

Reading Time (The Chn Book Council of Australia)

Hijabi Girl

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YOUNGER READERS

Hazel Edwards and Ozge Alkan (text), Serena Geddes (illus), *Hijabi Girl*, Bookpod, March 2016, 49pp., \$15.00 (pbk) ISBN 9780994358363

The countdown to Book Week is on and parents and students are already planning their costumes for the annual parade. It's great fun. The kids love to dress up as their favourite book characters (or superheroes and fairies...) and it's an opportunity to promote and celebrate reading. But what costume works with a hijab? That's what one student asked teacher librarian Ozge Alkan one year. Alkan looked, but came up short on suggestions. So she approached author Hazel Edwards and together they wrote *Hijabi Girl* – to give hijab-wearing students a go-to costume for Book Week.

Hijabi Girl introduces readers to Melek, a likable primary school-aged girl, just like any other, who also happens to wear a hijab. Melek is friendly, a good reader, loves Aussie Rules and is keen to do well at school. She befriends a new girl, Tien, who is from Vietnam.

The story takes the reader through the usual school activities, showing that while the girls may have different cultural backgrounds, they're just like everyone else, with the same schoolgirl hopes and aspirations.

There's typical classroom lessons, where Melek and the other girls at her table are keen to earn the most points and win a prize. At lunch-time Melek and Tien show readers their traditional foods. During swimming lessons Melek wears a full-body swimsuit, is in the top swimming group and even saves a classmate who gets into trouble in the water. And she uses her knowledge of books to come up with a last-minute costume for a classmate for the Book Week parade.

The cover is bright and fun and there are black and white illustrations interspersed throughout the book to help keep the attention of new readers. *Hijabi Girl* is aimed at readers aged 8 and older.

Teaching resources are available from the [author's website](#).

Reviewed by Carissa Mason