



Educator's Toolkit

Ramadan FAQ

Introduction

Ramadan is considered the holiest month of the year for Muslims. In Ramadan, Muslims fast from food and drink during the sunlit hours as a means of learning self-control, gratitude, and compassion for those less fortunate. Ramadan is a month of intense spiritual rejuvenation with a heightened focus on devotion, during which Muslims spend extra time reading the Qur'an and performing special prayers. Those unable to fast, such as pregnant or nursing women, the sick, or elderly people and children, are exempt from fasting.

When does Ramadan take place?

Ramadan is the 9th month of the Islamic calendar, which is based on a 12-month lunar year of approximately 354 days. Because the lunar year is 11 days shorter than the solar year, each lunar month moves 11 days earlier each year. It takes 33 solar years for the lunar months to complete a full cycle and return to the same season. The month traditionally begins and ends based on the sighting of the first crescent of the new moon. During this month, Muslims fast from pre-dawn until sunset, as a means to grow in God-consciousness and moral excellence.

The Length and Purpose of Fasting

Muslims fast from pre-dawn to sunset, a fast of between 11-16 hours depending on the time of year for a period of 29-30 days. The fast of Ramadan entails forgoing food and drink. For Muslims, Ramadan is a time to train themselves both physically and spiritually by avoiding any negative acts such as gossiping, backbiting, lying, or arguing. Muslims welcome Ramadan as an opportunity for self-reflection, and spiritual improvement. Ramadan is also a highly social time as Muslims invite each other to break fast together and meet for prayers at the mosque.

The ultimate goal of fasting is gaining greater God-consciousness, in Arabic, *taqwa*, signifying a state of constant awareness of God. From this awareness a person should gain discipline, self-restraint and a greater incentive to do good and avoid wrong. In commemoration of the revelation of the Qur'an, Muslim's holy book, which began during the month of Ramadan, Muslims attempt to read the entire book during Ramadan and gather nightly at mosques to hold special prayers during which the entire Qur'an is recited by the end of the month.

Who Fasts

All Muslims who have reached puberty are obliged to fast. However, for people in situations where fasting would be a hardship, they are exempted from fasting. This

includes anyone who is sick or traveling; women who are pregnant, nursing, or on their menses; or older people who are too weak or ill to fast. Anyone who is exempted must make up the fast later, except for those who cannot fast due to age or chronic illness. Instead, they can feed a poor person for every day of fasting they miss.

Children

While children are not required to fast until they reach puberty, it is customary for children beginning around seven years of age to perform limited or symbolic fasting such as fasting half days or on weekends. This trains them gradually and helps to engender a sense of inclusion during the month-long observance. Mosques often give special recognition to children who are fasting their first full day or first Ramadan.

Family Routines

A Muslim family usually rises about 5:00 a.m. before the first of dawn and eats a modest, breakfast-like meal called *suhur*. After the meal, the family performs the morning prayer, and depending on the circumstances, the family goes back to bed or begins the day. Particularly during the long summer months, people often take a nap in the late afternoon after work or school. At sunset, family members break the fast with a few dates and water, and depending on the culture, other light foods such as soup, appetizers or fruit. This is referred to as *iftar* which means “breaking the fast.” After performing the sunset prayers, the family eats dinner. Inviting guests to break the fast or going to someone else’s house for *iftar* is very common in Ramadan. Many families then go to the mosque for the night prayer and a special Ramadan prayer called *taraweeh*. After completing their prayers, the families return home around 11:45 p.m. (All of these times vary depending on the time of year, with shorter days in the winter and longer days in the summer.)

Eid al-Fitr

At the end of Ramadan, Muslims celebrate one of their major holidays called Eid al-Fitr or the “Festival of the Breaking of the Fast.” Children traditionally receive new clothes, money or gifts from parents, relatives and friends. A special prayer and sermon are held the morning of Eid day, followed by a community celebration usually in a park or large hall. Food, games and presents for children are important parts of the festivities, as friends and family spend the day socializing, eating and reuniting with old acquaintances.

Ramadan Resources

Article: [9 Ways to Support Students During Ramadan](#)

Source: We Are Teachers

Article: [In Consideration of Ramadan](#)

Source: Teaching Tolerance website

Article: [How teachers can support students during Ramadan](#)

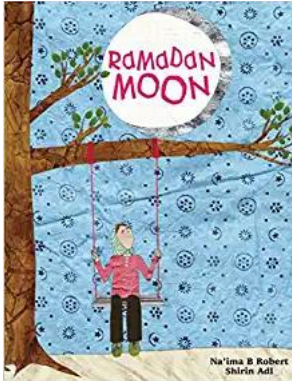
Source: PBS Newshour

PBS Learning Media

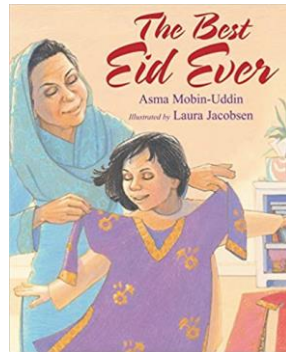
Grades	Title	Description
K-4	Eid al Fitr All About the Holidays	Eid al Fitr is a three-day holiday that ends the Islamic month of Ramadan. Known as the "Festival of breaking fast," Muslims will celebrate with family and food after the end of a long fast, joining with one another for prayer and other traditions.
K-5	Peg+Cat Eid-Al-Adha Adventure	Join Peg+Cat as they learn about the Muslim holiday Eid-Al-Adha from their friends Yasmina and Amir. In addition to exploring how Muslim's celebrate the holiday, students also explore the mathematical concepts of less than (<) and more than (>), fractions, and how to create equal amounts.
K-4	Eid Al-Adha All About the Holidays	Eid Al-Adha is a yearly four-day celebration of the Islamic faith remembering the story of Abraham. Known as the feast of sacrifice, the celebration centers around sacrifice to Allah.
1-8	Ramadan	Nadia, a young Muslim-American girl, describes the celebration of Ramadan, in which Muslims fast, or go without food and drink, during the day. She narrates a day in the life of her family of parents and siblings as she completes the fast for a whole day. Nadia explains when Ramadan happens, what happens from the beginning to the end of the day, and what it means for adults and children. The video ends with a description of the holiday celebration that ends the fasting
6-12	Ramadan is Here Religion and Ethics Weekly	"Ramadan is that really intense, focused way of fasting and working on our own selves," says Rahim Ulla, "and then working on our relationships to others and ultimately to God."

Here are some books to introduce Ramadan to students of various ages:

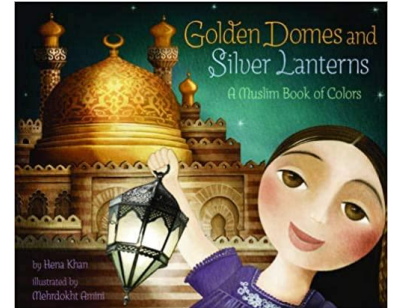
[Ramadan Moon](#)



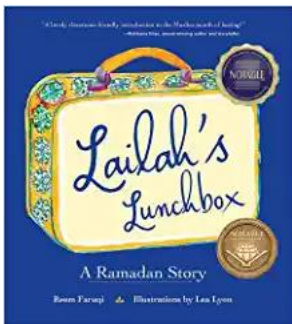
[The Best Eid Ever](#)



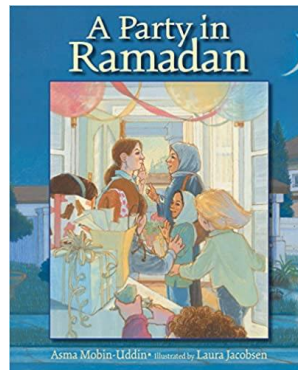
[Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns](#)



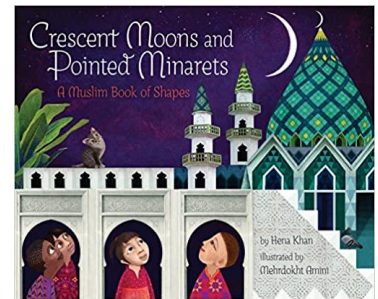
[Lailah's Lunch Box](#)



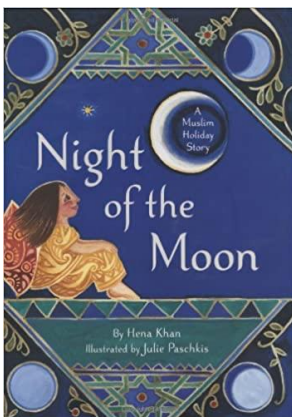
[A Party in Ramadan](#)



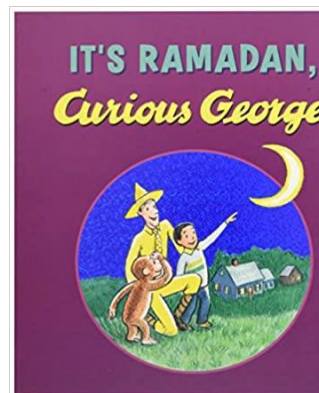
[Crescent Moons and Pointed Minarets: A Muslim Book of Shapes](#)



[The Night of the Moon](#)



[It's Ramadan, Curious George](#)



[The Proudest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family](#)

