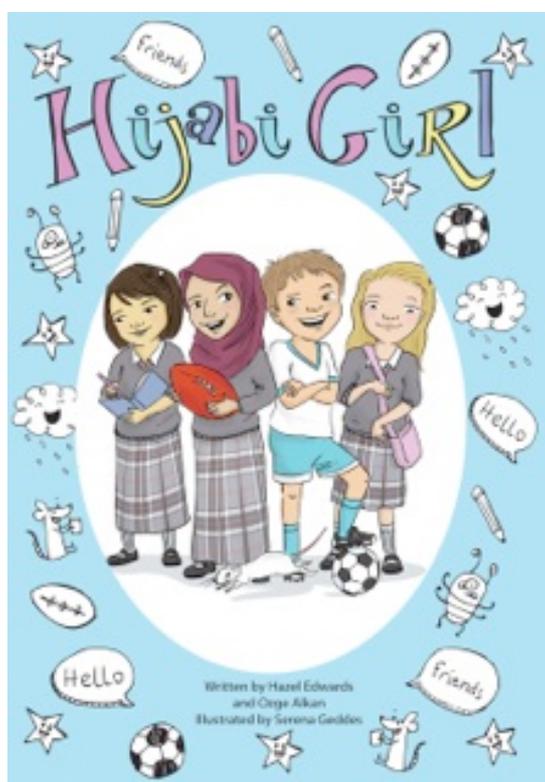


‘Hijabi Girl’ by Hazel Edwards and Ozge Alkan

Reviewed by MuslimReads

<https://muslimreads.com/2017/12/23/review-hijabi-girl-by-hazel-edwards-and-ozge-alkan/>

‘...a refreshing Muslim girl character: she is both bold and kind.’



Hijabi Girl is an early chapter book for 2nd grade readers published in 2016. Written by Hazel Edwards and Ozge Alkan, the story follows 8-year-old Melek as she meets a new friend and competes in a book character parade at school. This 47 page book is divided into 5 chapters and includes a glossary and an online book guide for teachers. The cover is designed by Serena Geddes, whose illustrations also appear inside the book—including a hijabi fish!

Hijabi Girl is a smart and playful story about a group of friends in Australia who navigate friendship, culture, and school. The four friends are smart and competitive Melek, the new girl Tien, Melek’s best friend Lily, and their classmate Zac, who loves soccer and his pet rat—Rattus Rattus.

Melek is such a refreshing Muslim girl character; she is both bold and kind. Outgoing and friendly, she introduces herself to the new girl, Tien, at school. She demonstrates empathy when she explains how to pronounce her own name and is careful to pronounce Tien’s correctly. Melek is fiercely competitive

and wants to win the most points for her table and the character parade competition for her class. The writing in this book is fun and whimsical. The story begins on a windy day, with Melek racing to school to beat the 9 o’clock bell. She spies a hat racing along the ground in front of her and thinks, “At this wind-speed, the hat would get inside the school gate by 9am, but where was the owner?” She discovers Tien, the new girl, is the owner of the hat.

Melek and Tien are delighted to discover that their names both mean “angel,” one in Turkish and one in Vietnamese. *Hijabi Girl* explores themes of language, religion, and culture in a very realistic way. Melek, eager to try something new but careful to follow her faith’s dietary restrictions, asks Tien if all Vietnamese food has pork in it. On the way to swim class, Tien asks Melek, “Do you wear your hijab when you swim?”

Melek’s hijab doesn’t define her; it is an empowering feature of her character. She explains that she likes to wear it, and wears a maroon hijab in school colors to show her school spirit. She shares her hijabi Barbie with Lily and is proud to describe her mother’s business designing clothing for Muslim women. Her hijab is described fluttering in the wind as she runs to school and plays football, and she shows how she can flip on the monkey bars without also flipping her hijab.

<https://hazeledwards.com/hijabi-girl.html>

A glossary at the end of the book defines words that may be new to some readers, including “halal,” “Muslim,” “hijab,” and “Ramadan.” The author’s website has an absolutely fantastic [reading guide](#) that makes this book a great choice for classrooms.

Ten illustrations by Serena Geddes are scattered throughout the book and make an already approachable book even more so for early readers. The cover design is playful and smart, although I’m not sure why Zac isn’t in uniform like the girls.

Hijabi Girl is a really lovely story that children will relate to and adults will love to share. Like other self-published books, this one would have benefited from another round of editing. The sentences are not always clear; there are some inconsistencies in characterization; and there are odd jumps from one location to another. Despite its flaws, *Hijabi Girl* is a gem of a story, and I look forward to seeing what Edwards and Alkan create next.

You can buy *Hijabi Girl* [here](#).

Discussion notes and downloadable class playscript <https://hazeledwards.com/hijabi-girl.html>