

Moon Watchers: Shirin's Ramadan Miracle**Reza Jalali****Anne Sibley O'Brien, Illustrator**

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After Shirin spots the new moon marking the beginning of Ramadan, she begs her parents to allow her to fast this year. Now that her older brother Ali is twelve, everyone else in the family is old enough to celebrate according to the tradition. Her parents insist, however, that nine years old is far too young to fast from sunrise to sunset. Instead, they instruct Shirin to focus on other Ramadan traditions, such as doing good deeds for others. As the month progresses, she's allowed to fast during small portions of the day, but she's frustrated by Ali's constant torment. One day, she finds Ali in the kitchen sneaking food. Her response changes everything between them.

This book is perhaps most valuable as a lesson on Islam. Each practice and tradition is explained, but without disrupting the pace of the story. Non-Muslim readers will walk away with a more developed global perspective, Muslims will relate the tale to their own Ramadan experiences, and every young reader will identify with hearing that terrible phrase: "you're too young." For ages four to eight.

REECE KARBOWSKI (July / August 2010)

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