



TEACHING THROUGH BOOKS

ISLAMOPHOBIA

BY RABIA KHOKHAR, RENÉE SHAH SINGH, AND JONELLE ST. AUBYN

LEARNING FOCUS

Islamophobia is a growing issue in Canada, resulting in hurt and harm to members of the Muslim community. Learning about Islam and Muslim culture can help break down stigma and stereotyping against Muslim people and stop anti-Muslim hate.

Identity: How does reading about Muslim identities help us to break down stigma and stereotypes about Muslim culture and people?

Skills: How does building vocabulary around Muslim identities allow us to confidently talk about people and places in our communities and around the world?

Intellectualism: In learning about the stories and experiences of Muslims, how does this allow us to make connections to our own beliefs and traditions and examine the similarities and differences between them?

Criticality: How does reading books about Muslim characters help us understand how Islamophobia manifests? What can we do to combat hatred and ignorance toward members of the Muslim community in a meaningful way?

Joy: How can reading this story help me understand and appreciate the multi-faceted experience of being Muslim? What positive things have I learned about the Muslim community and what do I want to learn more about?

THEME: Diversity

SUB-THEME:

Islamophobia

GRADE LEVELS:

Elementary (K-3)

Middle School (4-8)

High School (9-12)



ISLAMOPHOBIA | ELEMENTARY LEVEL

BY RABIA KHOKHAR

FEATURED BOOK



Journey of the Midnight Sun
by Shazia Afzal, illustrated
by Aliya Ghare (Orca
Book Publishers, 2022)

LEARNING EXPERIENCE

MINDS ON PROVOCATION

Community Mapping:

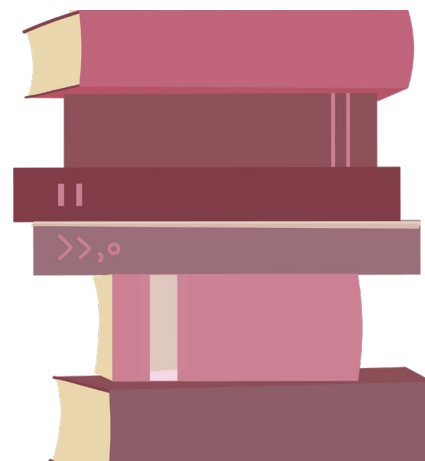
Introduce students to the word “community,” and ask them to think about important spaces around their community. To spark their thinking, you may want to show the class images of important community spaces (e.g. hospital, library, places of worship, schools, shelters, fire stations, etc.). Record students’ ideas on chart paper, [Google Slides](#), etc.

Explain that for some people who identify as Muslim, mosques are important community spaces. Share the definitions below.

Muslim: Some people choose to follow a religion and some do not. People who follow the religion called Islam are known as Muslims.

Mosque: A place where Muslim people pray and meet their friends and community members. A mosque can also be like a community centre, bringing people together for important and special events. *Masjid* is another word for mosque in the Arabic language. There are mosques all over the world and most of the time they have their own names.

Teachers can use the book *In My Mosque* by M.O. Yuksel to show examples of mosques around the world. Teachers can also find images from reliable websites. Within the pictures, prompt students to consider the similarities and differences (colour, architectural structure, names, size, shapes, etc.).





READ, PLAN, AND PRACTICE

Consider the following critical guided questions throughout the process of reading *Journey of the Midnight Sun* with the class.

Before Reading:

- What is an important community space for you?
- How do you feel in this space? What do you do there?
- We are going to read a story about a mosque that is located in the Northwest Territories in Canada. (At this point, the teacher may want to show a map.) What do you know about mosques?

During Reading:

- Why does Inuvik need a new mosque? What does the old and new mosque look like?
- What is the route and weather like for the mosque as it travels to its new home (e.g. travels on roads, bridges, in a boat, etc.)?
- The mosque in the story is going on a journey from Winnipeg all the way to Inuvik. As we read the story, who are the community members we see that help the mosque find its new home (e.g. charitable organization, construction workers, builders, truck drivers, electricians, drivers, citizens, etc.)?

After Reading:

- What are some of the things the community did in the mosque after it arrived?
- How did the Muslim community feel when the mosque arrived at its new home?
- Why do you think the mosque's name is the Midnight Sun Mosque?
- The mosque experienced some problems along the way. What were some of the problems? What were some of the solutions? Teachers and students can fill out the chart below individually or collectively.

PROBLEM	SOLUTION
- The mosque was too wide for roads	- Sign boards had to be removed

MAKE, TINKER, AND MODIFY

Option 1: Map the Midnight Sun Mosque's journey through coding

Use the [template provided](#) (or use your own) to code and map out the Midnight Sun Mosque's journey from Winnipeg to Inuvik. Consider the obstacles along the way.



**Unplugged:**

Print out or draw the different aspects of the Midnight Sun Mosque's journey (e.g. going on roads, on a bridge, in a ship, etc.). These will be game pieces. Put them on butterfly clips and spread them out on the coding grid. Choose a starting place and an end place. The goal will be for the mosque to reach its new home. Students will need to be taught some direction and positionality words such as: right, left, up, and down. These words will help students put arrows around their grid as they map the mosque's journey.

Students can be given this prompt: Can you help the Midnight Sun travel from Winnipeg to its new home in Inuvik?

Plugged:

Same as above, except that students will program robots (e.g. Bee-Bot, Dash) to move through the grid.

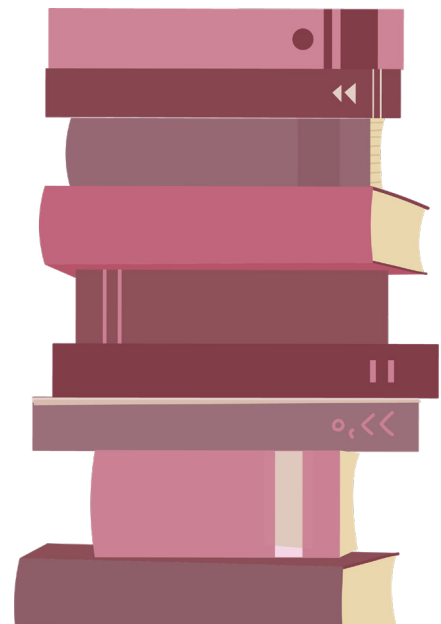
Option 2: Build a mosque and/or important community space

Using various loose parts (blocks, buttons, strings, etc.) and writing/drawing materials, students will build a mosque. Teachers can refer to the images of mosques already explored in class, or have students research their own mosque to create. Students can also be invited to create a community space that is important to them. Paper and writing tools can be provided if students want to draw their designs.

REFLECT AND CONNECT

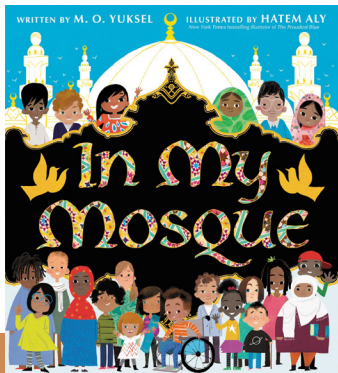
Individually or as a class, students can be invited to reflect on the following questions:

- What were some of the things I/we learned about Muslims and mosques?
- How can reading this story help us understand that Muslim people are similar and different?
- What positive things have I/we learned about the Muslim community and what do I/we want to learn more about?





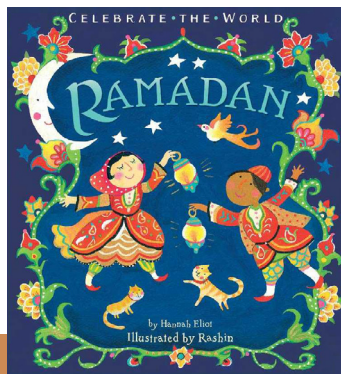
ADDITIONAL CANADIAN BOOKS TO SUPPORT THIS SUB-THEME



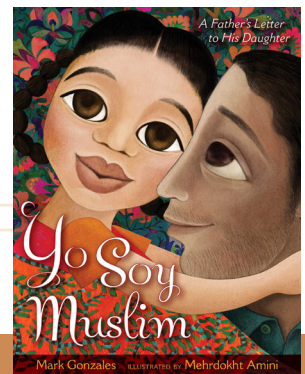
In My Mosque by M.O. Yuksel, illustrated by Hatem Aly (HarperCollins, 2021)



The Most Exciting Eid by Zeba Talkhani, illustrated by Abeeha Tariq (Scholastic Canada, 2023)



Ramadan by Hannha Eliot, illustrated by Rashin Kheiriyeh (Little Simon, 2018)



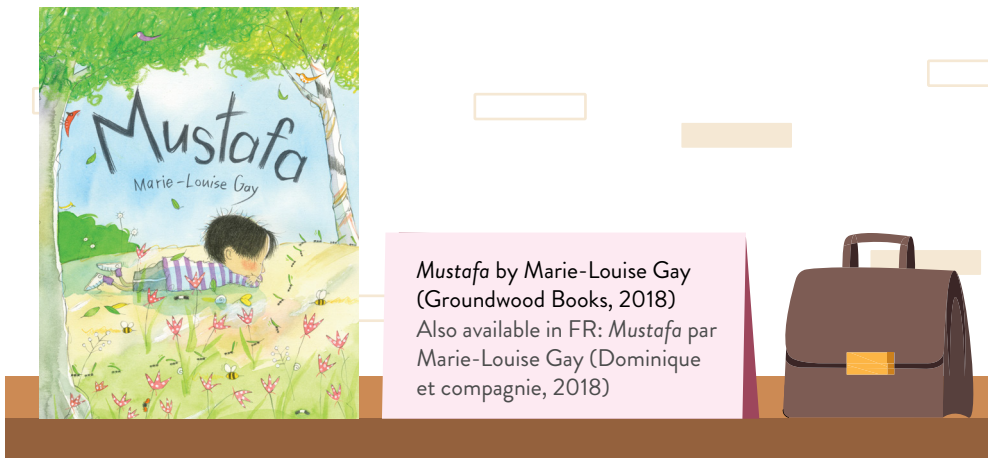
Yo Soy Muslim by Mark Gonzales, illustrated by Mehrdokht Amini (Simons and Schuster, 2017)



ISLAMOPHOBIA | MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL

BY RENÉE SHAH SINGH

FEATURED BOOK



MINDS ON PROVOCATION

Create a “wordless” review of the story with these pages: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 11-12, 15-16, 17-18, 26, 33-34. Cover the words and show students the pictures. This can be done by creating a [Pear Deck](#), using the document camera, or by covering the words in the book using sticky notes. As the students review the pictures (whole class engagement), ask them the following questions:

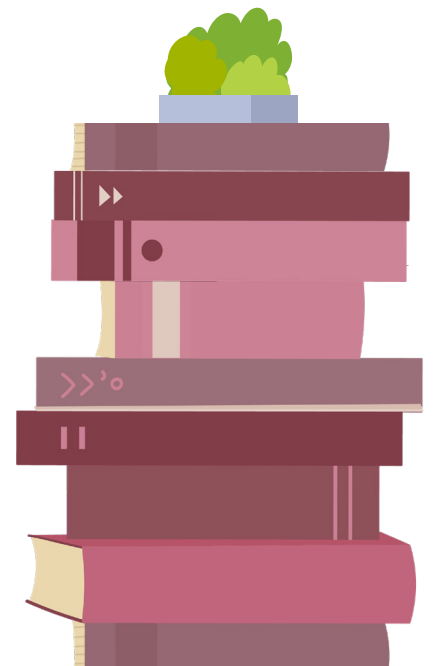
- What can you infer from the pictures?
- What do you wonder about the story?
- What assumptions are you making about the characters? Why?

READ, PLAN, AND PRACTICE

Read the book together. Discuss with students:

- Now that the text has been shared, what assumptions about the story changed? What assumptions stayed the same?
- Who are the characters in the story?
 - How are they related?
 - How are they the same? Different?
 - What can you infer about the characters’ identities?
 - What do you know about the characters’ identities?

These observations can be recorded on a [Padlet](#), [Jamboard](#), or on chart paper.





Class discussions will result in identifying that Mustafa and his family are Muslim. What were some clues in the book's text and illustrations which led to this conclusion (e.g. Mustafa's name, his uncle's name (Amir), and his mother's hijab)?

Students will notice Mustafa's mother is wearing a headscarf/hijab. This may have been one of the strongest clues students used to infer the identity of Mustafa's family. Learn more about the reasons [why Muslim women wear hijabs](#). Show students the many [different ways a hijab can be worn](#). Did you know there was a [World Hijab Day](#)?

MAKE, TINKER, AND MODIFY

Students can choose either of the following activities—or both if they wish:

1. Using Maria and Mustafa's art as inspiration (pages 15-18), students create their own collage to explore their personal stories and identities. As an extension, students can make this art with a partner or in a group of three. The art students create should be reflective of their own lived experiences.
2. Mustafa's story is an immigrant story. It is the story of a boy who doesn't feel seen—but it does not mean he isn't seen. How is this story similar or different to other immigrant stories that students may have read, seen, or experienced? Students can share their thinking and learning through various mediums (e.g. slideshow, art piece, written expression, etc.).

REFLECT AND CONNECT

Whole class discussion.

Reflect:

Using the drama method [Voices in the Head](#) and selected pages from the book (e.g. 5, 8, 9, 11, 15, 24, 26, 28, 31, and 36), have students share what Mustafa may be thinking at various points in the story.

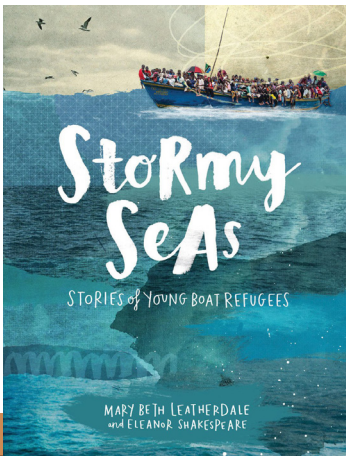
Connect:

Mustafa and his family are Muslim. How can reading this story help us understand and appreciate the multi-faceted experience of being Muslim? What positive things have we learned about the Muslim community and what do we want to learn more about? (The main message here should be: To both find *joy* and to *enjoy* others, we see in this story that different identities should not be a barrier to making a connection and finding friendship.)





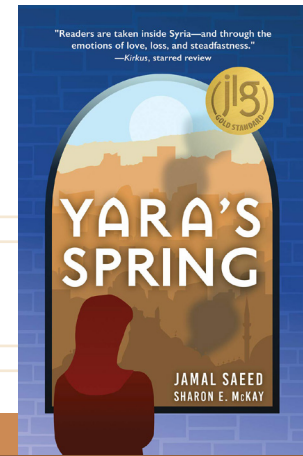
ADDITIONAL CANADIAN BOOKS TO SUPPORT THIS SUB-THEME



Stormy Seas: Stories of Young Boat Refugees by Mary Beth Leatherdale, illustrated by Eleanor Shakespeare (Annick Press, 2017)



From Far Away by Robert Munsch and Saoussan Askar, illustrated by Rebecca Green (Annick Press, 2017)
Also available in FR: *Venue de loin* par Robert Munsch et Saoussan Askar, illustré par Michael Martchenko (Éditions Scholastic, 2015)



Yara's Spring by Jamal Saeed and Sharon E. McKay, illustrated by Nahid Kazemi (Annick Press, 2020)



ISLAMOPHOBIA | HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

BY JONELLE ST. AUBYN

FEATURED BOOK



LEARNING EXPERIENCE

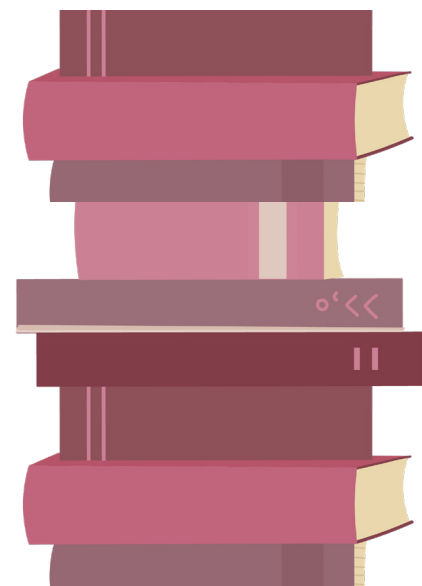
MINDS ON PROVOCATION

Students need to have an understanding of what Islamophobia is before they can begin this lesson. Educators can use all of the following resources, or allow students to choose one to learn about what Islamophobia is:

- Article: [Islamophobia in Canada](#)
- Survey: [Islamophobia in Canada, still a grave problem](#)
- Video clip: [Islamophobia in Canada: Why it's a problem and what's being done about it](#)
- Video clip: [What is Islamophobia?](#)

After examining the resources provided, share one or all of the following questions with students for them to think about before they read the book:

- What are some commonly known stereotypes about Islam and Muslims?
- Where have you heard these stereotypes before and in what context?
- How have these stereotypes informed societal impressions of Muslims?
- Who has the moral imperative to challenge the current narrative?
- Within your sphere of influence (e.g. classroom, family, friends, etc.) how can you debunk these stereotypes and change the narrative?





READ, PLAN, AND PRACTICE

After spending time pre-teaching to build up student understanding of Islamophobia, students will then identify examples of Islamophobia that occurred within the featured book. They will also identify what was done and not done when Islamophobic acts took place, and explain how they feel the situation should have been handled. This can be done as a [think-pair-share activity](#).

MAKE, TINKER, AND MODIFY

Students will critically examine the impact of Islamophobia experienced by:

- The characters in the book who were Muslim.
- The characters' friends/allies who witnessed acts of Islamophobia.
- The bystanders who witnessed acts of Islamophobia.
- The perpetrators of Islamophobic actions.

Students should record their findings/analysis to share with the teacher and/or the rest of the class using the following possible options:

- [Jamboard](#)
- [Padlet](#)
- A graphic organizer like [Mindomo](#)
- Chart paper with sticky notes

REFLECT AND CONNECT

The impacts of Islamophobia have long-lasting and devastating effects on those who experience it, witness it, or commit Islamophobic acts. How do we counter Islamophobia or anti-Muslim hatred? Students will create a plan of action for tackling Islamophobia at the following levels (either taking on one level, or presenting a strategy for all four):

1. **Individual** – What can each person do to combat Islamophobia?
2. **Bystanders** – What can bystanders do to stop Islamophobia when they see it happening?
3. **Allies** – What do allies need to do to support friends/community members who are experiencing Islamophobia?
4. **Structural/Governmental** – What needs to happen at the different levels of government (municipal, provincial, and federal) to prevent and protect people from Islamophobia and prosecute perpetrators of Islamophobic acts?

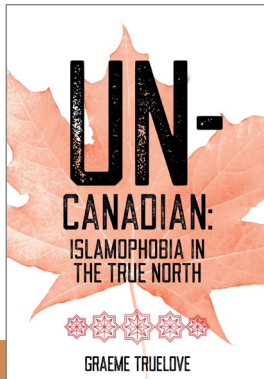
Students should be given a variety of methods to present their learning (i.e. podcast, infographic, short film, TED Talk, essay, spoken word, song, etc.). This sharing of knowledge can happen at the school level or the school board level, with the politicians in their communities, or with other community organizations.



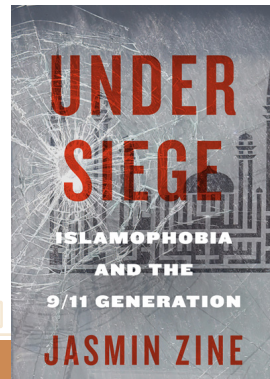


ADDITIONAL CANADIAN BOOKS TO SUPPORT THIS SUB-THEME

For Educators:



Un-Canadian: Islamophobia in the True North by Graeme Truelove (Nightwood Editions, 2019)

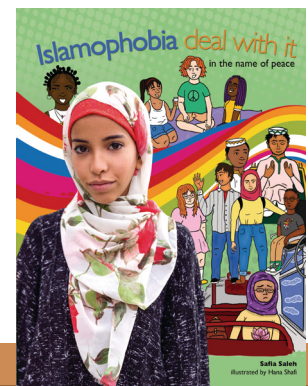


Under Siege: Islamophobia and the 9/11 Generation by Jasmin Zine (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022)

For Students:



We Have Always Been Here: A Queer Muslim Memoir by Samra Habib (Viking, 2019)



Islamophobia: Deal With It in the Name of Peace by Safia Saleh, illustrated by Hana Shafi (James Lorimer & Company, 2020)

MORE RESOURCES FOR ALL GRADE LEVELS

- [How bad is Islamophobia in Canada?](#): Focused on the tragedy in London, ON, this Global News video clip shares statistics and information about the growing problem of Islamophobia in Canada.
- [Islamophobia killed my brother. Let's end the hate](#): Suzanne Barakat speaks about how Islamophobia led to the death of her brother and shares her thoughts on what can be done to stop anti-Muslim hatred.
- [Inuvik and the journey of Midnight Sun Mosque](#): This YouTube video tracks the journey the Midnight Sun Mosque took to reach its new home, and provides lots of great footage showing how this mosque impacted the community.



- [The Midnight Sun Masjid: North America's northern most masjid](#): An article that shares details about the Midnight Sun Mosque and its arrival at its new home.
- [Mosque's epic move from Winnipeg to Inuvik a story of communities coming together, says picture book author](#): A CBC news report about the picture book, *Journey of the Midnight Sun*, in which author Shazia Afzal shares a lot of great details about the mosque's journey.
- [National Council of Canadian Muslims](#): Connect with NCCM for resources, workshops, and more.

