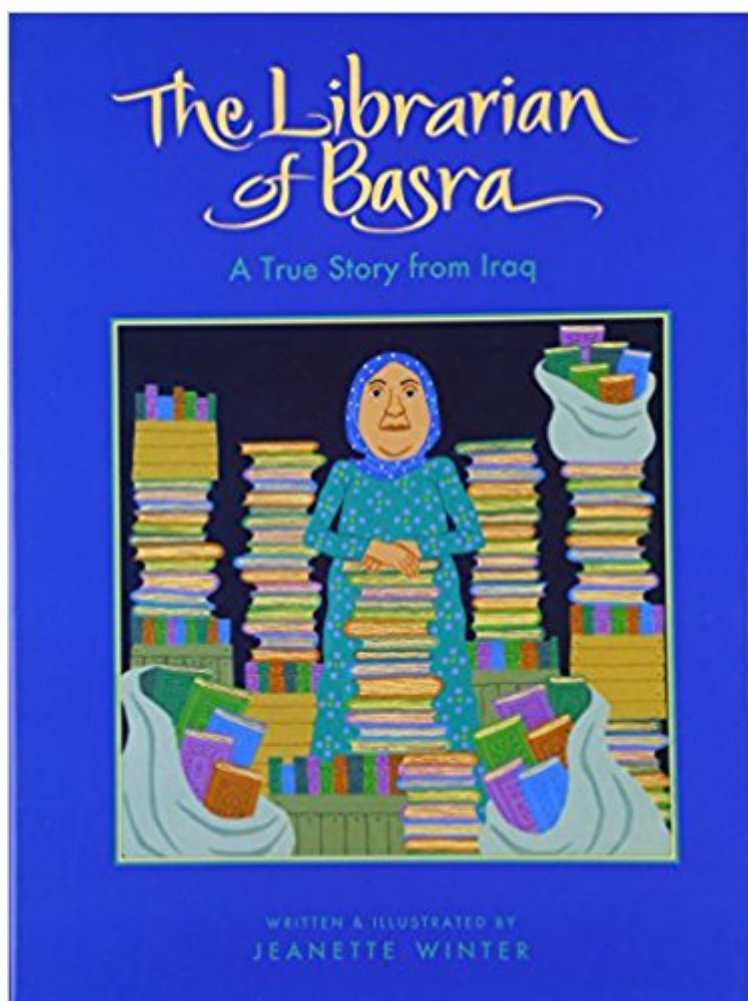


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The Librarian Of Basra: A True Story From Iraq



Synopsis

"In the Koran, the first thing God said to Muhammad was 'Read.'"^{*} --Alia Muhammad Baker
Alia Muhammad Baker is a librarian in Basra, Iraq. For fourteen years, her library has been a meeting place for those who love books. Until now. Now war has come, and Alia fears that the library--along with the thirty thousand books within it--will be destroyed forever. In a war-stricken country where civilians--especially women--have little power, this true story about a librarian's struggle to save her community's priceless collection of books reminds us all how, throughout the world, the love of literature and the respect for knowledge know no boundaries. Illustrated by Jeanette Winter in bright acrylic and ink. Includes an author's note. ^{*}From the New York Times, July 27, 2003

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 640L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 32 pages

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers; 1 edition (January 1, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0152054456

ISBN-13: 978-0152054458

Product Dimensions: 8 x 0.4 x 10.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 64 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #34,360 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #15 in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Middle East](#) #21 in [Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > Military & Wars](#) #49 in [Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > Jobs & Careers](#)

Age Range: 4 - 7 years

Grade Level: Kindergarten - 3

Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 2-4 - When war seemed imminent, Alia Muhammad Baker, chief librarian of Basra's Central Library, was determined to protect the library's holdings. In spite of the government's refusal to help, she moved the books into a nearby restaurant only nine days before the library burned to the ground. When the fighting moved on, this courageous woman transferred the 30,000 volumes to her and her friends' homes to await peace and the rebuilding of a new library. In telling this story, first reported in the New York Times on July 27, 2003, by Shaila K. Dewan,

Winter artfully achieves a fine balance between honestly describing the casualties of war and not making the story too frightening for young children. The text is spare and matter-of-fact. It is in the illustrations, executed in acrylic and ink in her signature style, that Winter suggests the impending horror. The artist uses color to evoke mood, moving from a yellow sky to orange, to deep maroon during the bombing, and then blues and pinks with doves flying aloft as the librarian hopes for a brighter future. Palm trees, architecture, dress, and Arabic writing on the flag convey a sense of place and culture. Although the invading country is never mentioned, this is an important story that puts a human face on the victims of war and demonstrates that a love of books and learning is a value that unites people everywhere. - Marianne Saccardi, Norwalk Community College, CT
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Gr. 3-5. On the heels of Winter's September Roses [BKL Ag 04]^B the author-illustrator isolates another true story of everyday heroism against a tragic backdrop. Books "are more precious than mountains of gold" to Basra librarian Alia Muhammad Baker. When "the beast of war" looms on the horizon, she and willing friends remove more than 30,000 volumes from the library and store them in their homes, preventing the collection's destruction when a bomb hits the building. As appropriate for her audience, Winter's bright, folk-art style does much to mute the horrific realities of war. The corresponding abstraction in the text, however, may give many readers pause. While an endnote explains that the "invasion of Iraq reached Basra on April 6, 2003," the nature of the crisis rocking Baker's homeland is left vague, and the U.S.'s role in the depicted events is never mentioned. At the same time, certain images--among them, silhouetted figures in robes fleeing from ominous tanks and jets--carry a pointed commentary that will require sensitivity when presenting this to children of deployed parents. Still, the librarian's quiet bravery serves as a point of entry into a freighted topic, and young readers will be glad to learn that a portion of the book's sales will go toward helping rebuild Basra's library. Jennifer Mattson
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Beautiful but sad story, made all the more poignant because it is true.

Great product, awesome seller. Recommend to all! A++++++

Excellent.

thank you. perfect.

We all are hearing much about war. It's a very scary thing. This beautiful book helps us understand something about war and about courage. It is in our church library and seems to talk to our children.

I recently asked my seven year old granddaughter what her favorite school subject was and she immediately said, "Library, because there are so many books there and I love to read." A few days later I read the review of "The Librarian of Basra" in the Washington Post and decided this was the perfect book for her. I just read it myself today and can't wait to share it with Maria. I am also going to order a copy for her school library because I think it sends a double message - the importance of books in our lives and the terrible effects of war on everyone. Jeanette Winter's illustrations are beautiful. I would truly recommend this book to elementary school children.

Borrowed this from the library. I found it.. different. Might not have shelled out for it had the kids not fervently insisted they wanted it at home "forever". Wonder what they found so interesting - the bright colors, toned-down pictures of wartime, the light prose, the minimalist neat artwork, or the hopeful tone running subtly throughout? Whatever it was, I bought it, and they're still going back to it ever so often. So it was worth it... I guess. (PS. the fact that it's a current world affair also probably plays into the interest factor, but hey, for reading time - whatever works!!)

I use this with my 6th grade students. The artwork is lovely and the story inspiring. They love a true life tale! This one had them thinking and asking questions and connecting with the risk this woman took.

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