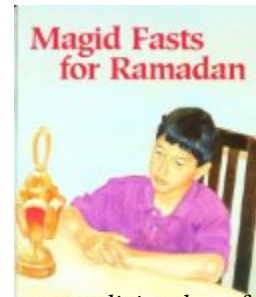


# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Mary Mathews. *Magid Fasts for Ramadan*. New York: Clarion Books, 1996. 48 pp. \$15.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-395-66589-3.

Reviewed by Dianne W. Oyler (Fayetteville State University)  
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*Magid Fasts for Ramadan* is a tender tale of family relationships, and how children learn responsibility and family values from adult role models. The story takes place in the Islamic nation of Egypt and focuses upon the Islamic custom of Ramadan. The story is followed by a “Notes on Islam” section providing factual information about Islam and a “Glossary and Pronunciation Guide” for unfamiliar names and terms. The story tells how Magid wishes to fast for Ramadan like the rest of his family. Since he is too young, he tries to accomplish his goal secretly and ultimately gives himself away by his actions. The story explores his relationship with each member of his family including his grandfather who lives with them. The conflict is resolved through discussion and acceptance of all points of view.

The strength of this children’s book is that it serves to informally educate younger readers in story form about the Muslim religion including the Muslim calendar, the prophet Mohammed, a history and an explanation of the practices concerning Ramadan. Additionally, it broaches the subject of the difficulty of exercising the tenets of one’s beliefs and of being different within a larger context. For U.S. audiences, this story introduces children who may be unfamiliar with Islam except in a negative context to the people who practice Islam. It helps to demystify the religion in the text as well as the notes by explaining the religion’s origins and practices. It acquaints children with the prophet and some of the values to which his followers ascribe such as honesty, loyalty, and maintaining religious values through practice. This

not only educates children about a new religion, but offers them, along with their parents, the opportunity to reflect or refocus on their own values and compare them to those described.

While the setting is in modern Egypt, it could just as well have been a Muslim home in the United States. The illustrations allow young readers to make connections to a lifestyle with which they are familiar—like western dress, furniture, and house construction—while introducing them to customary Islamic dress with which they may or may not be familiar. Another strength is the strong positive role models demonstrated by Magid’s father and grandfather. Both men demonstrate the nurturing spirit and the male support network that is evident in Muslim families found in Africa, the Middle East, and the United States.

The notes and glossary sections at the end of the text provide information on Islam and unfamiliar words. However, they miss the opportunity to reinforce the excellent illustrations by not identifying by name and providing an explanation of the different modes of dress to which the juvenile readers and their families have been introduced.

This book is highly recommended.

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