

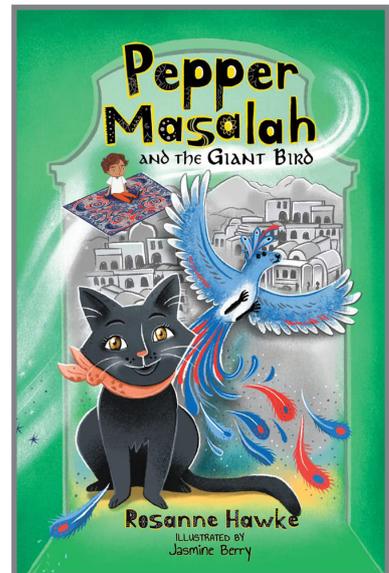
Pepper Masalah and the Giant Bird

AUTHOR

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ILLUSTRATOR

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Primary

SYNOPSIS

In the third book in this series, *Pepper Masalah and the Giant Bird*, the ancient carpet flies over Afghanistan. A huge bird (the Simurgh from Persian folklore) whisks Pepper off the carpet and up to her nest of eggs high on a mountain. The carpet is disorientated without Pepper and disappears after Zamir falls off. Zam makes the long climb to save Pepper before she becomes food for the bird's huge chicks. But Pepper and Zam still need to find the carpet in order to get home to Australia.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rosanne Hawke has been a teacher, a creative writing lecturer and a volunteer/aidworker in Pakistan and the UAE from 1981 to 1991. She spent two years in Al Ain, UAE (near the Omani border) between 1983–1985. She returned to Pakistan in 2006 on an Asialink Fellowship. She began writing in Pakistan and has over 35 books published. Many of her books are set in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Azad Kashmir or about Afghans and Pakistanis in Australia. These include *Shahana*, *Marrying Aameera*, *Beyond Borders* and *Taj and the Camel Trek*. She lives in rural South Australia; loves reading and cats, and has been kissed by a camel.

Find out more about Rosanne at www.rosannehawke.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Jasmine Berry grew up in beautiful Albany, Western Australia. She has been drawing to impress the other kids, since she was old enough to hold a colouring pencil. But lately, she crafts these exciting and magical worlds with her computer, iPad and many coffees.

She lives in Perth with her husband and with two adorable cats, and a rather large collection of succulents.

You can find out more about her at the following Instagram: [@jasmineberryart](https://www.instagram.com/jasmineberryart); Twitter: [@jasmineberryart](https://twitter.com/jasmineberryart); And at her website: www.jasmineberryart.com.

THEMES

- Afghan Culture
- Afghan Geography
- Friendship and kindness

- Honour and hospitality
- Folklore
- Bombay/British shorthair cats
- Child labour
- Courage
- Fantasy/adventure

STUDY NOTES

BEFORE READING

- Show the cover to the class and ask the students what they think the book might be about.
- Read the back cover blurb. Does this give them more of an idea of what the book could be about?
- Ask students if they can recognise the setting of this story from the cover image.

WHILE READING

- In the book, the carpet is flying over Afghanistan. Do you think the carpet meant to land here? Where do you think the carpet is going?
- Why did the carpet fall when the giant bird took Pepper from the carpet?
- Do you think the carpet will get even better at flying? What do you think will happen then?
- Where do you think Rosanne Hawke, the author, got the idea of the giant bird? Did she make it up?
- Do you think the khan (village leader) has a right to make Zam stay to make carpets? Why do some people do this to children? How should children stay safe?
- Why do you think the khan wants to keep the carpet and emeralds?
- What is the kindness that Pepper and Zam show for Dana's family?
- What kindness does Dana's father do for Pepper and Zam?
- The author originally wrote Pepper Masalah's Cat Fact Files for herself while writing the story, then she thought readers might like to see this too. Do you think it's a good idea to include the cat file? Why? What sort of cat facts do you like best?
- What new information have you discovered in the news section? Why do you think the author included this?
- Pepper and Zam make lots of new friends on their journeys. How do each of the new people they meet help the pair? What new things do Pepper and Zam learn from those they meet?
- The magic carpet has the ability to let Zam and Pepper understand anything that tries to talk to them. What creature, real or magical, would you most like to talk to? What do you think they'd say to you? What languages would you like to understand? Perhaps you can start learning some.
- Going to new places can be strange, especially when they have different customs. Have you ever visited a place where the people do things differently from you? What do you think can be learned from the different ways people live?
- Being all alone in a strange place can be scary. How do Pepper and Zam overcome their fear and keep going?

AFTER READING

- Ask students if Pepper or Zam remind them of anyone they know: a friend, a sibling, their pet, themselves perhaps.
- After several stories now with Pepper Masalah and Zam how has your impression of them changed from their first story till now?
- What do the challenges of the story do to change Pepper and Zam's characters? Do they become wiser? More resilient?
- Ask students how they perceive Pepper and Zam's situation. Do they come through in the end?
- Pepper's flying carpet has taken them somewhere new. Where (or when) have they landed this time?
- What adventures would you like Pepper and Zam to have next? Where could they go and what might they do there?
- Pepper and Zam are in Afghanistan. What does the class know about the country and culture of Afghanistan? What did they learn during the course of the story?

- Ask students if they had their own flying carpet, where would they want it to take them.

Discover

- Discover where Afghanistan is. What countries are neighbours to Afghanistan? What kind of climate does Afghanistan have? Find out what the land looks like. How do the people live? What do they wear, what jobs do they work at? What do they eat?
- The Simurgh, a creature from Persian folklore, is part of the story. Try looking up the story of *The Three Brothers* or *The Greedy Merchant* online. What are some of the messages and themes of these stories?
- There are several similar figures in Persian Mythology—the Simurgh, the Chamrosh and the Huma Bird. Look up these creatures and the phoenix of Greek Mythology. How are they different and how are they the same? Could stories have travelled across the different countries and civilisations and inspired one another? Discuss.
- Choose a cat fact and find out more info to write a short report or presentation about it. If you write a short presentation, take turns to present it to the class.

Create

- There are many different kinds of rugs. Some well known kinds are the Persian and the Oriental rug. The Afghan rug has a long history, and there are many different designs used on them. Afghan rugs have a lot of cultural significance and are not just for decoration and warmth, they have a deep meaning and are passed down through generations of a family. Look at different designs, then design your own rug. Write a paragraph about the carpet design you chose and what elements you chose to use. Why did you choose them?
- Look up the Simurgh online in Google Images. There are lots of different interpretations about what this mythical creature looks like. Draw your own version of what you think the Simurgh might look like based on the description from the book and these pictures.
- What would it be like to fly on a carpet? Where would you go and what would you do? Write a story about your adventure.
- How do you think the carpet can fly? Write an imaginative report explaining how you think a carpet could fly.
- Get into a small group and write an animal story. Think about a time and place, then choose an animal to be the main character in the story. Think about the following questions when creating your story:
 - Where will the story be set?
 - What will be the problem the character will have to solve?
 - Will the animal character talk?
 - Is the story in the present or the past?
 - Did they travel back in time?

After a discussion of who, what, when, where, and how write the events of your story together and tell it to the class.

- Has one of your pets ever gone missing? Write a story about the adventure it may be having. Draw your pet to go along with your story.
- Create an instruction manual for the flying carpet and how to care for it. Ensure you use any vital information learnt from the book and any other information you consider essential. Remember to focus on using it correctly and taking care of it.