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Amina's Voice

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Book Review

Amina's Voice

Author

Hena Khan

Illustrator

Reviewer

Emma Patton

Rating

Excellent

Level

Intermediate

Pages

197

Year

2017

Publisher

Salaam Reads

ISBN

9781481492065

Amina is a talented singer who is afraid to perform. She's also a Pakistani American girl trying to find her place between the traditional culture and religion of her parents and the American way of life that she sees at school. Amina must find her voice for her friends, her family, and her community. She worries about losing her best friend, Soojin, to another girl in the class who Soojin now wants to be friends with, even though Amina isn't so sure about her. With her family, she has to respect her uncle, Thaya Jaan, even if she disagrees with his strict religious views. And in her community, Amina wants to speak about who she is and how she feels about the world around her, but she doesn't know if it's possible to be accepted into her parents' world of traditional Islam and also accepted into her friends' world of American life.

Amina's Voice features quite a bit of diversity. Not only is Amina's family from Pakistan, but her best friend is Korean American. As a result, readers are exposed to different aspects of Korean and Pakistani culture, including food and language. Also, the experience of an immigrant is discussed, as Amina's friend Soojin and her family go through the process of becoming official American citizens. While there is certainly more violence and intolerance in America than Amina experiences in this book, especially toward those practicing Islam, such a detailed account would not be appropriate for the intermediate age level. However, the author still shows how immigrants can feel ostracized, even in a generally accepting community. Kids at school make fun of Amina and Soojin for their ethnic smell and Amina's local mosque is vandalized. Even though Amina lives a fairly safe existence, the fear and confusion that she feels at just being who she is can be understood by the reader.