

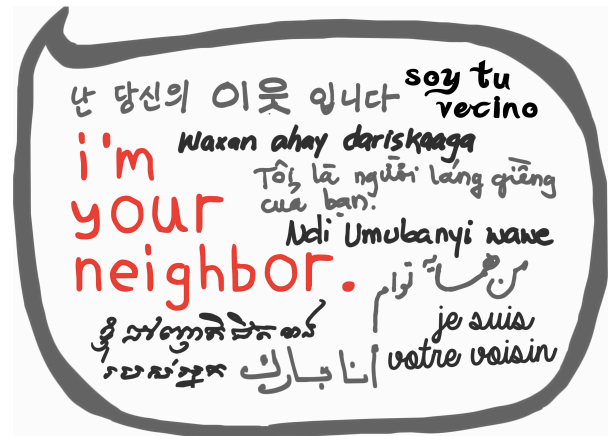
I'm Your Neighbor, Portland: Book Guide: Moon Watchers: Shirin's Ramadan Miracle

by Reza Jalali and illustrated by Anne Sibley O'Brien (Tilbury House)

Thank you for reading this *I'm Your Neighbor, Portland* book.

"The true meeting takes place when the book opens, and a stranger reads about — and comprehends — a stranger." –Amit Majmudar, author of *The Abundance*.

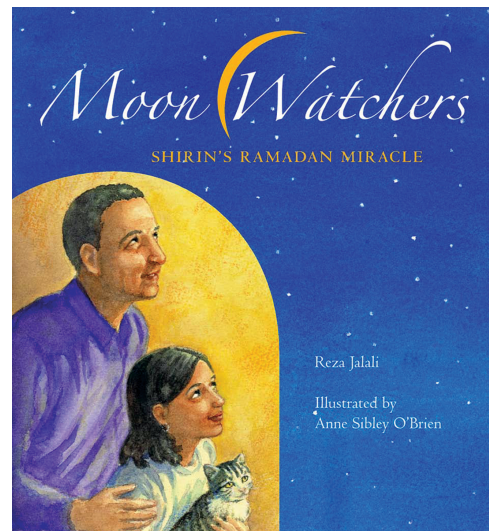
We hope that this book has introduced you to some of your neighbors' stories and as Amit Majmudar said, allowed you to "comprehend a stranger."



Discuss

Consider exploring these questions after reading *Moon Watchers* by Reza Jalali and illustrated by Anne Sibley O'Brien.

- Shirin and her older brother Ali don't always get along. Do you have older or younger siblings? Is it sometimes difficult to get along with them?
- During Ramadan, Shirin's family does not eat or drink from dawn until dusk to remind them to be thankful for what they have. If you had to give something up for a month, what would it be? What do you think would be the most difficult part?
- Shirin feels left out because everyone in her family is fasting but they tell her she can still celebrate Ramadan with them by doing good deeds and fasting for part of the day. Have you ever been unable to take part in a family event? Were there other ways that you were able to be included?
- Shirin's grandmother, Maman-Bozorg, tells her about a small boy who wanted to fast, and Shirin realizes that her father is the boy in the story. What stories have your grandparents or relatives told you about your parents when they were young? Did your parents seem like you when they were your age?
- When Shirin sees Ali sneaking food during his Ramadan fast, she first thinks to tell on him, but decides not to. Have you ever seen someone doing something that



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they shouldn't have? Was it difficult for you to decide whether you should tell on them or not?

- For the month of Ramadan, Shirin and her father go outside every night to watch the moon change. To celebrate Eid, Shirin's mother paints her hands with henna. What traditions does your family have to celebrate a holiday?
- After reading ***Moon Watchers*** what have you learned about Islamic practices during Ramadan and the Muslim community in Maine?

Explore

For Muslim people around the world, Ramadan is a month-long time for prayer, fasting, and charity. This "month of blessing" is not viewed as a time of hardship but instead as a time to develop self-discipline and increase awareness of and compassion for the poor and the hungry. It is a time to deepen connection with Allah through prayer and community. For this much-anticipated month, Muslim people gather together in homes, shops, and restaurants to break their fasts and pray.

Islam uses a lunar calendar, so the timing of Ramadan depends on the cycles of the moon. Ramadan lasts a lunar month: from new moon to full moon and back to new moon. Ramadan always begins on the first night of the new moon of the ninth month of the year. Because the lunar calendar's months are shorter than the solar calendar's months, Ramadan appears to "move" from year to year. As a result, fasting (no food or water) during the winter months is not quite so much a challenge as fasting during long, hot summer days.

It is the custom to start the day with a pre-dawn meal called suhoor, then not eat or drink again until after the sun has set. That post-daylight meal is called iftar. Sharing these pre-dawn and post-sunset meals is an important part of community and family bonding, which is part of why Shirin feels a bit left out.

Ramadan is as important to many Muslims as Christmas and Easter are to many Christians, and Passover, Yom Kippur, and Rosh Hashanah are to many Jewish people. Ramadan ends with a gift-giving celebration called Eid ul-Fitr, which means "festival of breaking the fast."

Engage

EAT at Middle Eastern restaurants run by local families. **Tandoor Bread and Restaurant** at 845 Forest Avenue in Portland serves Middle Eastern cuisine and fresh baked Iraqi breads. **Babylon Restaurant** at 1129 Forest Avenue in Portland also specializes in Middle Eastern cuisine.

CELEBRATE Eid-ul-Fitr, the end of Ramadan, on August 7th, 2013

READ Reza Jalali's articles on celebrating Ramadan, Muslims in Maine and making Portland home

The Portland Press Herald: http://www.pressherald.com/opinion/sense-of-community-can-be-found-where-its-least-expected_2012-08-25.html

The Huffington Post: <http://huff.to/16i6Z94>

LISTEN to Middle Eastern music. **Okbari** is a local Middle Eastern ensemble that has performed at many Portland venues and events and plays both contemporary and traditional pieces.

www.okbari.org

LEARN about the Muslim community. Portland, Maine has a strong Muslim community thanks to **Masjid Bilaal / The Maine Muslim Community Center** on Anderson Street and other mosques. Watch The Maine Muslim Community Center's website <http://mainemuslim.com> for Open House opportunities. If you have questions about Islam in Maine or the faith in general, please email Brother Ahmed at Masjidbilaal@gmail.com.

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Read

From ***I Remember Warm Rain***

- "A Day in Three Worlds" by Hassan Jeylani
- "Promises" by Navid Sabeti

From ***New Mainers***

- Introduction (Written by Reza Jalali)
- Amarpreet and Hermeet Kohli, India

Titles set among Muslim communities:

Ages 4-8

- ***Nadia's Hands*** by Karen English and illustrated by Jonathan Weiner (Set in Muslim American community)
- ***Night of the Moon: A Muslim Holiday Story*** by Hena Khan and illustrated by Julie Paschkiss (Set in Muslim American community)
- ***The Best Eid Ever*** by Asma Mobin-Uddin and illustrated by Laura Jacobson (Set in Muslim American community)
- ***Silent Music: A Story of Baghdad*** by James Rumford (Set in Baghdad, Afghan community)

Ages 8-12

- ***The Garden of My Imaan*** by Fahana Zia (Set in Muslim American community)
- ***Shooting Kabul*** by N.H. Senzai (Set in Muslim American community)

Ages 13 +

- ***Does My Head Look Big in This?*** by Randa Abdul-Fattah (Set in Australia, Muslim Australian community)
- ***My Sister Lives on the Mantelpiece*** by Annabel Pitcher (Set in Britain, Muslim British community)
- ***Out of Nowhere*** by Maria Padian, an I'm Your Neighbor Portland featured book (Set in Maine, Muslim American community)
- ***Ten Things I Hate About Me*** by Randa Abdul-Fattah (Set in Australia, Muslim Australian community)