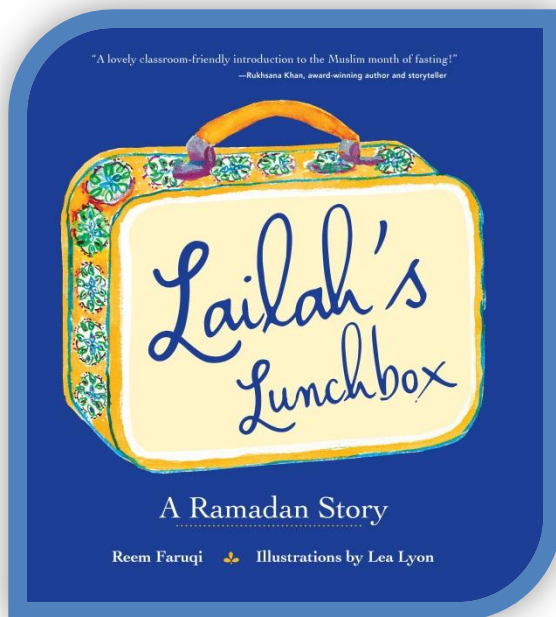




Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Division

About the Book of the Month Parent/Family Discussion Guide: This collection of featured books is from Books Matter: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity, encourage social action and reinforce themes addressed in education programs of [A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute](#), ADL's international anti-bias education and diversity training provider. For parents, guardians and family members, reading the books listed on this site with your children and integrating the concepts into your interactions with them is an excellent way to help children grapple with and learn about these important principles.



Lailah's Lunchbox: A Ramadan Story

Reem Faruqi (Author), Lea Lyon (Illustrator)

ISBN: 978-0884484318

Publisher: Tilbury House Publishers

Year Published: 2015

Age Range: 5-8

Book Themes

Culture Identity, Muslim Traditions/Practices, Acceptance

About the Book

Lailah's family recently moved to Georgia from Abu Dhabi in the Middle East and Lailah still misses her friends. Although a lot has changed, good things are happening, too: this year her parents have agreed that she's old enough to take part in fasting for Ramadan. Lailah won't be taking her lunchbox to school for a whole month! But Lailah's excitement turns to worry. Will Mrs. Penworth and her classmates understand that she hasn't just forgotten her lunch? How can she explain that fasting for Ramadan is an important part of growing up?

Conversation Starters

Whether you read the book aloud or children read it on their own and you discuss it later, use these open-ended questions to deepen the conversation. Remember not to judge their responses and to listen thoughtfully and engage in a give-and-take that helps them expand upon their understanding of the book and its themes.

- What is the story about?
- What was your favorite scene and why?
- What did you know about being Muslim before reading the book and what do you know now?
- Why do you think Lailah was hesitant to tell her teacher about Ramadan and fasting?
- Have you ever felt scared to tell your teacher or classmates something about yourself? What happened?
- How do you think Lailah's friends and classmates will respond when she shares her Ramadan poem with the class?
- Have you ever seen someone getting teased or called names because of something about their identity? What happened?
- What is something about your religion, race or culture that you want others to know?
- Have you ever known anyone like Mrs. Carman, the librarian in the story who gave Lailah advice?
- What helps you "get your thoughts out?"

Talking Points

Below are some important considerations to highlight in order to make this a learning opportunity for your child and your family.

1. Culture and Identity

The book provides an opportunity to learn more about Muslim traditions/practices and a chance to find out what your child knows and doesn't know. Find out what they already know about being Muslim, what they learned by reading the book and what questions they still have, answering those questions or finding the answers together. You can read [children's books](#) about Muslim people together or visit these websites for more information from [Fact Monster](#), [PBS](#) and [Rethinking Schools](#). Reading the book is also an opening to discuss your child's cultural identity. For young children, we define culture as the patterns of daily life that can be seen in language, arts, customs, holiday celebrations, food, religion, beliefs/values, music, clothing and more; explain that these aspects of culture are often handed down from one generation to the next. Talk with your child about parts of their cultural identity/identities which can come from race/ethnicity, religion, national origin, etc. and point out the things you do as a family that reflect that culture. If your family doesn't have a strong cultural identity, acknowledge that by saying that people identify their culture in different ways and to varying degrees. Explain that different cultures have both similarities and differences and convey the message that cultural differences are part of life and in fact, can make life interesting.

2. Diversity and Acceptance

As you read the book together, ask about and discuss Lailah's concern that her teacher, friends and classmates will find out she is Muslim and not understand, especially because she is the only one in her class (and maybe her whole school) who is Muslim. Ask your child if s/he has ever been in this situation or if any of their classmates have and explore how it might feel to be "the only one" of a certain group. Stress the importance of learning about people and understanding and accepting the differences between people when they exist. Talk about how the best way to learn about people who are different is to get to know them and learn more about this part of their identity. Emphasize that it is natural to notice and acknowledge differences. However, those differences should not be a reason to tease, bully or pass judgment but rather an opportunity to learn, empathize and connect. Use the example of Ramadan as a way to talk about how different religions have differences and similarities and explain that other religious groups fast during different holidays or times of year and there are also religious groups that do not fast at all.

3. Getting Your Thoughts and Feelings Out

In the book, instead of going to the cafeteria for lunch, Lailah goes to the library and talks with Mrs. Carman, the librarian, about her worries. Mrs. Carman tells her, "You know what I always do when I can't get my thoughts out, or when I get shy about talking? I write my thoughts down." Ask your child why it helped Lailah to write her thoughts down and ask what they do when they are feeling shy or uncomfortable about sharing something about themselves. Explain that there are a lot of ways to express themselves in a situation like this: writing, talking to someone else, taking a walk, dancing, drawing, and listening to music are just a few of the strategies that help children and adults get in touch with their thoughts and feelings. Brainstorm some ideas that might work for them and remember to suggest it next time they are having strong feelings they need to express.

Other Books You May Like

Golden Domes and Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Colors by Hena Khan, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/golden-domes-and-silver.html

My Name is Bilal by Asma Bodin-Uddin, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/my-name-is-bilal.html

The Best Eid Ever by Asma Bodin-Uddin, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/the-best-eid-ever.html

ADL Additional Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on Muslim culture and being an ally.

Print Material

Be An Ally: Six Simple Ways

www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/Be-an-Ally-Six-Ways-online-version.pdf

This resource provides simple things youth can do to be an ally to targets of name-calling and bullying.

Are You Ready to Be an Ally?

www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/Are-You-Ready-to-Be-an-Ally.pdf

This resource provides some thoughts to guide youth in determining if their read to be an ally as well as ways they can become an ally.

Websites

Parent, Family and Caregiver Resources

www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education/c/parent-family-and-caregivers.html

Strategies, tips, guiding principles and resources to help parents, family members and caregivers impart values and principles to the children in their lives.

Definitions Related to Bias, Injustice and Bullying

www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/definitions-related-to-bias-injustice-bullying.html

A listing of terms and definitions relating to bias, diversity, bullying and social justice concepts written for elementary-age children.

The Question Corner

www.adl.org/education-outreach/early-childhood/c/the-question-corner.html

A collection of answers to frequently asked questions about anti-bias issues faced by early childhood professionals and family members interested in promoting respect for diversity among young children.

Considerations for Inclusive Holidays and Celebrations

www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education/c/considerations-for-inclusive-holidays-and-observances.html

Some important considerations when planning holiday observances in the classroom or school to ensure that holidays and observances are inclusive and respectful.

Creating an Anti-Bias Learning Environment

www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/creating-an-anti-bias-learning-environment.html

Some practices for creating positive, anti-bias environments where respect for diversity is taught, modeled, and experienced firsthand.

Children's Books

Below are links to lists of recommended anti-bias and multicultural books for the indicated category.

Religion and Religious Bigotry: Muslim/Muslim-American, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/religion-religious-bigotry-books.html?subreligion=muslim-muslim-american

People, Identity and Culture: Middle Eastern, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/people-books.html?subpeople=middle-eastern

People, Identity and Culture, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/people-identity-culture.html