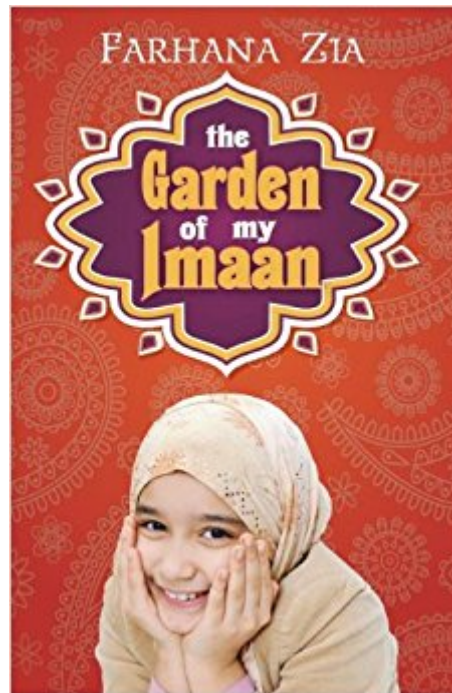




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# Garden Of My Imaan, The



## Synopsis

Aliya already struggles with trying to fit in, feeling confident enough to talk to the cute boy or stand up to mean kids the fact that she's Muslim is just another thing to deal with. When Marwa, a Moroccan girl who shares her faith if not her culture, comes to Aliya's school, Aliya wonders even more about who she is, what she believes, and where she fits in. Should she fast for Ramadan? Should she wear the hijab? She's old enough for both, but does she really want to call attention to herself?

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 550L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 192 pages

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Product Dimensions: 1 x 6.5 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 15 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #528,341 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #23 in [Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Religious Fiction > Muslim](#) #281 in [Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Religious Fiction > Other Religious Fiction](#) #2559 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Girls & Women](#)

Age Range: 9 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Gr 4-7-Aliya is worried about fitting in at her New England school for many reasons. Other girls go to parties and talk about boyfriends, but her family is Muslim, so the fifth grader has to think about how these things do or don't fit in with what her religion teaches. Will the other kids notice when she fasts for Ramadan? What type of reaction might she face if she decides to wear the hijab? With Ramadan approaching, her teacher at the Islamic Center tells her to communicate with Allah, and taking the advice of her great-grandmother, Aliya decides to write letters to Allah explaining her concerns. As the year progresses, Aliya works at understanding herself and her faith, and with the support of a new Muslim classmate, she comes to appreciate her many blessings and her identity. The author

recognizes the diversity of the Muslim population (Aliya's family is from India, while the new girl is from Morocco); however, the book is definitely slanted toward a more conservative Islamic viewpoint, particularly with regard to the hijab. Aliya mentions that her mother feels that Muslim women can be modest without covering up, and a classmate at the Islamic Center discusses how her parents are not happy about her decision to wear the hijab, but these ideas are not explored further. The novel is at its best when depicting Aliya's interactions with her grandmother and great-grandmother as well as comic incidents such as a halal turkey mix-up at Thanksgiving dinner. This would be a good addition for libraries serving Muslim populations; it also might be of interest to non-Muslim readers wanting to find out more about the religion's everyday life and practices.-Kathleen E. Gruver, Burlington County Library, Westampton, NJ  
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Terrorist. Go back to the desert. Drive a camel. Growing up Muslim in the Northeast, Aliya encounters racism on the streets and in her fifth-grade class, even though her family members are not strictly observant Muslims, she does not wear the hijab, and she doesn't even speak Arabic. She hates it that she is supposed to help a new student, Marwa, who does wear the hijab. Her big interest is in Josh, but he likes her classmate Juliana, and Aliya loses to Juliana in the election for class rep. Aliya's diarylike entries to Allah about her conflicts are sometimes contrived, but her wry first-person narrative perfectly captures her middle-school struggles with friends and enemies, as well as her family and her faith, as she changes her perspective, stands up to a bully, and wonders if she should wear the hijab after all. True to Aliya's contemporary viewpoint, which is sometimes laugh-out-loud funny, the messages are never heavy. Grades 4-8.  
--Hazel Rochman

There are many things to like about gardens. Once you get past all of the work (well, you never really do), you find that they provide beauty, nourishment and a reflection of one's self. "The Garden of My Imaan", by Farhana Zia, does all three. My 2 favorite things about this book are 1) the humor and sensitivity with which the author treats the subject and 2) that there is no singular cultural viewpoint or agenda being pushed here. On one level, it's the engaging story of a month-in-the-life of a pre-teen girl. On another level, it may be one of the most important "post 9/11" books ever written.

Great book! I was afraid that it would imply that the Muslim girl was ok only because she did not

practice her religion, but it did not. This book showed that not all Muslims are bad any more than any other people group. The author did a good job portraying the struggles this young girl had dealing with her religion and the fears she had that she would be ridiculed. This book will definitely be on my middle school book shelf.

This is a must read for all middle schoolers! The Garden of My Imaan is a captivating look into a middle school girls' struggle with just finding her comfort level of who she is spiritually and how she fits into her world view with her family, community, and the world around her. So interesting to see that throughout all of her "life experiences" the glue that held her together was her conversations with God. Very well written! The author did an amazing job with really taking the reader through Iman's spiritual journey and growing up in as an American Muslim after 9/11. This book is definitely NOT written for only one ethnic or religious group.

This is a great book that contains many themes relevant to the life of any late elementary or middle schooler. Realistic, sweet, and satisfying with a happy ending as Aliya discovers and embraces who she is as the story progresses.

Fills a great void in literature for Muslim girls. I am reading it with my daughter as the content makes it necessary to have an adult to discuss some of the issues that are brought up in the book. This actually makes it great for bonding and conversations between daughters and mothers or other caretakers. Very current and meaningful to girls grades 4 and up.

The Garden of my Imaan is a middle grade novel written by Farhana Zia. This is a sort of modern day, Islamic retelling of Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret. Aliya is a young American Muslim girl trying to navigate a post 9/11 world. This book shows how similar she is to any other American girl, trying to figure out her place in society and what she believes. She's learning how to make friends and how to stand up for herself. I thought this was a great book for kids and adults that enjoy middle grade novels and learning about other cultures. I highly recommend The Garden of my Imaan.

See more of my reviews on The YA Kitten! My copy came from YA Books Central for review.

Diversity: 3 ⭐ Closer to Reality Racial-Ethnic: 4 (Aliya and her family are Indian Muslims; her best friend Winnie is Korean; Marwa's family is Moroccan)

QUILT BAG: 0 Disability: 0 Intersectionality: 4 (the book's focus on Muslim girlhood creates plenty of intersections between gender and racial-ethnic identity) One review of *The Garden of My Imaan* calls the book a modern homage to *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*, that classic book parents gave to their kids when puberty threatened to rear its ugly head and begin the monthly misery of menstruation. I never got to read that one because I was an ace at odd things like not getting to read things that were "normal" for kids my age to read. That continued all the way into high school. ANYWAY. *The Garden of My Imaan* is far from perfect, but it has a lot of value for its audience even if it's a bit didactic. I'm used to seeing most MG and YA Muslim rep in the form of Arab Muslims, but Aliya provides a different perspective as a tween girl from an Indian Muslim family. Her family observes Ramadan as many other practicing Muslims around the world do, but their cultural practices as an Indian family are mixed in as well. Aliya's dynamic with her family is lovely, especially when it involves her grandmother and great-grandmother. At times, it seems to offer commentary on how people of color can perpetuate racism against other people of color as well. Though it's a one-scene wonder and never comes up again, Aliya's grandmother expects Aliya's half-Korean best friend Winnie to be good at math because Asian people are "all the same." Sadly, it's played off as a joke. It demonstrates the same point a bit unintentionally as well through Winnie's mangling of the Spanish language on a basic level. Winnie once calls someone a "loco mujer" and "crazy woman" is offered as a translation. Later, she says Aliya looks "precioso" in something. As soon as you learn adjectives in Spanish, you're taught that they're gendered and typically placed after a noun, not before it. "Mujer loca" is how to correctly call a woman crazy; if a girl looks beautiful or beautiful in something, she looks preciosa. Some adjectives like inteligente (intelligent) don't change form based on the noun's gender, but the two used in the book do. If there's a term for when a Manic Pixie Dream Girl is entirely platonic, *The Garden of My Imaan* is guilty of using the trope through Marwa, the hijabi girl and new kid at Aliya's school. Marwa exists to say whichever sage thing Aliya needs to hear at a given time and teach Aliya to be more comfortable with her Muslim-ness. The book's heavy focus on Aliya leaves Marwa bereft of her own character arc and reduce her to a heavily didactic character in a novel that already feels more like a teaching tool than a reading experience. Typically, a book like *The Garden of My*

Imaan would be a little too didactic for my tastes, but this is 2016. Due to an outdated, broken electoral system, a minority of the United States pushed an openly racist and Islamophobic man into the presidency and the world will suffer for it. With rhetoric like his shaping the world, The Garden of My Imaan is highly necessary and offers a new view into life for Muslim families post-9/11.

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