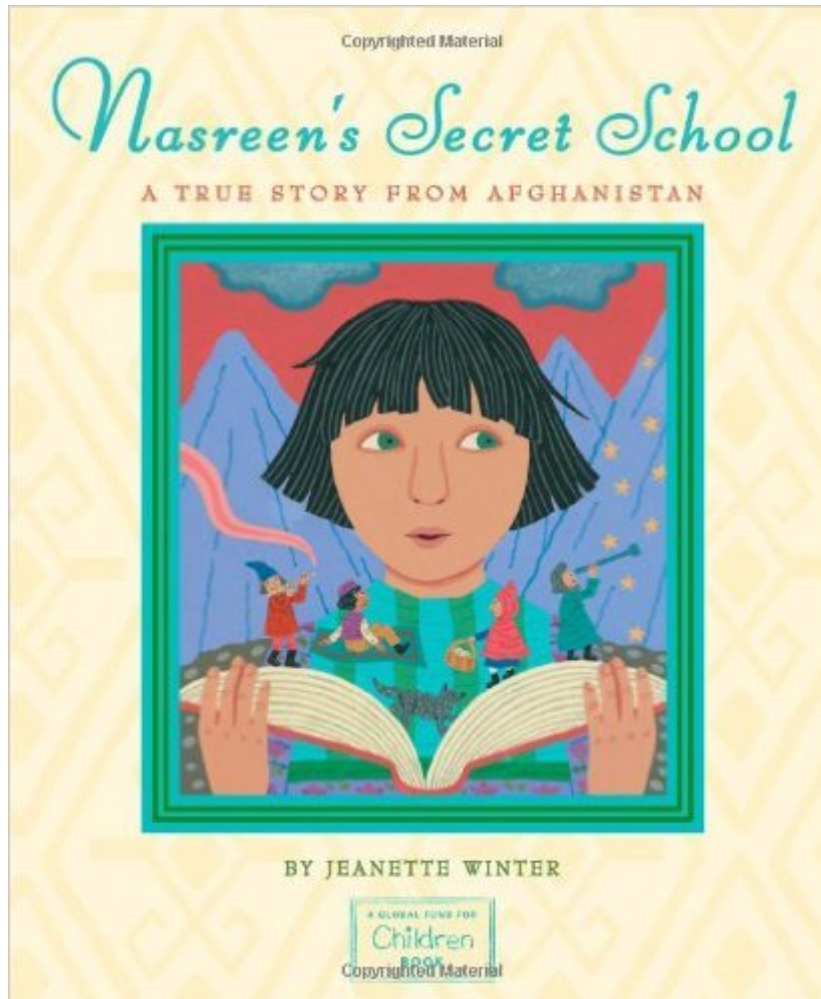


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Nasreen's Secret School: A True Story From Afghanistan



Synopsis

Young Nasreen has not spoken a word to anyone since her parents disappeared. In despair, her grandmother risks everything to enroll Nasreen in a secret school for girls. Will a devoted teacher, a new friend, and the worlds she discovers in books be enough to draw Nasreen out of her shell of sadness? Based on a true story from Afghanistan, this inspiring book will touch readers deeply as it affirms both the life-changing power of education and the healing power of love.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: AD630L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 40 pages

Publisher: Beach Lane Books (October 6, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1416994378

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Product Dimensions: 9 x 0.5 x 11 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (43 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #19,218 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #5 in Â Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Middle East #11 in Â Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Violence #285 in Â Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Emotions & Feelings

Age Range: 6 - 9 years

Grade Level: 1 - 4

Customer Reviews

This picture book is told as narrated by the grandmother, which I think helps to provide an emotional buffer for children. She tells of how music and art and learning once flourished in her city, but now soldiers have come and changed everything, and these things are now gone. Her grand-daughter, Nasreen stays at home all day because the Taliban soldiers deny the joys and privileges of schooling to girls. Nasreen's father is taken away by the police, and her mother goes to find word of him and never returns. Nasreen retreats into her own inner world and ceases to speak. The grandmother hears of a secret school for girls and she brings her grand-daughter to the school, praying to Allah that she will find something there to help her bloom again. The soldiers come to the school once, but the girls outwit them, says the grandmother, by hiding their forbidden schoolbooks

and reading the Koran by the time the soldier comes. Other times boys outside watch and distract the soldiers. One day Nasreen speaks to a friend in the school and tells her of her sorrows, and after that she begins to smile, and 'little by little, day by day,' she learns to read, to write, to do math, and she learns of the world around her. The grandmother compares what she learns to windows, and says that with this knowledge, Nasreen will never again be alone, "the knowledge she holds inside will always be with her, like a good friend."The illustrations remind me a little of the Grandma Moses style, primitive, an almost dreamlike sense of perspective, but with a marked Middle Eastern influence.

In "Nasreen's Secret School", young Nasreen has fallen into depression since her father was taken by the Taliban and her mother disappeared looking for him. She has withdrawn into herself and won't speak. Her grandmother takes a risk by enrolling her in a secret school for girls, believing that it's the only thing that can bring Nasreen out of her shell. Although it takes time, Nasreen eventually starts to respond to her new knowledge, and to other people. This is a wonderful book about the importance of education, the healing powers of love, and the ability of the human spirit to rise above oppression. Although the story is set in Afghanistan and has a distinct Middle-Eastern backdrop, the themes and emotions presented are universal. I appreciate the fact that the grandmother narrates the tale. Nasreen seems too shy to tell her own story, and the grandmother probably has more awareness of what's going on. This also helps adult readers relate to the story better, I think. The book also evoked a good emotional response from me. I was especially touched by a scene where Nasreen finally opens up to one of her classmates. Some may worry that the story is too heavy for children, and it is a bit much for the four and under group. However, I think older children will be able to appreciate and enjoy it. They may not understand all the complexities of the plot, but they will understand the basics: Nasreen is sad because her parents are gone, but she's able to find happiness in learning and new friends. These are emotions children can relate to. The story does have sad parts, but I think children can handle it. It's important for them to experience different emotions so they can relate to others. It's a good book that gets children asking questions and imagining new experiences.

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