic with diacritical markers to indicate vowels and stops, transliteration, and translation into English. Simple but profound, these books can create understanding of words used by Muslims and Arabic speakers across the globe. Noor H. Dee is an Indonesian author, but Nabil and Noura are racially ambiguous.

Picture Books



Arabic Quilt by Aya Khalil. Illus. by Anait Semirdzhyan. 36 pp. Tilbury House. 2020. Tr \$17.95 ISBN 9780884487548.

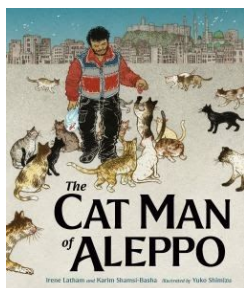
K-Gr 3 - Starting at a new school, Egyptian-American Kanzi is afraid to stand out as "different" but is mocked by a classmate who hears Kanzi's mother speaking Arabic. Wrapped in her Teita's (grandma) quilt, Kanzi writes a poem and inspires a classroom quilt project, with her teacher, Mrs. Haugen facilitating a discussion of English words that come from Arabic, language appreciation, and acceptance. Kanzi and her mother write student names in Arabic to add to a classroom quilt, and Kanzi finds pride and love in the languages she speaks. A glossary of Egyptian Arabic terms is included. Illustrations by Semirdzhyan richly convey Egyptian culture and information about the family. Kanzi's father appears to be a Black Arab Egyptian, while her mother is light-skinned, Kanzi and her brother Zacharia also have brown skin. In Kanzi's house there are photographs displayed of protestors and a tennis player that appears to be Serena Williams. Details like patterns on Kanzi's father's vest, the tablecloth, dishes, the newspaper he is reading "Akhbar Misr" (Egyptian News), body types, and food items are delightful. Teita's quilt itself is colorful and bright and depicts feluccas on the Nile. The final scene has Kanzi meeting with schoolmate, Japanese American Kura, from the class across the hall and talking about commonalities in expressing their cultures at school.



Building Zaha: The Story of Architect Zaha Hadid by Victoria Tentler-Krylov. 48 pp. Orchard Books. 2020. Tr \$18.99. ISBN 978-1338282832.

PreS- Gr 3 - Growing up in Baghdad, Zaha Hadid found interest in the shapes and patterns found in mosques, palaces, the ruins of ancient civilizations, and the natural world. Determined to become an architect from a young age, Zaha obtained a math degree in Lebanon before moving to London to study architecture. But upon graduation Zaha met with many who challenged and

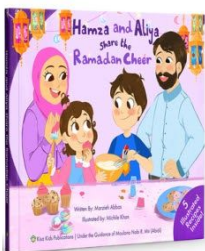
rejected her unconventional ideas and designs for not only the ideas themselves, but because Zaha was a woman. Determined to achieve her dreams Zaha found the ability to design, seen as a diva, under scrutiny not faced by men in her field. Zaha earned the title of Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire, became the first woman to design an art museum in the United States, and the youngest, first Iraqi, first Muslim, and first woman to win the Pritzker Architecture Prize. A note from the author indicates that parts of the book are fictionalized. Illustrations show Zaha's age progression from youth to the age that most are familiar with her and her work and photographs are also included.



***The Cat Man of Aleppo by Irene Latham and Karim Shamsi-Basha. Illus. by Yuko Shimizu. 40 pp. Putnam. 2020. Tr \$17.99 ISBN 9781984813787.**

K-Gr 4 - In a narrative based on the story of Mohammad Alaa Aljaleel, ambulance driver Alaa, stays in his beloved Aleppo, helping the injured while many must flee from the ongoing war. Noticing how the cats of the city are also affected, Alaa starts taking care of them, first with scraps he can afford and soon with funding from people who care from across the world. Soon Alaa is able to help the cats, other animals, children and adults, to find a home and moments of joy and hope.

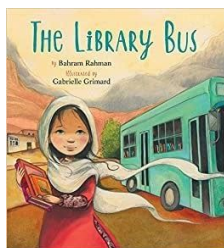
An inspiring story of human compassion. Shimizu's breathtaking illustrations and notes from Alaa and the book creators add to the entire experience.



Hamza and Aliya Share the Ramadan Cheer by Marzieh Abbas. Illus by Michèle Khan. Tr \$20.99 ISBN 978-1683121947

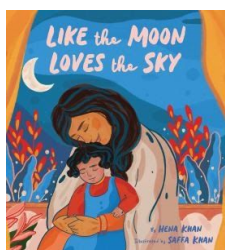
PreS-Gr 3 - The day before Ramadan begins, siblings Hamza and Aliya and their parents prepare for the blessed month ahead. Searching for the new moon, which signals the beginning of the month, decorating, listening to stories about their father's childhood in Pakistan, and making Ramadan resolutions is how they usher in the month. Over the course of the first week of Ramadan, Hamza and Aliya bake treats for neighbors with their mother and prepare a sweet, but healthy surprise for

her with assistance from their grandmother. Cheerful illustrations and several delicious recipes complement the story. Backmatter includes hadith narrations, Quranic verses, and a glossary of terms. Hamza and Aliya Share the Ramadan Cheer is published by the Kisa Kids Publications, a Shia Muslim institution, offering much needed representation.



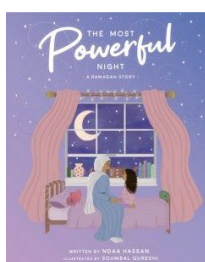
The Library Bus by Bahram Rahman. Illus by Gabrielle Grimard. 32 pp. Pajama press. 2020. Tr \$15.40. ISBN 978-1772781014.

K-Gr 3 It's Pari's first day as her Mama's library helper. Mama drives the only library bus in Kabul to a small village where the girls borrow books and practice English. Afterward, they head to a refugee camp where Pari passes out pencils and notebooks. Pari learns that her grandfather taught her mom to read at a time when it was not allowed for girls to be educated. Pari, Mama, and many other girls are depicted covering their hair with scarves. Rahman's narrative effectively emphasizes access to and the power of education, particularly for those in Afghanistan who have been denied in the past, girls and refugees. Grimard's illustrations capture Pari's joy, the excitement of the girls awaiting the bus, and Mama's determination and belief in providing access to education. Particularly beautiful is the relationship between Pari and her mother and the deliberate intention of passing down the family value and tradition of education and service in the betterment of others.



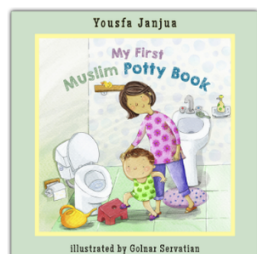
***Like the Moon Loves the Sky by Hena Khan. Illus. by Saffa Khan. 40 pp. Chronicle. 2020. Tr \$17.99 ISBN 9781452180199.**

PreS-Gr 1 - In eloquent and expressive poetic verses inspired by the Quran, a mother shares wishes and invocations for her child using the Arabic phrase "inshallah" ("if God wills it"). Parental wishes range from finding wonder in the natural world, seeking and reflecting on knowledge, and speaking "truth and working for its sake." Hopes that capture the importance of being an integral part of the world, and the role and responsibility one has to contribute to its betterment. Paired with lovingly, vibrant illustrations, this book celebrates a parents unconditional love and faith. Though text does not specify ethnicity, illustrations and details indicate that the family is South Asian.



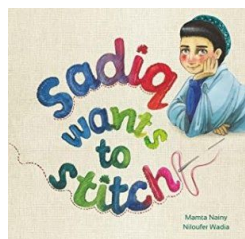
The Most Powerful Night: A Ramadan Story by Ndaa Hassan. Illus. By Soumbal Qureshi. 40 pp. 2020. Tr \$26.00 ISBN 978-1732097032.

PreS-Gr 4 - Layla is curious about why the last days of Ramadan are the best days and what makes one night, Laylat al-Qadr the most special. Layla's mother explains its significance and the power and blessings that come with it. A gentle pink and purple pastel palette adds a dreamlike quality to the book. Muslim children will benefit from this book in learning more about Laylat al-Qadr and add to their practice, especially during Ramadan, non-Muslim readers will gain cross-cultural understanding of specifics of Ramadan and an appreciation of why a Muslim family may choose to spend more time away from regular day-to-day activities in the last ten days of Ramadan. A glossary of Islamic terms used in the book is included. Text and illustrations do not specify ethnicity or nationality of the characters.



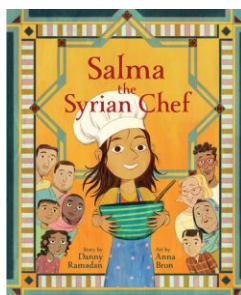
My First Muslim Potty Book by Yousfa Janjua. Illus by Golnar Servatian. 26 pp. Prolance. 2020. Tr \$15.00. ISBN 978-1734576009.

Birth-PreS- *My First Muslim Potty Book* offers all of the beloved components of ever popular how-to-toilet books with additional resources and contents for Muslim families who want to teach their little ones the practice of istinja (“the act of cleaning oneself with water” after using the toilet) and Islamic toileting traditions. Warm and colorful illustrations depict a Muslim mother and father teaching their young child to use the toilet according to Islamic etiquette. Islamic terms in Arabic are used throughout the rhyming text. Backmatter includes a glossary of terms, as well as Quran & Hadith references, and duas (supplications) to say when using the bathroom. Intended for a Muslim audience, but presentation makes it accessible to others who may want to learn about Islamic bathroom practices.



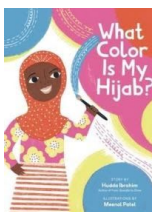
Sadiq Wants to Stitch by Mamta Nainy. Illus by Niloufer Wadia. 40 pp. Karadi Tales. 2020. Tr \$13.95 ISBN 978-8193388914.

Gr PreS-Gr 3 - Sadiq and his mother are nomadic Bakarwal Muslims living in the mountains of Kashmir where he, like other boys and men, tend the herds of sheep and goats, while women are in charge of household work and embroidering intricately patterned rugs. While ammi (mother) allows him to help her with her work, she emphasizes that embroidery is women's work, and Sadiq hides his interest and talent from her, stitching in secret. When ammi gets sick and cannot complete an order, Sadiq decides to use his hidden skills to help. Sadiq's work brings ammi pride and changes her mind about his talents and role in the village.



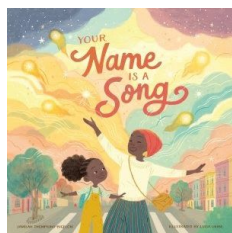
***Salma the Syrian Chef by Danny Ramadan. Illus. by Anna Bron. 40 pp. Annick. 2020. Tr \$18.95 ISBN 9781773213750.**

PreS-Gr 3 - Salma and her mother are Syrian refugees, living in Vancouver, Canada. More than anything, Salma misses the sound of her mother's laughter and believes with a taste of home, it will return. With the help of friends at the refugee center, Salma attempts to make her mother's favorite dish, foul shami, to hear the laughter she craves. Striking illustrations and use of Syrian motifs, frame Salma's heartwarming story as she adjusts to her new home, and finding moments of joy with the help of a loving community of refugees from around the world. [Link to full review](#) by Hadeal.



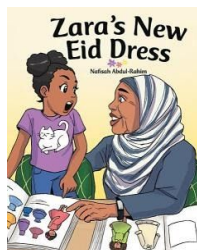
What Color Is My Hijab? by Hudda Ibrahim. Illus. By Meenal Patel. 30 pp. Beaver's Pond Press. 2020. Tr \$16.78 ISBN 978-1643439204

PreS-Gr 2 - In this book of colors, a young Black girl thinks of many Muslim women who wear their hijab, their crowns, in professional roles and associates character traits and actions with the colors of their hijabs. For example, when thinking of a smart, Black female engineer wearing a white hijab, the girl plans to wear a white hijab when she wants to solve problems. Muslim women hold various roles: engineer, athlete, model, pilot, politician, doctor, artist, teacher, business owner, and the narrator's own mother. The style of wearing hijab also differs for each woman and skin tones, with the majority of the women being Black. In the author's note Somali American Ibrahim emphasizes that different styles of hijab are a visual representation of faith and identity, differing by nation, fashion, and preference. Beaver's Pond Press publishes independent books.



***Your Name is a Song by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow. Illus by Lisa Uribe. 40 pp. Innovation Press. 2020. Tr \$16.99 ISBN 9781943147724.**

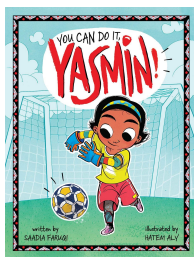
K-Gr 5 - On the first day of school a young, Black Muslim girl is upset because her classmates and teacher "could not say her name." During their walk home, through their bustling, multiethnic neighborhood, her mother teaches her that "names are songs," each conveying an innate melody. Soft, flowing illustrations compliment the lyrical theme and are an inclusive affirmation of all names. The conversation between mother and daughter reflects the common experience for many BIPOC families, who must uplift their children's identities, and teach them tools to defend and diffuse microaggressions from both peers and teachers.



Zara's New Eid Dress by Nafisah Abdul-Rahim. 30 pp. Archway Publishing. 2020 Tr \$25.95. ISBN 978-1480888883.

Gr PreS-Gr 3 - Zara, an African American Muslim girl, has worn matching outfits with her friends for recent Eid celebrations, but now wants an outfit for Eid that reflects her own culture. Her mother suggests that she allow her Nana to make the outfit that she wants, "bright, pink, fluffy, and has flowers on it". Together, they design the perfect Eid outfit. The bold illustrations, which appear to be multimedia in nature, capture the joy of three generations of one African American Muslim family.

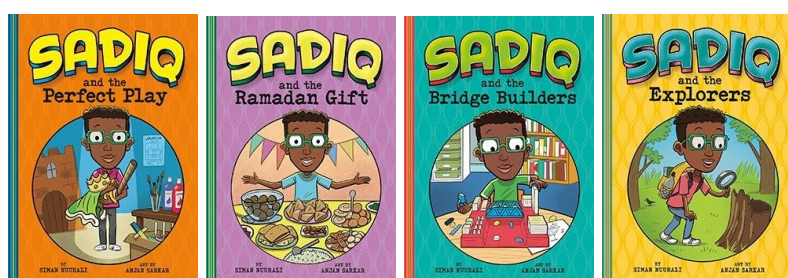
Early Readers



Faruqi, Saadia. You Can Do It, Yasmin! (Yasmin series). Illustrated by Hatem Aly. 96p. Capstone. 2020 Pb. \$5.95. ISBN 9781515860914

PreS-Gr2 - Whether Pakistani American second-grader Yasmin is tackling writing assignments, gardening with her family, playing soccer for the first time, or managing disagreements with friends she is always a curious and creative problem-solver. Yasmin's interactions with her multi-generational Pakistani American family are endearing and recognize her agency. Faruqi's sprinkling of Urdu words and Aly's

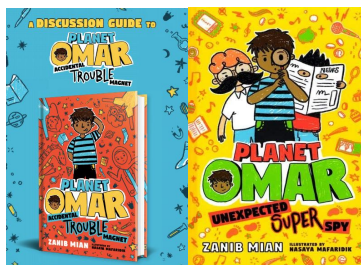
beautiful and bold illustrations convey cultural details and insights into Yasmin's world. Some titles are available in Spanish and French. Fountas & Pinnell Level K.



Nuurali, Siman. Sadiq series. Illustrated by Anjan Sarkar. 64 p. Capstone. 2020. Tr \$6.95. ISBN 9781515872900 (Sadiq and the Explorers), 9781515872887 (Sadiq and the Ramadan Gift), 9781515872894 (Sadiq and the Bridge Builders), 9781515872870 (Sadiq and the Perfect Play).

K-Gr 3 - Somali American Muslim third-grader Sadiq lives with his family in Minnesota. This set of books published in 2020, show Sadiq's inquisitive nature, problem solving, and the importance of involvement and helping in the community -- in Minnesota and in Somalia. Each volume contains information around Somali culture and a glossary of words in Somali as well as terms that pertain to each story. Sarkar's illustrations are expressive and charming. One of the few works which feature a Black Muslim family and center a Black Immigrant Muslim boy. Fountas & Pinnell Level M.

Middle Grade

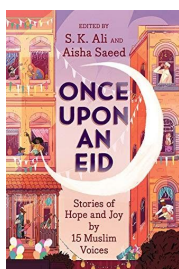


Planet Omar: Accidental Trouble Magnet by Zanib Mian. Illus by Nasaya Mafaridik. 224 pp. G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers. 2020. Tr \$12.49. ISBN 978-0593109212

Gr 2-6 - [Link to our review and discussion guide](#)

Planet Omar: Unexpected Super Spy by Zanib Mian. Illus by Nasaya Mafaridik. 224 pp. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers. 2020. Tr \$12.49. ISBN 978-0593109212

Gr 2-7 - In this followup to *Accidental Trouble Magnet*, Pakistani British Omar finds out that, without funding to fix the roof, his local masjid is in danger of closing down! Knowing how important the masjid is to his family, Omar and his friends decide to help fundraise by holding a talent show at their school. When the talent show money goes missing, Omar and his friends try to catch the thief and save the day. Filled with the same hilarious antics, references to Islamic practices and values, warm day-to-day familial relations (with minor bickering) as the previous volume, this one shows Omar caring for the community and being proactive in trying to do his part to save a special place that gives his parents "secret smiles."



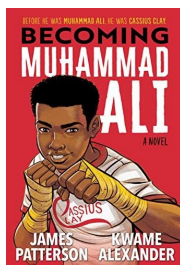
Once Upon an Eid: Stories of Hope and Joy by 15 Muslim Voices by S. K. Ali and Aisha Saeed. Illus by Iman Rasheed. 304 pp. Harry N. Abrams. 2020. Tr \$14.39. ISBN 978-1419740831.

Gr 3-8 - The stories in *Once Upon an Eid* capture Eid traditions and so much more, through prose, verse, and imagery, including the vibrant cover art, and a comic selection, authored by G. Willow Wilson and illustrated by Sara Alfageeh. Consisting of stories by 15 Muslim authors of diverse backgrounds, each selection explores an aspect of the rich variety of the human experience, from changes that come from external events and explore how they are internalized, to smaller every day occurrences. Characters are relatable, display a range of emotions and the complexities of what it means to be Muslim. Check out Ariana and Mahasin's interview of editors S.K. Ali and Aisha Saeed for [Abrams' Beyond the Book](#) episode on [Once Upon an Eid](#).



The Girl and the Ghost by Hanna Alkaf. 288 pp. HarperCollins. 2020. Tr \$11.99. ISBN 978-0062940957.

Gr 4-8 - In a small Malaysian village Suraya, a young girl ostracized by the other village children, and held at a distance by her busy and uninterested mother, finds comfort in a new friend. She names the cricket-shaped creature Pink and cherishes their constant companionship. But Pink is actually a witch's familiar, seeking Suraya as its new master, and is capable of malicious destruction and retribution. This side of Pink makes Suraya uneasy and when she makes her first friend, Pink turns dangerous, prompting a visit from a pawang hantu, a ghost shaman, whose intentions are suspect. Uncovered truths bring revelations, poignant heartbreak, and healing in a book that appeals to mystery and horror lovers, and the more tenderhearted.



Becoming Muhammad Ali by James Patterson and Kwame Alexander. Illus by Dawud Anyabwile. 320 pp. James Patterson. 2020. Tr \$6.74. ISBN 978-0316498166.

Gr 3-7 - A biographical novel told in prose and verse from the perspective of his friend Lucky and himself, *Becoming Muhammad Ali* explores the young life of the beloved boxer when he was still known by his birth name, Cassius Clay. Lyrical depictions of friendships, his complex family life, and experiences with racism in his hometown of Louisville, Kentucky offer insight into his psyche. Black and white cartoon-styled illustrations throughout the novel offer texture and additional insight into his life.

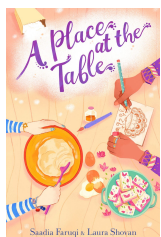
While Ali's conversion to Islam and adult years are not addressed, a final chapter acknowledges his ideological evolution and draws the connection between the belief system he ultimately embraced and his upbringing. A recommended read for fans of *Betty Before X*.



Flying Over Water by N. H. Senzai and Shannon Hitchcock. Illus by Andrea Davis Pinkney. 272pp. Scholastic Press. 2020. Tr \$17.99. ISBN 978-1338617665.

Gr 3-7 - Set in 2017, this novel is told from the perspectives of middle schoolers Noura, a Syrian refugee whose family's arrival in Tampa, Florida coincides with Executive Order 13769 (also known as the Muslim ban) and Jordyn, a white competitive swimmer whose church is sponsoring Syrian refugees and who serves as a school ambassador for newcomers. Both are learning to cope with their fears, Noura, petrified of water after

learning that her best friend drowned trying to cross the Mediterranean to Europe, and Jordyn experiencing panic attacks after her mother suffers a miscarriage at a qualifying swim meet. Along with the trauma of war Noura and her family are only in Tampa for a short time before their mosque is vandalized and they experience Islamophobic events at school. But with the help of their social studies teacher and their own initiative, students are able to connect experiences of present day refugees and those who came before and advocate for their school community and all of those who are in it.

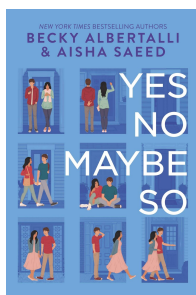


A Place at the Table by Saadia Faruqi and Laura Shovan. 336 pp. Clarion Books. 2020. Tr \$12.19. ISBN 978-0358116684.

Gr 5-7 - Told in alternating chapters, two sixth graders, Pakistani American Muslim Sara, and British American Jewish Elizabeth, *A Place at the Table* explores what it means to navigate friendship, family, and religious identity and practice in the middle school years. Food and cultural traditions are central to this timely story, which also explores themes of Islamophobia, antisemitism, and what it means to stand up against injustice and hold

those we love accountable for their wrongs. Written together by a Muslim and Jewish author, *A Place at the Table* demonstrates what can happen when we focus on what we have in common, instead of where we differ.

Young Adult



Yes, No, Maybe So by Becky Albertalli and Aisha Saeed. 448 pp. Balzer + Bray. 2020. Tr \$13.99. ISBN 978-00662937049.

Gr 8-12 - Told in alternating chapters, two former childhood friends, white Ashkenazi Jewish Jamie and Pakistani American Muslim Maya, reconnect as 17-year olds to canvas for district candidate, Democrat Jordan Rossum, in the northern Atlanta suburbs. Volunteered by their mothers, they are first aloof but then connect over the personal, sharing their respective insecurities and worries; and the political, encountering anti-Semitic and Islamophobic white supremacist propaganda and politicians who advocate a ban on headcoverings that primarily targets headscarf-wearing Muslim women. Amidst this all feelings are kindled between the two of them. Beyond the budding relationship, this narrative feels particularly significant and personal as the two characters lament what seems to be a regression of progressive values and tolerance and more acceptance of xenophobia and hate. Issues of voter suppression, incremental change, complacency, and apathy feel particularly relevant given the outcomes of recent elections in Georgia.



The Henna Wars by Adiba Jaigirdar. 400 pp. Page Street Kids. 2020. Tr \$16.75. ISBN 978-1624149689.

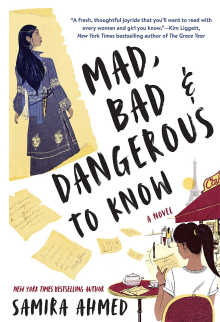
Gr 8-12 - Bangladeshi Irish Nishat has come out as a lesbian to her family, earning her parents' disdain and her own heartbreak. Focusing instead on an entrepreneurial competition at school, Nishat separates herself from her friends, Chaewon and Jess, in order to start a mehndi business, taught to her by her grandmother and based on her own designs. To her dismay her idea is one of two in the competition. White Irish Chyna, a former friend who spread rumors about Nishat and her family restaurant and made her a pariah, is also doing henna with her cousin, biracial Brazilian and white Irish Flávia, a talented artist whom Nishat hasn't seen since primarily school, and whom Nishat has unresolved feelings for. Nishat is angered by the blatant cultural appropriation, racial and homophobic behavior of classmates at her Catholic high school, and Flávia's efforts to get closer to her, for reasons she can't determine are pure. Alongside the cold, and at times, hypocritical behavior of her parents and community, who seem to choose the only see the importance of being Muslim when it comes to her sexuality, the gaslighting and Nishat experiences are incredibly agonizing, making her stubborn determination to succeed in her henna business and cling to her cultural identity and sense of self more heart-wrenching and the genuine feelings between Nishat and Flávia more endearing. Chyna's inability to see the parallels in her xenophobic treatment of Nishat juxtaposed to her love for her cousin and aunt are another powerful depiction of cognitive dissonance to unpack. An incredible debut with so much complexity and depth.



Punching the Air by Ibi Zoboi and Yusef Salaam. 400 pp. Balzer + Bray. 2020. Tr \$15.99. ISBN 978-0062996480.

Gr 7-12 - Sixteen-year-old Amal Shahid is tried and convicted of an act of violence against a white boy. Amal is a poet and talented artist. Told in first person, readers are pulled deeper into Amal's world, his emotions and thoughts, learning about his experience as a Black boy in the prison system, how the school system failed him—specifically his art teacher. Salaam, one of the Exonerated Five, draws on his experience from his wrongful conviction and the injustice he experienced at the hand of the American criminal justice system. The format of the book lends to its brilliance

in poetry and use of space, artwork, references to hip hop. Amal references his Islamic faith and family members, and the symbolism in his naming is also rich and intentional, with Arabic words “Amal” meaning hope and “Shahid” meaning martyr. Zoboi and Salaam examine the connection between American chattel slavery, policing and the prison system, and the school to prison pipeline and calling readers to further action and the necessity of reform to rectify injustice.



Mad, Bad & Dangerous to Know by Samira Ahmed. 336 pp. Soho Teen. 2020. Tr \$15.49. ISBN 978-1616959890

Gr 8-12 - Nursing a broken heart from a complicated undefined relationship in Chicago and a failed effort to impress her dream art school with a theory connecting a lost Delacroix painting to writer Alexander Dumas, 17-year-old white French and Indian American Muslim Khayyam spends summer in Paris with her professor parents. In an impossibly happy coincidence Khayyam bumps into a Dumas descendant, also called Alexander, and the two entertain a budding attraction and Khayyam's theories of the lost painting, prompting the two to dig into the mystery

behind the raven-haired muse of Delacroix, Leila. Alternating chapters give us glimpses into Leila's life in an Ottoman pasha's harem, first as the haseki, the primary consort of the pasha, with a secret lover, ties to jinn, and dreams of escape; while Khayyam's narratives further the art mystery but examine a multitude of subjects from the the impact of orientalism, colonialism, and sexism, to her complicated relationships, and her own identity with her biracial, tri-cultural, and religious identities. The ties between the women across the centuries are significant and give readers further food for thought.

Graphic Novels



When Stars Are Scattered by Omar Mohamed. Illus by Victoria Jamieson and Iman Geddy. 264 pp. Dial Books. 2020. Tr \$9.99. ISBN 978-0525553908.

Gr 4-7 - This collaboration between Somali Omar Mohamed and Victoria Jamieson is a memoir of the six years of Omar and his brother, Hassan, life in the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, after fleeing during the Somali Civil War. Their father is killed and they are separated from their mother and though living separately, they are being cared for by Fatuma, another Somali refugee whose own children died in the war. Omar cares for his brother who is nonverbal and amongst his responsibilities must think of their future in the camp, while holding onto the hope that their mother is still alive. Moments like helping his brother fall asleep by telling him stories about their home in Somalia and Omar waking up with nightmares illustrate his responsibility to his younger brother while also showing that Omar himself is still a kid, dealing with the trauma of his father's death as well as missing his mother. Omar agonizes about attending school while leaving Hassan during the day, and later about the opportunity to leave the camp to resettle in another country, going in depth into the vetting process and the difficulty and rarity of being chosen. Omar references the Qur'an and prayers, drawing strength from his remembrances of Allah, the time and peace he felt spending time at dugsu (Islamic school), and in particular the verse "For indeed, with hardship will be ease. Indeed, with hardship will be ease" (p 142), Surah Ash-Sharh (94:5-6). Jamieson's drawings convey with sensitivity the tenderness and innocence of two young boys experiencing the trauma of war, life as a refugee, loss, and uncertainty. Jamieson and Mohamed have spoken about their collaboration, research and the importance of getting cultural and historical details right in the visuals. Geddy, also of Somali descent colored the art for the book, adding textural details and patterns to the settings and characters. Backmatter includes photographs, an afterward, notes from Mohamed and Jamieson and a link to Mohamed's foundation, dedicated to supporting Somali refugees. A powerfully accessible narrative and collaboration.

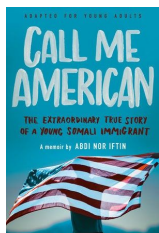


Shirley and Jamila Save Their Summer by Gillian Goerz. 224 pp. Dial Books. 2020. Tr \$10.99. ISBN 978-0525552864.

Gr 3-7 - Ten-year-old South Asian Canadian Muslim Jamila Waheed doesn't want to spend the summer going to a science camp, wanting to play basketball instead, but as a newcomer to the neighborhood she doesn't have an alternative. Enter Shirley Bones, a ten-year old white girl whose deductive reasoning -- a clear parallel to Sherlock Holmes, intrigues Jamila, especially since Shirley has a plan for both of them to get out of the dreaded summer camp. While Jamila plays basketball, Shirley uses the court as her personal detective consulting spot, and Jamila becomes involved as well. As they spend more time together the two bond, but Shirley's tendency to minimize and omit details frustrates Jamila, and puts a strain on their budding friendship, leading Jamila to find out what their peers really think about the often ostracized Shirley. Jamila must decide how she feels about Shirley's friendship and friendship in general. Muslim and South Asian readers will notice the cultural and religious interactions between their family: the names of the members of Jamila's family, the use of the word ammi for mother and ammi wears a loosely draped scarf whenever she goes out (that may or may not be hijab or a dupatta), Jamila

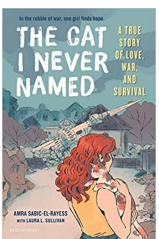
is tasked with helping her mother hang up artwork that shows Arabic/Islamic lettering (and appears to be the basmala/tasmiyah) and Moroccan or Andalusian tiles, the family doesn't wear shoes inside the house, and her brother Farooq's adaptation of dua-e-noor (the supplication of light) to mock his older brother, and the use of term *mera bacha* to refer to Jamila (a technically male term, but used generally to refer to one's child). Their appearingly Toronto suburb neighborhood is diverse with kids of different races, skin tones, and body types, while the Muslim background characters also express their dress in different ways. Goerz' note of acknowledgement and consultants is incredibly impressive and shows how an author may consult to get cultural details right.

Nonfiction



Call Me American (Adapted for Young Adults): The Extraordinary True Story of a Young Somali Immigrant by Abdi Nor Iftin. 272 pp. Delacorte Press. 2020. Tr \$13.97. ISBN 978-1984897114.

Gr 7-9 - In his memoir, adapted for a young adult audience, Abdi Nor Iftin entralls readers with a description of his experience as a survivor of the Somali Civil War and young man infatuated with the English language who is influenced by aspects of US culture that have been exported to East Africa. The son of nomads with a deep connection to nature and animals, Iftin recalls his family's herculean efforts to survive when war and the concomitant inhumanity of mankind upends their nation and their lives, and his eventual relocation to the United States. Iftin thoughtfully explores the complex intersection of religion, extremism, colonialism, poverty, and human nature.



The Cat I Never Named: A True Story of Love, War and Survival by Amra Sabic-El-Rayess and Laura L. Sullivan. 384 pp. Bloomsbury YA. 2020. Tr \$15.99. ISBN 978-1547604531.

Gr 7-9 - In this powerful memoir by professor Amra Sabic-el-Rayess, of Columbia University's Teachers College, Sabic-el-Rayess recalls the years of the Bosnian war and in particular the Serbian siege of her city of Bihać when she was a teen. From the beginning of the narrative Amra speaks of the heavy atmosphere and targeting Bosniaks for their Muslim heritage and not necessarily Islamic practice, and how this targeting affects her schooling and everyday life. The physical threats to Bosniaks, and particularly to women, have the threat and imagination of rape an ever present phantom lurking in Amra's mind. When Serbian residents of Bihać evacuate right before the siege, including Amra's best friend, the betrayal of those who leave juxtaposed to the resolve of the non-Bosniaks those who stay is incredibly moving. War brings violence and death to their door, with Amra and her family experiencing evacuation, near misses, and witnessing deaths, facing starvation, and opportunistic price gougers getting rich off the suffering and deaths of Bosniaks, but the family is determined to survive. But amidst the anger and grief, Sabic-el-Rayess highlights life-affirming moments of beauty, grace, kindness, and the struggle and courage required to keep and sustain one's humanity. Much of this comes in the form of Maci (cat in Bosnian), who is seen as the family's luck, credited for some of those near misses and a source of softening in the soul. Beautiful, heartbreaking, and a necessary read.

*Originally published in "To See and Be Seen: Muslim Representation in Picture Books." *School Library Journal*, vol. 66, no. 9, 2020, pp. 52-54.