

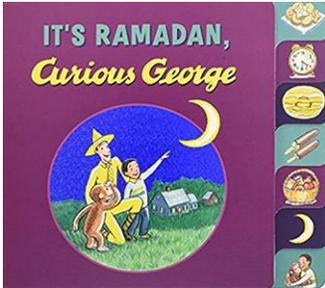
Book Review of Islamic Children’s Books Recommended for Public Schools

These 8 books plus several others were recommended to teachers for Minnesota public schools at the “Engaging Muslim Students in Public Schools” Training Seminars for Educators 2017 presented by Michael Abraham.

Please read CPL’s *Critical Review of “Engaging Muslim Students in Public Schools” Training Seminars for Educators (PDF)*

1. *IT’S RAMADAN, Curious George*

by Hena Khan - Illustrated by Mary O’Keefe Young



A departure from other *Curious George* stories, this familiar story about the mischievous little monkey named George, has a Muslim twist with a lesson on the Islamic holiday Ramadan and the Eid celebration. In this story, George learns all about Ramadan customs from his Muslim friend, Kareem. Young readers will learn that Ramadan is a special month where Muslims fast between sunrise and sunset.

In the evening when the Muslims break the fast, George is proud of his friend, Kareem, who has just completed his first fast and can now partake of the traditional Islamic meal. The foods include: kabobs, curry, veggies, dates, rice etc. To celebrate Kareem’s first fast, George and Kareem are given the best treat of all—chocolate-dipped bananas! The story says: “The room is filled with happiness and the peaceful sounds of prayer.”

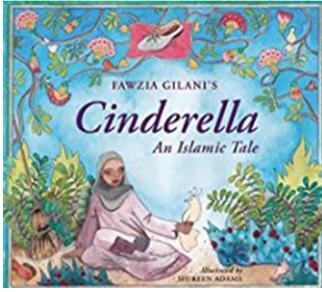
George also makes a trip with Kareem to the mosque where they are having a food drive. In the evening Kareem teaches George how to spot the crescent moon. He learns from Kareem that the Eid festival begins the next day, but the celebration starts with gift giving that night. George receives a fancy vest from Kareem, and the man in the big yellow hat receives a yellow fez. (When a man wears a fez, it signifies he is a Muslim.)

George spends the next day at the mosque with Kareem for “hours of feasting and fun.” The story says “They are sad Eid has to end.” That night “George thinks of his first Ramadan and smiles as he closes his eyes.”

Observation: The familiar story of *Curious George* is used in this book to introduce young children to Islam and the holidays of Ramadan and Eid that are a form of worship of Allah. It legitimizes these religious holidays and beliefs in the minds of young children who enjoy the *Curious George* stories about the lovable little monkey.

2. *Cinderella: An Islamic Tale*

by Fawzia Gilani - Illustrated by Shireen Adams



Similar to the traditional Cinderella story, the father dies and the young girl must live with her mean stepmother. As her father is dying he tells Cinderella “‘My sweet child,’ he said, ‘Follow the Quran and the Sunnah, and never miss your prayers....May Allah protect you and make you a strong Muslim.’”

Although Cinderella was mistreated and teased by her stepsisters, she continued to be patient and obedient. The story says, “She read the Quran every day and comforted herself with the words of God and stories of God’s Messengers....Cinderella would wake early at *fajr* before sunrise and do her morning prayers.” (At the back of the book is a Glossary of Arabic Terms. Children reading this story will learn 23 new Muslim words. For example, *Fajr* means dawn).

Before bed, Cinderella would “recite some *surahs* (a “Chapter of the holy Quran”) before she closed her eyes and then whisper the *shahadah* (“The Islamic declaration of faith). The more difficulties Cinderella faced, the stronger her *iman* (faith) grew.”

When Cinderella is told by her stepmother that she cannot go to the Eid party, she remembers another Quranic verse she had memorized:

“Allah does not place on any soul a burden greater than it can bear...

(So) pray... ‘O Lord, do not lay a greater burden on us than we have the strength to bear!

Remove our sins, forgive us, and have mercy on us!

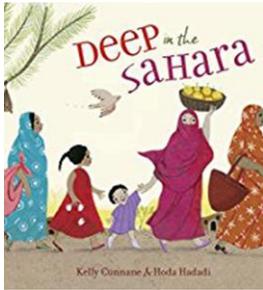
You are our Protector; so help us against those who stand against faith.”

As in the traditional Cinderella story, Cinderella marries the prince and they live happily ever after.

Observation: The first page of the book begins with the statement “In the name of Allah, the One God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.” The traditional Cinderella story does not begin with “In the name of Jesus Christ, the One God, born of the Virgin Mary, who died and rose again that we might have life eternal in Him.” Cinderella has always been a fairy tale—not a metaphorical story to promote a specific doctrine. Why should this Islamic propaganda be brought into our elementary classrooms and impressed upon the minds of impressionable children?

The Islamic version of Cinderella introduces children to several Muslim terms throughout the story. The prayer that Cinderella says when she is told she cannot go to the party is really a prayer to Allah against Christians and Jews—“those who stand against the faith”—the ‘infidels’ who stand against Islam.

3. *Deep in the Sahara*
by Kelly Cunnane – Illustrated by Hoda Hadadi



Appealing to young girls, this story is about a little Muslim girl named Lalla who wants to wear a malafa like all the Muslim women. A malafa is described as “the beautiful, colorful cloth” that Muslim women wear in public.

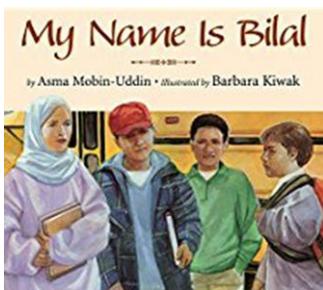
Lalla watches her mother’s malafa flutter in the wind as she prays and she wants to be beautiful like her mother. Her sister, Selma, wears a malafa that only shows her dark eyes so she wants a malafa so she can be mysterious like Selma. Lalla sees Muslim women on the street who are veiled head to toe in colorful malafas. Lalla wants a malafa so she can be a lady too. When Lalla sees her grandmother, she notices that her malafa is a robe of ancient royalty and wants a malafa so she can be “like a long-ago queen too.”

When the call to prayer is heard and men hurry to mosques, Lalla sees her mother pray and says, “I want a malafa so I can pray like you do.” Lalla’s mother gives a nod and slips a lovely blue malafa on Lalla, “as blue as the ink in the Koran.”

The story ends with Lalla saying to her mother, “I know what a malafa is for.... A malafa is for faith.’ And together, you face east, your malafa fluttering behind like wings.”

Observation: This story gives a positive view of the Muslim way of dress for women and could easily convince little girls to want to wear a malafa—a lovely, colorful cloth that is described as making them beautiful and mysterious as they pray to Allah. The covering of women in Islam is, in fact, a symbol of their subjugation and inferiority.

4. *My Name is Bilal*
by Asma Mobin-Uddin - Illustrated by Barbara Kiwak



Recommended by Michael Abraham as a good book for a discussion on bullying, the story is about a Muslim boy, Bilal, and his sister who wears a head scarf or hijab to school. When she is teased by two boys, her brother does not have the courage to step in and stop the bullying.

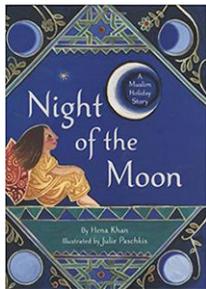
In his class, he says that his name is really Bill. After class, his Muslim teacher, Mr. Ali, asked him why he did not use his real name. Bilal replies that he wants to be like everyone else. Mr. Ali gave Bilal a book about a famous Muslim that had his same name—Bilal Ibn Rabah—“the first person to give the Muslim call to prayer during the time of Prophet Muhammad.” Even though he was tormented by having heavy rocks placed on his chest, he would not agree to worship other gods. Bilal had a dream that he, too, was being crushed by rocks. In his dream he was calm and told the angry people that his name was Bilal.

The next day at school when the other boys teased his sister, Bilal had the courage to step in and defend her as well as state that he was a Muslim and was born in America. After school, Bilal met another Muslim boy and they went to a park to pray. Bilal gave the call to prayer. The end of the book gives the English translation of the *adhan*—the call to prayer:

God is the greatest. God is the greatest.
God is the greatest. God is the greatest.
I bear witness that nothing deserves to be worshipped except God.
I bear witness that nothing deserves to be worshipped except God.
I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of God.
I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of God.
Come to prayer. Come to prayer.
Come to success. Come to success.
God is greatest. God is greatest.
Nothing deserves to be worshipped except God.

Observation: The boys are praying to Allah which is *not* the same God of the Bible who Christians and Jews worship. While Michael Abraham said this was a good story to teach about bullying, it really is a story that teaches about Islam and the worship of Allah. In Michael’s review of the book, he says that the story “gives a real life illustration of how the lives of religious figures in Islam inspire Muslims.” Where are the books in our schools about how the lives of religious figures inspire Christians?

5. ***Night of the Moon: A Muslim Holiday Story*** **By Hena Khan – Illustrated by Julie Paschkis**



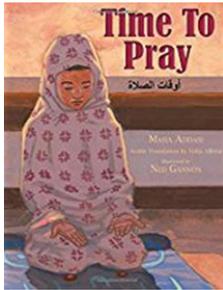
Yasmeen, a 7 year old, learns about the shape of the moon and what Ramadan means from her mother. Yasmeen, a Pakistani-American girl, loved Ramadan because, “It was a time filled with delicious foods, new clothes, lots of parties, and her favorite thing ever—presents!”

In school, her teacher taught the class what a fast was and why Muslims fast. From her parents, she also learned that when the moon’s first crescent appeared, it was a very special night, the Night of the Moon, that meant Ramadan was over. The following day would be Eid—a very special holiday for Muslims. Eid was celebrated at a community center with lots of food and stalls where gifts could be purchased. That night, Yasmeen received a wonderful Eid present from her parents—a telescope—so she could look at the moon and “watch for Ramadan to come again next year.”

Observation: This Muslim story for children is a primer on Islam and the traditions included in Ramadan and Eid.

6. *Time To Pray*

by Maha Addasi - Illustrated by Ned Gannon



A young girl named Yasmin, on her first night visiting her grandmother Teta in an unnamed country in the Middle East, heard the voice of the *muezzin*—the man who gives the call to prayer. She watched her grandmother do the ritual washing before prayer.

The next day, her grandmother took Yasmin to a fabric store where they picked out material so Teta could make prayer clothes for Yasmin. In another store Teta helped Yasmin pick out a small prayer rug.

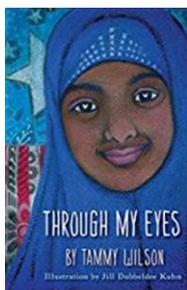
The story continues with Teta teaching Yasmin about the five prayers that a Muslim must perform every day. When Yasmin flew back home, she was suddenly surprised by a special gift that her grandmother had placed in her suitcase. It was a special prayer clock shaped like a miniature mosque. When the timer went off, it made the sound of the muezzin calling Muslims to prayer. Now Yasmin could practice all five prayers.

The end of the book has a full-page detailed explanation of the prayer times and how Muslims must perform an ablution—a special washing—before they pray. “Prayer is not valid without this.”

Observation: Where are the books for Christian students that teach other children about The Apostles’ Creed, or the Lord’s Prayer and what each verse of the prayer means? Where are the books that include Hebrew prayers and blessings that are commonly recited by Jewish students? These books do not exist in the public school classroom; they are censored. Now we are embracing books about Islam!

7. *Through My Eyes*

by Tammy Wilson Illustrated by Jill Dubbelde Kuhn



Michael Abraham praised the author of this book who is an elementary principal in Saint Cloud, MN. This book is for upper elementary or middle school students.

In the chapter page 11 on Islam, Ms. Wilson states: “There are almost two thousand mosques, Islamic schools, and Islamic centers in America....Muslims are monotheistic. They believe in one unique God, the creator of the universe; it is believed that God spoke through a chain of prophets beginning with Adam and included Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, David, Solomon and Jesus. God’s eternal message was then reaffirmed and finalized by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on them all).”

Notice how this is presented to the students as fact. Jesus is referred to as a prophet with Muhammad having the final word of truth. Muslims believe that Abraham was asked to sacrifice Ishmael—not Isaac as the Bible teaches. At the end of page 11 it says: “One becomes a Muslim by saying ‘There is no deity but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God.’ By this declaration, the person announces faith in all God’s messengers.”

On page 14 students learn the five Pillars of Islam. On page 15 it says: "The Quran is considered the literal word of God, the Almighty (Allah in Arabic), revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) through the angel Gabriel. It was memorized by Muhammad and then dictated to his companions."

On page 16 it says: "Under Islamic law, women have always had the right to own property, receive an education, and otherwise take part in community life. Men and women are to be respected equally. The Islamic rules for modest dress apply to both women and men....If a particular society oppresses women, it does so in spite of Islam, not because of it."

At the end of the story when the main character, Zamzam, is reunited with her Muslim cousin, Zamzam cries out, "Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar!"

Observation: This phrase Zamzam cries out is significant because these are the words shouted by terrorists right before they attack! Perhaps Ms. Wilson has not read the Quran because she includes so much misinformation regarding Muslim women and how they must dress. Even the statement on modest dress for both men and women is incorrect. Has anyone ever seen a man wearing a Burka? Men and women are not respected equally. Under Sharia Law, a female is personally and legally under male control for her entire life. She cannot even leave her home without the consent of her male guardian.

Tammy Wilson included a Muslim prayer of salvation for all the students to learn. This undermines the Jewish, Christian as well as other faiths. Where are the books that have a prayer of salvation to Jesus, the Messiah, Savior, triune God, King of Kings?

8. *Sophia's Journal* by Najiyah Diana Maxfield



Sophia's Journal is a Muslim version of Laura Ingalls *Little House on the Prairie* for middle school students and is filled with Islamic propaganda. The acknowledgments page begins with: "I testify that there is no god but Allah, and that Muhammad was His last messenger. All praise and thanks is due to Allah, may He shower His blessings and peace upon our beloved Prophet."

In this story Sophia, a young Muslim girl, tumbles into the freezing water of a river and blacks out. When she wakes up, she is trembling and begins to recite the *tasbeih dhikr*: "SubhanAllah wa Alhamdulillah wa La illaha il Allah wa Allahu Akbar...All glory to God, and All thanks to God, there is no God but God, and God is the Greatest." She is rescued by a farmer, Mr. Sampson, who takes her to his home where she is cared for by the Sampson family. Somehow she has been transported back to 1857. She is now a Muslim girl living in a little house on the prairie.

The Sampson family had worship every evening. Sophia soon realized that "there were so many precise similarities between Christianity and Islam....the Bible stories they read, about Prophet Noah or Prophet

Moses, even Prophet Jesus, all contained admonishments to worship God...” The Sampsons “were impressed that Sophia knew Arabic and could recite her scripture in its original language.” They said that they had never met “a Christian who could recite the Old Testament in Hebrew or the New Testament in Greek.”

When Sophia learns that two black men, Adoet and Mr. William, are slaves, she thinks back to the year she came from and says, “How could she have carried on so blithely when she was back home, naively reaping the benefits of living in a country that was created on the backs of people like Adoet and Mr. William?

When the Sampson’s daughter, Abby, asked what Islam would say about slavery, Sophia responded: “In the old days, people used to have slaves. But not like this. Not slaves because of their color. Slaves were prisoners of war or things like that. Slaves were just a part of the world before Islam came. But Islam taught people to house and feed their slaves in exactly the same manner they did themselves, and people were always encouraged to free slaves. Slaves could marry free people, and if a child was born to a slave woman and her master, both the mother and the child were free. Slaves could also earn enough money to buy their freedom. So the whole institution of slavery was slowly abolished.”

One day, in a conversation with Mr. William, he told Sophia that he tried to keep up his faith in America, but “The white men don’t care a lick for Islam, and they made us go ta church. They whipped us if ’n they found us praying. I learned to pray inside muh head.”

When Abby asked to know more about Sophia’s faith, Sophia summed up what the Muslims believe about God: “Say: He is Allah, the One and Only Allah, the Eternal, Absolute. He begetteth not, Nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him.”

Sophia meets a young man named Matthew and wishes she could “talk to him about Islam and convince him of its truth.”

When Abby asked her why she prays five times a day, Sophia replies: “Well, praying five times a day keeps you connected with God and helps you avoid sins. As for why we pray on the ground, we do it to show our humility before God. That’s the way all the Prophets prayed, including Prophet Jesus and Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon them. It involves your entire body in worship not just your heart or your mind.”

At the end of the story when Sophia is transported back to the 21st century, she learns that two friends she had met in 1857 had become Muslims. In her journal it says: “Stan recognized Islam as the truth....we are still the only Muslims—but that makes our lives an important jihad.”

Observation: This story for middle school students gives a negative view of Christianity and is filled with Islamic propaganda and mistruths. There is no mention of the fact that American slave owners purchased many of their slaves from Muslim slave traders!