



Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Division

About the Book of the Month: 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 educators, adult family members and other caregivers of children, reading the books listed on this site with your children and incorporating them into instruction are excellent ways to talk about these important concepts at home and in the classroom.

Lailah's Lunchbox: A Ramadan Story

Reem Faruqi (Author), Lea Lyon (Illustrator)

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?

ISBN: 978-0884484318

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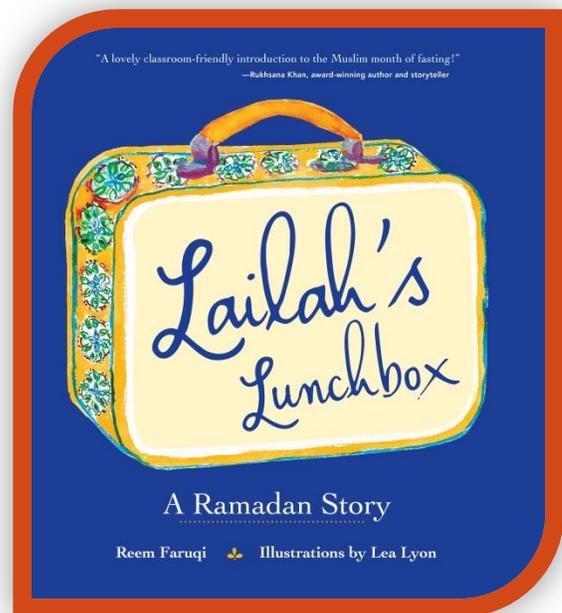
Age Range: 5-8

Book Themes

Identity, Muslim Traditions/Practices, Acceptance

Key Words

Discuss and define these words with children prior to reading the book. Do not focus on students' retention of all the words; instead make sure they understand the words enough to follow the story and remind children of their meanings as they come up in the book. You can also post the words and point



out to students when they appear in the story. See also ADL's [Definitions Related to Bias, Injustice and Bullying for Elementary Age Children](#).

- atlas
- Muslims
- sunrise
- continent
- prayers
- sunset
- fasting
- Ramadan
- twirl
- impressed
- shy
- volunteered

Discussion Questions

Before reading the book aloud, ask pre-reading questions:

- What is the title of the book?
- What do you see and notice on the cover of the book?
- What do you think the book might be about?

As you read the book aloud, ask a few discussion questions periodically throughout the reading to check comprehension and keep the students engaged:

- Why do you think Lailah isn't going to bring her lunchbox to school? (page 3)
- Why did Mrs. Penworth ask if Lailah forgot her lunch? (page 15)
- What did the librarian tell Lailah to do to get her thoughts down? (page 21)

After reading the book aloud, ask some or all of the following discussion questions:

- What is the story about?
- What words would you use to describe Lailah?
- Why do you think Lailah was excited to be able to fast?
- Does your family have any cultural traditions like fasting? What are they?
- How did Lailah feel about her move from the Middle East to the United States?
- What do you know about Ramadan?
- Why did Lailah decide not to give her teacher her mother's note about fasting on Ramadan? How did she feel?
- Why was she nervous about telling her friends about fasting for Ramadan?
- Have you ever felt nervous about sharing something about yourself with your friends? How so?
- How did Lailah feel when she talked with Mrs. Carman, the school librarian, about fasting on Ramadan?
- How did Mrs. Carman respond to Lailah's sharing of her situation?

- What did you think about Lailah's poem about Ramadan?
- What did Mrs. Pentworth, Lailah's teacher, convey to her at the end of the book?
- How did Lailah feel about it?
- What do you think will happen when Lailah shares her Ramadan poem with the class?
- What do you think was the overall message of the book?

Extension Activities

Below are activities that you can do with children in order to extend the learning from the book.

1. Draw a Scene

Have students select a favorite scene from the book and draw that scene, giving it a title, caption or quote. First, as a class, brainstorm the different parts of the book or scenes by asking: *What was your favorite scene of the book? What part really grabbed your attention or surprised you?* (e.g. when Lailah ate her chocolate chip pancake breakfast before sunrise, when Lailah was in the cafeteria not eating lunch, when Lailah went to the library and talked with Mrs. Carman, when Lailah wrote a letter and poem to her teacher about Ramadan). Make a list of scenes on the board and have students choose one. Instruct them to draw a picture of the scene and write a title, caption or quote that goes with it. If they are too young to write, they can dictate their caption or title and you can write it for them. Have the students share their drawings with the class, asking them to talk about what happened in the scene and how the person(s) felt. Create a gallery and invite parents/family members to view it.

2. Identity and Culture

The book provides an excellent opening to discuss identity and culture with students. After reading the book, read the "Author's Note" on the final two pages of the book (pages 30 and 31) and ask students: *Why was Lailah fasting (going without eating for a period of time) during Ramadan?* Elicit and explain that Lailah and her family are Muslim and during Ramadan, which is a month long period of prayer, fasting and charity-giving for Muslims, people fast between sunrise and sunset. Ask: *What holidays and traditions does your family celebrate?* Explain that these traditions can come from your religion, race, nationality or another aspect of your culture. Use this opportunity to engage students in an interactive activity where they share something about their culture by either creating culture flags, developing an acrostic poem or a poem inspired by Lailah's poem, or interviewing each other about aspects of their identity and culture.

3. Write a Book Review

Have students write a book review about *Lailah's Lunchbox*. Depending on their age/grade level, you can include the following suggestions/requirements as part of the book review: (1) draw a cover of the book that illustrates a character or scene that was especially meaningful or important, (2) brief summary of the plot (what happened) without giving anything away (i.e. "spoilers"), (3) favorite scene and why, (4) characters you liked or disliked and why, (5) main conflict in the story and how the character(s) overcame (or did not) the conflict, and (6) assessment as to whether it's worth reading and why. Have students work with a writing partner to give feedback and write revisions. Have them share their reviews by inviting parents/family members in, have students use KidBlog to write a blog post with their reviews or make a video of students reading or summarizing their book reviews.

ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and other educational resources on Muslim people, identity and culture.

Curriculum Resources

"Identity-Based Bullying," *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/identity-based-bullying.pdf

"Who Am I? Identity Poems," *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/who-am-i-identity-poems.html

"Who is Malala Yousafzai," *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/who-is-malala-yousafzai.html

Websites

Anti-Bias Education

www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education

Provides training program offerings for pre-K through 12th grade school communities—educators, administrators, youth and families—which focus on the development of an inclusive culture and respectful school climate by addressing issues of bias and bullying.

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.

Children's Books

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

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

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

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