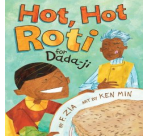


Farhana Zia, author, multicultural books for children  
Cultural Awareness through Storytelling  
BookTalk/Cultural fest/Multi-media presentations for Grades K-8

[www.fziastories.com](http://www.fziastories.com)

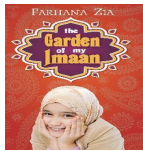
[farhanazia@hotmail.com](mailto:farhanazia@hotmail.com)



Get up close and personal with the foods and traditions of the Indian subcontinent through a telling of Aneel and Dada-ji's capers (*Hot, Hot, Roti for Dada-ji*)! The book reading and Power Point presentation are accompanied by interactive demonstrations and exhibits. Students will participate in a variety of fun hands-on experiences such as: roti making and sari wrapping. The author will share her journey as a writer. The session is followed by a brief Q/A.

Target audience: Grades K-4

Duration: 1 hour



This presentation combines a slide presentation, demonstrations and artifacts to introduce the customs and traditions of Aliya's family (Muslim/American family with roots in the Indian subcontinent). The audience will learn about Aliya's festive foods and celebrations. Among other things, they will learn about the joint family system. They will learn to make *sheer khorma* (a popular dessert) and will experience tying on the *hijab*! Book reading (*The Garden of My Imaan*) included. Q/A.

Target audience: Grades 5-8

Duration: 1 hour



A multi-media presentation that includes a book reading (*Child of Spring*), brief discussion on child labor, an exhibit and a fun peek into Basanta's world. Make tamarind lollies! Sweep with Basanta's hand broom! Try a hand at Amma's winnow! Try on Amma's sari! Light a Diwali sparkler! Create lovely *Rangoli* designs! Q/A

Target audience: Grades 3-6

Duration: 1 hour



Target Audience: Grades K-4

## Reviews

### Hot, Hot Roti for Dada-ji

- 2011 Kirkus starred review
- 2012 APALA (Asian/Pacific American Library Association) award for literature Honor, Picture Books
- 2014 USBBY (United States Board on Books for Young People)
- Best Children's Books of the Year Bank Street College of Education

**Kirkus starred review:** Food, family and storytelling set irresistible hooks in this high-spirited double picture-book debut. Grandfather's rousing tales of a village youth spent tying cobras into knots, shaking mangos for the pickle jar from a giant tree and savoring the "fluffy-puffy roti that bubbled and wobbled in *ghee* on the hot, hot *tavva* pan" inspire young Aneel to give his Dada-ji "the power of the tiger" once again with a fresh batch of the unleavened treat. Since no one else in the extended family seems willing to make it—though they do gather around to watch—into the kitchen goes Aneel to mix the ingredients, knead and roll the dough, then (with help from Dadi-ma, his grandmother) to fry and dish up a "high, high stack" of "[hot, hot roti for Dada-ji!" Min echoes the narrative's exuberance with bright, blocky acrylic scenes of an Indian family in Western surroundings, dressed in a mix of contemporary and traditional styles and headlined by the lad and his elder. After downing the roti with finger-licking enthusiasm, the two proceed outside to shake apples off a tree for Dadi-ma's pie and tie their legs in knots to sit lotus fashion on a grassy hillside. A natural for reading aloud, laced with great tastes, infectious sound effects and happy feelings. (glossary) (*Picture book*. 5-8)

**School Library Journal:** "This debut for both author and illustrator is a winning story of family traditions as well as a rollicking tall tale.... Zia has an ear for the storyteller's cadence. She creates lyrical lines for the framing narrative and then alters her voice, animating the interior story with exaggeration and exclamations. Min's style is dynamic; he borrows a variety of techniques from graphic novels to delineate time and place and to focus attention. From inset boxes and monochromatic background figures to silhouettes and sequential panels, the effect is exciting and fresh. As Aneel stands on his head in imitation of his grandfather, the room tilts and smoke from the burning incense spreads across the page, carrying light green colored-pencil sketches of the 'wheat fields and swaying coconut palms' of the elders' village. This contrasts with the bold colors of the boy's modern living room, rendered in acrylics. Inspired by the story, Aneel starts mixing ingredients. Boy and man chomp and chew. Do the roti still do the trick? Hunh-ji! Yes Sir!"

--*School Library Journal*

"Young readers will flip for Hot, Hot Roti for Dada-ji by F. Zia!" --*The Children's and Teens' Book Connection*

### The Garden of My Imaan

- 2013 Publisher's Weekly star review
- 2013 Society of School Librarians International Book Award Honor Book
- 2013 Booklist's Editors' Top 10 Religion Books for Youth.
- 2013 CBC Diversity list
- 2014 Winner, Social Justice Literature Award / Literacy and Social Justice Special Interest Group, International Reading Association
- 2014 Honor Book: South Asia Book Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature

**Publisher's Weekly★ Review:** Aliya is an Indian-American Muslim preteen trying to make her way through school and life, riding the various divides between the conservative and liberal interpretations of her religion, standing up to the school bully, working up the nerve to talk to her crush and to run for student council, all while dealing with her annoying younger brother and fasting for Ramadan during Thanksgiving. Aliya's world is turned upside down with the arrival of Marwa, a Moroccan girl who wears a *hijab* and seems to fast every day of Ramadan with ease. Embarrassed by Marwa, Aliya starts writing letters to Allah in this modern homage to *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*. Zia (*Hot, Hot Roti for Dada-ji*) has deep insight into adolescent Muslim life and capably handles diversity within American Islam. She provides one of the better representations of the matriarchy of South Asian families in her depiction of Aliya's home life—with the strong presence of her mother, grandmother, and even great-grandmother—and seamlessly weaves the Urdu language into her story. Ages 8–12.

**Kirkus Review:** While inviting comparison to Judy Blume's seminal *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*, this likable tale of an Indian-American girl who fears drawing attention from those hostile toward Muslims focuses on the social consequences of religious identity, rather than faith itself.

With Ramadan fast approaching, Sister Khan asks Aliya's religion class to set Ramadan goals and write about what they learn. She expects Aliya to fast not just weekends but weekdays. (Aliya's loving, supportive family leaves the decision to her.) Like Margaret before her, Aliya pours out her worries and frets over her late puberty in letters to Allah. Her friend Amal has gotten her period and started covering her head. Asked to befriend a Moroccan girl at her public school who wears hijab and fasts during Ramadan, Aliya's first annoyed, then intrigued at how Marwa finds a place for herself without sacrificing her religious principles. If the downside of open observance is clear to readers, the beliefs and intentions underlying these religious observances, especially hijab, are not. Hijab's part of her, Marwa says vaguely. "I feel natural in it." For Aliya's mother, who doesn't wear it, "hijab is a symbol of modesty—a good symbol but a figurative one."

Omissions aside, Zia's gentle message—that Muslims come from many cultures whose observances differ, while the long shadow of 9/11 hovers over all—is timely and beautifully conveyed. (*Fiction. 8-12*)

### Child of Spring

- 2016: Parent Choice Award.

Engaging writing and a delightful protagonist bring life in a contemporary Indian village to life. Basanta longs for the beautiful ring worn by her young mistress, but when it comes into her possession, she realizes that it's not the wonderful possession she expected. Increasingly aware of the struggles of her less privileged friends, Lali and Bala, she finds a way to improve their lives and entertain their community and the beautiful ring takes on new meaning.

## Testimonials

Farhana Zia's author visit to Freeman-Kennedy School was fantastic! I would highly recommend Farhana Zia for an author visit to your school. Students, teachers and administrators all had rave reviews.

Being a 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, F. Zia knows her audience well. She brought many artifacts from India and the Muslim religion to share with students. Her presentation was very interactive, involving students attempting to make roti and put on a sari. F. Zia sang, read book excerpts and presented slides with great photos. She adjusted the content and level of her presentation for the older students. See the attached copy of the announcement I sent to our school describing Farhana Zia and her books.

In addition, there is an article on global awareness: "Why students need a Global Awareness and Understanding of Other Cultures". The last paragraph is particularly good in stating why it was so good for our students to see Farhana Zia:

Global awareness and international collaboration during the formative years results in more rounded individuals, encouraging our pupils to see things from different perspectives and helping them to make informed decisions, acquiring transferable skills that will be useful to them and will remain with them for life. According to the Association of Graduate Recruiters companies cannot find enough applicants with the requisite skills to operate in an international market place, indicating that greater efforts by schools in fostering global awareness and international collaboration are needed to best prepare our students - and ourselves - for life in the 21st century. (<http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2012/sep/25/students-global-awareness-other-cultures>)

Sharon Lavalley,  
Librarian,  
Freeman-Kennedy School,  
Norfolk, Ma

It was wonderful to have you at our Celebration of Community event. Both Donna and I really enjoyed your presentation. We thought your introductory material including the differences between American and Indian culture, explanation of vocabulary, and discussion of cultural traditions was quite informative. Your read aloud of the book of the book was phenomenal. No one can read the story better than you. I wish the children had a bit more time to explore some of the artifacts you displayed on the tables. Overall, we had an excellent response from the community. Thanks for taking the time to share your story with Miller students.

Chris Louis Sardella, Assistant Principal  
**Rita Edwards Miller Elementary School**  
(978) 392-4476 ext. 1112  
**Norman E. Day Elementary School**  
(978) 692-5591 ext. 14

Hi Farhana-  
This is the blog that I wrote for Teaching Tolerance describing the power of your visit and the Islamophobia that we faced in the classroom.  
I hope that it helps spread awareness of your beautiful book!!! Your visit had such a lasting impact on my students and me.  
Amy Vatne-Bintliff  
Teacher of English  
Oregon Middle School,  
Oregon, WI

<http://www.tolerance.org/blog/confronting-students-islamophobia>

Dear Enthusiastic Educators:

Do you want to awe your students? Then invite author Farhana Zia to come to your school and talk about her experience as a writer and Muslim American who has lived in the United States for many years. Exciting! Interesting! Amusing! Awesome! Compelling! All adjectives used by the students and teachers of Marion E. Zeh School to describe the presentation by Farhana Zia, author of three children's book ("Hot, Hot Roti for Dadi-Ji", "the Garden of my Imaan" and the soon to be released "Child of Spring"). Mrs. Zia's presentation was the most interactive and fun, yet educational, demonstration I have ever experienced in my 30 years of working as a librarian. Teachers and students learned so much about the Indian culture from tying hijabs and sari wrapping, to cooking roti and Indian deserts, to the smelling of incense and spices to learning the variations in commonly spoken languages. They also learned about the writing process and the thrills and disappointments of becoming a published author. Mrs. Zia's presentation was a great mix of literacy related topics and a cultural celebration that did not feel forced. Students made lots of connections to her work, her personal life, and her culture and were motivated to write very thoughtful letters to her. She clearly made a positive impact on our students.

Sincerely,

MaryEllen Remillard  
School librarian and Head teacher  
mremillard@nsboro.k12.ma.us  
Marion E. Zeh School  
Northborough, MA 01543

February 23, 2016

As an ELL educator in an elementary school, I am constantly looking for ways to encourage cultural diversity. This past year we invited author, Farhana Zia, to visit our school on Multicultural Book Day to discuss her books and her Indian heritage. She created a program which combined literacy-related topics with a celebration of her culture. She presented for every grade level and each presentation was different because she made each one grade level appropriate. Therefore, all students were engaged and they made personal connections to her books, personal life, or culture.

Farhana brought many artifacts with her including hijabs, sari's, food, incense, and spices which the children were able to view and experience in some fashion. The students loved the interactive part of her demonstration. They saw how to tie a hijab and dress in a sari, how to cook roti, and how incense and spices smell. The presentations ended with a question and answer forum that lead to further discussions in their classrooms. The students have asked for her to return when her next book is published in the spring. Hopefully Mrs. Zia will accept our invitation.

It was wonderful to see our students participate in such wonderful conversations which further our understanding of being a culturally diverse community and to watch them enjoy literature written by multicultural authors.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Lento  
ELL Teacher  
Marion E. Zeh School  
Northborough, MA 01532