

The Month that Makes the Year

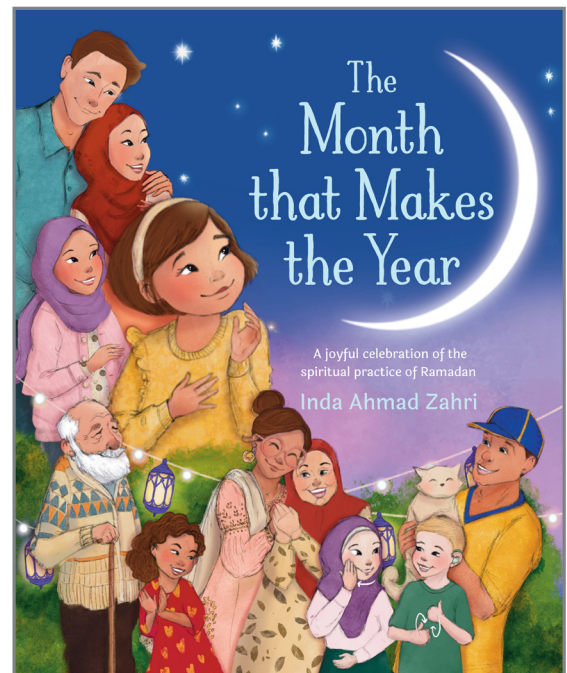
CREATOR

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SCIS: 5438542

ISBN: 9781761068423

RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower



SYNOPSIS

Exploring Ramadan through the eyes of a Muslim child, this graceful and authentic story illuminates the sense of belonging to both the community and the universe that this month of fasting, prayer and reflection brings, as well as the sense of accomplishment that springs from sacrifice.

ABOUT THE CREATOR

Inda Ahmad Zahri writes and illustrates stories that are often imbued with her fervent wish for a kinder world. Originally from Kuala Lumpur, she now splits her time between her garden home in Meanjin/Brisbane and a sandy spot in the Middle East. She counts books, languages, Malaysian rice dishes and the ocean as some of her greatest loves. Inda's debut book, *Salih*, was a Notable Book in the CBCA Picture Book of the Year Awards. She has written several other picture books and received an ASA/CA Mentorship Award in 2021 to develop a middle grade novel. *The Month that Makes the Year* is her first author/illustrator title. Inda is also a surgical doctor, a vocation that has taught her to be meticulous while embracing chaos, and to appreciate the gentler moments in life. Find out more about Inda at www.indabinda.com.

STUDY NOTES

BEFORE READING

- Ask students if they can name any periods of time when family and friends come together to celebrate a special time of the year. Hopefully, Diwali, Passover, Christmas, Eid and Lunar New Year will be mentioned, along with others. Encourage further discussion of how each of these moments are celebrated by preparing special food, visiting family and friends, and gift giving. Point out that each might be slightly different, but that they share lots of similarities.
- Next, show the cover of *The Month that Makes the Year* to the class and explain that this book will talk about Ramadan, a period that is very important to Muslims. Examine the front cover and ask questions such as:
 - How might the moon be linked to the word 'month' in the title? (The time a moon passes through all of its phases is called a month.)
 - What sort of moon is shown here? (A crescent moon.)
 - Do only adults celebrate Ramadan? (No, children take part, too.)
 - The illustration shows people in a community: some of whom are Muslim and some who are non-Muslim. Is it possible to pick people who celebrate Ramadan by the way they dress and the way they look? (No. Some of the people are Muslim and are wearing head coverings, but some are not. People from India, Eastern Europe, the US and many, many other countries are Muslim yet dress differently. Also, some of the people on the cover are non-Muslims who come to celebrate Eid at the end of the story.)

AFTER READING

- Read the story through once and close the book before asking the following questions to gauge comprehension:
 - Ramadan follows a lunar calendar, meaning it is a different date every year. What in the night sky tells people when it starts?
 - What is the hardest thing about Ramadan for Deenie?
 - What are some of the good things she learns to do during Ramadan?
 - Why do Deenie and her family believe it is important to fast during daylight hours?
 - What do they do after the sun sets?
 - What else do they try to give up during Ramadan?
 - Where do people gather to pray during Ramadan (as well as the rest of the year)?
 - How does looking at the night sky tell people when Ramadan is over?
 - What does Deenie mean when she says, ‘a month like this makes my whole year’?
- The below definitions are all jumbled up. Draw a line to connect the below terms with its correct meaning:

Ramadan	A special prayer performed during Ramadan.
Suhoor	The breaking of the fast at sunset.
Iftaar	The celebration after Ramadan.
Tarawih	The month where Muslims abstain from food during the day and bad habits.
Imam	A person who leads a congregation in prayer.
Sadaqah and Zakat	A meal taken before dawn.
Eid or Eid’ul Fitr	Donations or alms.
- Turn to the page showing a ribbon with multiple images of Deenie’s family learning big things by doing one little thing at a time. Match the big things below with the little things each person learns to do during Ramadan. Why do you think the creator of the book chose a ribbon to connect all of these images?
 - Health (Deenie’s dad and Juju go for bike rides together)
 - Kindness (Deenie’s mum pays special attention to looking after the kitten)
 - Knowledge (Juju reads more books)
 - Mindfulness (Deenie and Juju learn to pay closer attention to beautiful things in nature, such as butterflies)
 - Gratitude (Deenie learns to stop and play with her pet kitten)
- Now turn to the page featuring all the kindness that Deenie sees everywhere and encourage students to describe each different act of kindness pictured. Ask older students to see if they can work out the connection between earlier and later acts of kindness in the story. Provide a scaffold by showing how the soccer goalie being consoled by a fellow player goes on to help the old lady with her groceries. Encourage students to search for other connections.
- Turn to the page where Deenie gives her own coins to help people who are going hungry most of the year. Ask students why they think she decided to do this during Ramadan? Explain that Deenie is learning empathy, the ability to better understand how other people feel. Encourage discussion of why this might be an important skill to have. Make a list of other things students might be able to do to learn empathy.
- Turn to the page where Deenie’s mother goes to the art gallery with her friends and ask students to explain how going somewhere different for their usual lunch date shows the friends have empathy.
- Create your own Ramadan calendar to count down the days of Ramadan until Eid. Place a card with a good deed written on it—and a small treat—in each of the thirty boxes on the calendar. Choose a different student to open a box every morning and encourage them to perform the good deed during the day.