

Behind My Doors

written by Hena Khan

illustrated by Nabila Adani

About the Book

Genre: Nonfiction

Format: Hardcover, 40 pages

ISBN: 9781643794235

Reading Level: Grade 4

Interest Level: Grades PreK–6

Guided Reading Level: R

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: Cultural Diversity, Diversity, Dreams & Aspirations, History, Muslim/Muslim American Interest, Nonfiction, Religious Diversity, Women's History, Nonfiction Juvenile Literature

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/behind-my-doors

SYNOPSIS

Come learn about the oldest operating library in existence that was originally founded by a Muslim woman in 859!

Merhaba! Welcome! Meet Al-Qarawiyyin Library--the oldest library in the world. Do you want to see what magical treasures are behind its doors? You'll find special reading rooms where young and old gathered to discuss, debate, and discover the world. And, most important, the collection of books that hold knowledge more valuable than any jewels! Open its doors, unlock its story, and discover an adventure that only a library can share.

Told from the unique perspective of the library, award-winning author Hena Khan, along with luminous illustrations by Nabila Adani, bring to readers *Behind My Doors*, a charming ode to the magical wonders of each and every library.

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

BACKGROUND

Author's Note from Hena Khan

There's an old saying in Fez, Morocco, that people without books are like coppersmiths without tools. In 2019, I stood in a busy plaza in the old medina of Fez, in front of the doors of the Al-Qarawiyyin (pronounced "awl kar-ah-WEEin") Library. I stared in awe at the building I had been researching and hoping to visit for years. As someone who grew up in my local library, I wanted to share the magic and wonder of this special place, which was founded by a Muslim woman.

In 859, Fatima al-Fihri, the daughter of a wealthy merchant, used her inheritance to build Al-Qarawiyyin Mosque; a school that eventually grew to become Al-Qarawiyyin University, the first degree-granting university in the world; and a library that served both institutions. Al-Qarawiyyin Library is now known as the oldest continuously operating library in existence.

Some of the important transfer of knowledge between North Africa and Europe throughout the Middle Ages is attributed to the library, which remained a significant center of learning for hundreds of years. However, after part of the university moved outside Fez in the 1960s, the library building was used less and needed serious repairs.

Aziza Chaouni, an architect who grew up in Fez, remembers passing by the library doors as a child. In 2012, she was hired by the government of Morocco to restore the building. Dr. Chaouni led the effort to reinforce the walls, add lighting, build a canal to divert water under the building, and help digitize the books. She shared with this book's creators that since there weren't existing blueprints for the library, the construction site was a mystery. Her team found that the library started inside the mosque and grew into two buildings, then three buildings. They discovered different layers as she figured out how to preserve it.

Dr. Chaouni's own great-grandfather traveled for days by donkey from his village to Al-Qarawiyyin University, where he spent countless hours in the library. In our conversation, she shared that her work felt like a tribute to him. The library reopened in 2017, and Dr. Chaouni is proud to preserve a part of her heritage and the legacy of Fatima al-Fihri. She hopes that the history of this special place will be widely known, and that the library will be accessible to all—for the next thousand years and beyond.

Behind My Doors Glossary

Medina (meh-DEEN-ah): the word means "city" or "town" in modern Arabic, but it is also used to refer to the oldest part of a city in North Africa, which usually includes narrow streets, lots of historic sites, and markets.

Merhaba (MER-ha-ba): a casual greeting in Arabic, such as "hello."

Quran (kor-ahn): the Muslim holy book.

Behind My Doors References

Bennett, Charlie, Ameet Doshi, Wendy Hagenmaier, and Fred Rascoe (hosts). "Reimagining the Oldest Library in the World." *Lost in the Stacks* on *WREK Radio*, Episode 308 (June 24, 2016). <http://hdl.handle.net/1853/55377>

Lewis, Danny. "The World's Oldest Working Library Will Soon Open Its Doors to the Public." *Smithsonian Magazine*, July 13, 2016. www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/worlds-oldest-working-library-willsoon-open-to-the-public-180959670/.

Marozzi, Justin. *Islamic Empires: Fifteen Cities That Define a Civilization*. Penguin UK, August 29, 2019.

More about the Al-Qarawiyyin Library

The Al-Qarawiyyin Library is the world's oldest library, established in 859. For more resources and articles about the Al-Qarawiyyin Library, see CNN's "Al-Qarawiyyin – world's oldest library – gets facelift in Fez, Morocco" (<https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/worlds-oldest-library-al-qarawiyyin/index.html>), *Time's* "Al-Qarawiyyin Library Is One of the World's Greatest Places" (<https://time.com/collection/worlds-greatest-places-2018/5366659/al-qarawiyyin-library-fez-morocco/>) and Literary Hub's "The World's Oldest Library: Founded by a Woman, Restored By a Woman" (<https://lithub.com/the-worlds-oldest-library-founded-by-a-woman-restored-by-a-woman/>).

Interview with Hena Khan about *Behind My Doors* and *Zain's Super Friday*

Listen to the conversation between Hena Khan and *Booklist's* Books for Youth Editor, Sarah Hunter (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FQ20kTrPq4>) about the process behind developing her books, her two most recent being *Zain's Super Friday* (leeandlow.com/books/zain-s-super-friday) and *Behind My Doors*.

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- What is a library? What can you find in a library? Do you visit the library in your community? What books do you like to read at the library? Do you ever take books home? What are some ways people use libraries?
- Why are libraries important? How are they essential places in your community?

- When you visit a library, how does it make you feel? Do you like visiting the library?
- What is a librarian? What does a librarian do? Do you have a memory of a librarian helping you?
- What does it mean to be resilient? How do you demonstrate resilience even though something may be challenging? Why is it important to be resilient? Do you think it can be learned? How so?
- What does it mean to be hopeful? How can you demonstrate hope during difficult times? Why do you think hope can be powerful and motivational?

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Book Title Exploration: Talk about the title of the book, *Behind My Doors*. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?

Ask students to make a prediction: Do you think this book will be fiction or nonfiction? What makes you think so? What clues help you know whether this book will be fiction or nonfiction?

Read about the author Hena Khan in the back of the book. Why do you think she wrote this book? Does it give you more insight about what the story will be about? Visit Hena's website (<https://henakhan.com/>) to learn more about her work and other titles.

Read about the illustrator Nabila Adani in the back of the book. Visit her website (<https://nabilaadani.wixsite.com/graphics>). Click on some of the examples of her work. What do you think of them? What kind of artistic style does she use in her work?

Encourage students to stop and jot down notes in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they: learn new information, see a powerful image, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or hear new words.

Have students quickly write their feelings in their notebooks during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote down those feelings and have them write journal entries about them.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- who created the Al-Qarawiyyin Library
- why the Al-Qarawiyyin Library was established
- how the Al-Qarawiyyin Library grew and who visited the library over time

- how the Al-Qarawiyyin was a place for people with different cultures, religions, and beliefs to interact and learn from each other
- what the Al-Qarawiyyin Library was known for
- what happened to the Al-Qarawiyyin Library and who helped to restore it
- why the Al-Qarawiyyin Library is a critical establishment in the community and the world
- why libraries are important and critical places in their communities today
- how Muslim women were integral to the legacy of the Al-Qarawiyyin Library

Encourage students to consider why the author, Hena Khan, would want to share with young people this story about the Al-Qarawiyyin Library.

VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Content Specific

Merhaba, Al-Qarawiyyin Library, Fez, Morocco, mosque, medina, coppersmiths, Quran, Muhammad al-Idrisi, Maimonides, Ibn Khaldun, Fez River, Fatima al-Fihri, Aziza Chaouni

Academic

plaza, courtyard, dazzled, treasures, jewels, philosopher, centuries, scholars, countless, debated, seekers, wisdom, gazed, buzz, sagged, gleamed

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Who is the narrator of the story? How do you know?
2. Where does the story take place?
3. When was the library created?
4. Who is Fatima al-Fihri?
5. How did the library grow?
6. What was the environment outside the library like? What was the environment inside the library like?
7. What was the special room? Who could enter?
8. What were the books like in the special room?
9. Who were the notable scholars that entered the library's reading rooms? What were they known for?
10. How was the library almost destroyed?
11. What ended up happening to the library over time?
12. Who is Aziza? How did her great-grandfather visit the library?
13. Who returned to the library?
14. How did Aziza help the library?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What does *Behind My Doors* teach readers about the importance of libraries? Why are libraries critical to communities, both past and present?
2. What does your local library mean to you? Do you like visiting your local or school library? How do libraries make you feel?
3. Why do you think Fatima decided to create the section for the library at the mosque? What do you think compelled her to do that? Why was this an important decision?

4. What was it like to read the story from the library's perspective? How would this book have been different if it was not told from the library's perspective? Why do you think it was important to read the library's thoughts and feelings?
5. How did the illustrations help you to envision what the library looked like? What colors did the illustrator use? What was her artistic style? How did it evoke the time and the way Hena Khan described the library and the books inside?
6. Why do you think Aziza returned to restore the library? How do you think the library influenced her life when she was a child? Why do you think she became an architect and returned to restore the library?
7. Read Hena Khan's Author's Note section in the back of the book. What does she tell young readers about why she wrote this book? What did you learn from the story from her note? Why do you think it's important to read Author's Notes after the book? What can you learn from the book that you don't get from reading the main story?
8. Why is *Behind My Doors* an important book to teach women's history? How were women critical to the success and legacy of the Al-Qarawiyyin Library?
9. *Behind My Doors* ends with, "And I'm ready for more readers, thinkers, and dreamers to come through my doors." Why do you think author Hena Khan chose to end the story with this sentence? What do you think this means? What do you think is in store for the library's future?

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. What is one big thought that you have after reading this book? What is your takeaway from this book? What would you tell a friend about this book?
2. What do you think Hena Khan's message is to the reader? Think about possible motivations behind the author's intentions to write this story. What do you think she wanted to share with readers?
3. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make between the book and your own life? What did you relate to and how did they make you think of your own childhood or growing-up experiences?
4. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while reading *Behind My Doors*? Why did you make those connections?
5. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make between the text and/or art in the book and what you have seen happening in the world, such as on television, in a newspaper, or online? What in this book made you think of that?
6. Describe how resilience is a theme in the story. Despite the challenges and obstacles, the library remains active today. How did this come to be?

Multilingual Learners Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are multilingual learners (ML).

1. Assign ML students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading: 1) Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing. 2) Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about why libraries are important and what they mean to them.
5. Have students give a short talk about what they think the message of *Behind My Doors* is.
6. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose Multilingual Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.
7. Keep a list of all the Arabic words and their meanings mentioned in *Behind My Doors*. Consider displaying a chart in the classroom for students' reference.
8. Consider consulting www.multilinguallearningtoolkit.org/ for more ideas on how to support Multilingual Learners.

Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. How do you think libraries make people feel? Libraries were important to both Fatima and Aziza, who worked to create and restore the Al-Qarawiyyin Library. How do you think libraries

made them feel? Why do you think scholars desired to work in this library? Why are libraries integral places in our communities?

1. Design a poster encouraging your local community to come to the library. What would you put on the poster? How would you encourage others to come and support the library? Students can design the poster and display it in the classroom or around the school to showcase their support for their local and school libraries.
1. Aziza returned to the library in her adulthood after she became an architect to restore the Al-Qarawiyyin Library. Is there a place in your community that you would like to restore? How does that place make you feel? What would you like to fix? Why would you like to fix it? How can you work with others in your community to help?
1. Which illustration in *Behind My Doors* do you think best shows an emotion? Explain which emotion you think it is. How does the artist portray that emotion?
1. Choose an emotion such as happiness, fear, hope, sadness, and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *Behind My Doors*.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Read Hena Khan's other Lee & Low titles, *Under My Hijab* ([leeandlow.com/books/under-my-hijab](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/under-my-hijab)) and *Zain's Super Friday* ([leeandlow.com/books/zain-s-super-friday](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/zain-s-super-friday)) alongside *Behind My Doors*.** As students read the titles, have them think about the following questions: are there similar themes in both books? What do you think Hena's message is in her titles? What do students connect with, or learn from, in the titles? Start with a graphic organizer outlining the details, and then have students discuss in small groups or write or draw a reaction piece to their experience after reading *Under My Hijab*, *Zain's Super Friday*, and *Behind My Doors*.
- **Have students come up with a list of questions to ask author Hena Khan.** What do students want to know about the process behind writing a children's book? How did she come up with her idea to write *Behind My Doors*? What about her other books? Why did she want to write a book about the Al-Qarawiyyin Library? Consider contacting Hena and

inviting her to your school, library, or other relevant setting for an author visit in person or virtually (<https://www.henakhan.com/book-visit>).

- **Watch the interview with Hena Khan in the Background section of this guide, and have students answer the following questions: what did they learn from the interview with Hena that they hadn't gathered from the book?** Why did she write this story? What inspired her to write this book? Have students answer the questions in an essay and think about the message that she wanted to impart on her readers.
- **Conduct a library study featuring picture books about libraries.** Other Lee & Low titles about libraries include, *A Storyteller's Candle/La velita de los cuentos* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-storyteller-s-candle-la-velita-de-los-cuentos>), *A Library for Juana* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/a-library-for-juana>), and *Bookjoy, Wordjoy* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/bookjoy-wordjoy>). Have students answer the following questions: how are libraries featured in the books? Why are libraries important in these books? How do the libraries make the people and characters in the books feel? How are the libraries presented in the illustrations? Other picture books about libraries are featured in the Children's Library Lady blog post, "Uncover the Magic of Reading: Picture Books About Libraries and Librarians" (<https://childrenslibrarylady.com/books-about-libraries/>).
- **Invite your local and/or school librarian to your classroom.** Before the visit, have students think about different questions to ask the librarian. PBS' Lesson Plan "How to Interview Someone" (<https://thinktv.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/how-to-interview-someone-lesson-plan/media-arts-elementary-grades/>) provides tips for students on how to interview an expert and how to take notes during the interview. What do students want to learn from the librarian? Why did the librarian choose this profession? How can the librarian help them learn more about their profession and what they do for their community?
- **Write a thank-you letter to a librarian.** Have students think about a librarian that's helped them before, whether it was at their local public or school library. What do they want to tell the librarian? How did the librarian help them? How are librarians important in their local communities and schools? Have students share with their class, and if possible, the librarian.
- **If possible, go on a field trip to the school or local library.** ReadWriteThink's "Exploring the Library" Lesson Plan has additional ideas on different prompts and questions to ask students during the field trip (<https://www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/activities-projects/exploring-library#ResourceTabs1>). At the library, have students record their answers to the following questions: what do they see in the library? What is the first thing that they notice? What is the librarian doing? What are the people in the library doing? How does the library make them feel? What kinds of noises do they hear? How can they take books home—what is the process of getting a library card? Afterwards, have students explore the library and select books with a library card.
- **Learn more about the American Library Association (ALA)** (<https://www.ala.org/>). The American Library Association has resources dedicated to learning more about the importance of libraries and librarians (<https://www.ala.org/aasl/advocacy/resources>).

ALA also has pages dedicated to resources for children (<https://www.ala.org/tools/atoz/childrenservices/childrenservices>). Have students think about why it's important to advocate for libraries and to keep libraries in our communities, and why ALA is a critical organization to libraries.

- **Write a piece about students' connection to their library.** Students can write about going to their local and/or school library and answer the following guiding questions: how does the library make them feel? What do they like to do at the library? What kinds of books do they look for at the library? Who do they like to go to the library with? Why is the library important to them? Students can share their findings with a partner, small group, and/or the whole class.
- **Analyze the point of view of the text.** *Behind My Doors* is told from the perspective of the library. Have students learn more about point of view and perspective in writing. Grammarly's "What is Point of View in Writing, and How Does it Work?" (<https://www.grammarly.com/blog/point-of-view/>) provides different definitions about the various points of view. Have students think about what the story would be like if it was told from the perspective of Fatima or written as a nonfiction text in 3rd person. Afterwards, have students play with point of view in their own writing and select a building to write a story about from that building's perspective. Why did students select that building? What was it like to write a story writing from the perspective of that building? Students can also refer to *School's First Day of School* (Roaring Book Press) for other ideas on how to write from a building's perspective.
- **Examine the figurative language used in *Behind My Doors*.** Have students go on a figurative language scavenger hunt in *Behind My Doors*. Refer to Read Write Think's "Figurative Language Resource Page" as a tool for students to use during their search (http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson79/figresource.pdf). Create a chart with different rows for figurative language terms (i.e. simile, metaphor) and students can fill it in with specific examples from *Behind My Doors*. How did the author use figurative language to set the tone of the book? Afterwards, students can experiment using figurative language in their own writing inspired by the book.
- **Have students think about expository nonfiction versus narrative nonfiction.** How was reading *Behind My Doors* different from reading a newspaper article about the Al-Qarawiyyin Library? Have students read the article, "The World's Oldest Working Library Will Soon Open Its Doors to the Public" from the Smithsonian magazine (<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/worlds-oldest-working-library-will-soon-open-to-the-public-180959670/>). Have students create a Venn Diagram with the headings, "Narrative Nonfiction: *Behind My Doors*" and "Expository Nonfiction: 'The World's Oldest Working Library Will Soon Open Its Doors to the Public.'" Students can compare the different formats of the texts and the information they learn in both. What did they learn from both texts? What was it like to take in information from a picture book about the Al-Qarawiyyin Library versus a newspaper article about it?
- **In an essay, poem, or other written format, have students share something about a place in their community that's important to them.** What place did they

select? What do they enjoy about that place? Fatima in the story loved spending time in the Al-Qarawiyyin Library. Is there something that students enjoy about this place in their community that makes them feel good? Why does it make them feel that way?

- **Conduct a literature unit on picture books with Muslim characters and books that will inspire pride in Muslim identity** (<https://www.hautehijab.com/blogs/hijab-fashion/16-childrens-books-that-will-inspire-pride-in-their-muslim-identity>). What do students learn from each of the books? How is Muslim identity presented and how are Muslim characters portrayed? What traditions or customs are shown? What did students learn from reading each of the books? Why are these books essential to have in a library? Other Lee & Low picture book titles with Muslim characters and people include *King for a Day* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/king-for-a-day>), *Coming to America* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/coming-to-america>), *Twenty-Two Cents* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/twenty-two-cents>), *Malala Yousafzai: Warrior with Words* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/malala-yousafzai>), *Growing Peace* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/growing-peace>), *Under My Hijab* ([leeandlow.com/books/under-my-hijab](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/under-my-hijab)), and *Zain's Super Friday* ([leeandlow.com/books/zain-s-super-friday](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/zain-s-super-friday)).

Social Studies/Geography

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Learn about other historical libraries around the world.** Some articles featuring libraries include “The Best Libraries in the World” (<https://www.thebestcolleges.org/amazing-libraries/>), “The Most Significant Libraries of the Ancient World” (<https://www.worldatlas.com/ancient-world/most-significant-libraries-of-the-ancient-world.html>), “Beautiful Libraries Around the World” (<https://www.travelandleisure.com/culture-design/architecture-design/worlds-most-beautiful-libraries-design>), “11 Public Libraries Invaluable to World History” (<https://www.oldest.org/culture/historic-libraries/>) and “8 Legendary Ancient Libraries” (<https://www.history.com/news/8-impressive-ancient-libraries>). Have students select one of the libraries from their research, and conduct a thorough investigation about the library by answering the following questions: where is the library? When was it established? Who helped to create the library? What kind of works can be found in the library? Can you still visit this library today? How is it important to its community? Students can create informational posters with their findings to display in their classroom.
- **Conduct a research project about Fatima al-Fihri and Aziza Chaoui.** Divide students into two groups, dedicated to learning more about Fatima and Aziza. Some resources to get students started include:
 - **Fatima al-Fihri:** <https://manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/blog/2018/03/08/fatima-al-fihri-founder-worlds-first-university/>; <https://www.whyislam.org/fatima-al-fihri-founder-of-worlds-very-first-university/>
 - **Aziza Chaoui:** <https://www.azizachaouniprojects.com/>; https://www.ted.com/speakers/aziza_chaoui

- Students can answer the following questions: what was this person known for? How did they both influence the success of the Al-Qarawiyyin Library? Why are their accomplishments important for their time, whether it's in the past or present-day? How are they important female figures? Students can share what they learned about Fatima and Aziza with the other group and compare what it was like for Fatima in 859 and Aziza in helping the library come to life today.
- **As a follow-up activity, research famous Muslim women, past and present** (<https://www.1001inventions.com/womens-day/>) (<https://en.vogue.me/culture/empowering-muslim-women/>). Have students select one of the women and answer the following questions: what is this woman known for? What time did she live in? How was she important during her time? How is she known today? Students can create posters detailing their findings to share with a partner, small group, or the whole class.
- **Learn more about the researchers featured in the story, Muhammad al-Idrisi, Maimonides and Ibn Khaldun.** Divide students into groups dedicated to learning about each of the scholars. Some resources below include:
 - **Muhammad al-Idrisi:** <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/al-idrisi/> https://science.missouristate.edu/_Files/PosterMuhammadAl-Idrisi.pdf
 - **Maimonides:** <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/maimonides/>
 - **Ibn Khaldun:** <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ibn-Khaldun>
- Have students answer the following questions: what was this person known for? How were they influential in their field? In what time did they live? What is their legacy, and what are they known for today?

Art/Media

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Have students come up with questions for an interview with the book's illustrator, Nabila Adani.** What is the process behind creating the illustrations for a children's book? What medium did she choose to create the illustrations? Why? How does her work showcase the themes of the book? Visit Nabila's website for more information about her and her work (<https://nabilaadani.wixsite.com/graphics>).
- **Encourage students to select the illustration from *Behind My Doors* that resonated with them the most.** Have students write a reflection about the illustration. What stood out to them? How did it make them feel? What did it make them think about?
- **Design a library.** Students can design their own library. Have them think about the following questions: what would their library look like? What kinds of books would they have in their dream library? Where would people sit? What would the shelves look like? Students can create their library with appropriate materials in the classroom (crayons, markers, collage, etc). Students can display their pieces in the classroom for others to see.

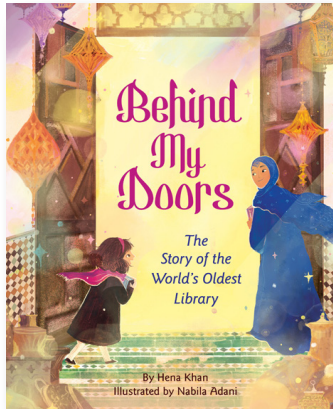
School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Encourage students to interview family members about how libraries are important to them.** Both Fatima and Aziza had fond memories of the library. Do their family members visit the library? Did they visit the library during their childhood? What kind of books did they like to check out?
- **If possible, have students visit their local library with a caregiver and check books out with a public library card.** AFT's "10 Tips for Taking Your Child to the Library" (<https://www.aft.org/ae/fall2023/obrien>) has ideas on the best ways to utilize your time at the library together. ALA's Family Engagement also provides resources and tips on engaging families with libraries (<https://www.ala.org/pla/initiatives/familyengagement>).
- **Provide students with the list of texts about libraries and encourage students and families to check out the books at their public library together.** What did students and families learn about libraries from these books? How do libraries make them feel? What kinds of books do they like to check out at the library? How can they use librarians as a resource for learning about new books?



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hena Khan is the author of multiple children's books, many of which focus on contemporary Muslim life, including *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns; Under My Hijab;* and *Amina's Voice*, which was named to multiple best-of-the-year lists. Born and raised in Maryland, she now lives near Washington, DC, with her family. Please visit her online at henakhan.com and follow her at [@henakhanbooks](https://twitter.com/henakhanbooks).

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Nabila Adani is an illustrator who briefly worked as a product designer before moving to the United States to study children's book illustration. She now enjoys illustrating different cultures from around the world for children. She lives in Jakarta, Indonesia. You can see more of her work at nabilaadani.wixsite.com/graphics.

Reviews

"The library's role in the history of scholarship is well established, and readers will have no trouble extending the thought that its purpose as a place "to sit, think, and dream big" encompasses all of its descendants."—*Booklist*

"A lovingly told ode to libraries, Islamic intellectual history, storytelling, and the role of women in Muslim history."—*The Horn Book*

"Khan's first-person prose imbues the subject with both intimacy and a sense of majesty; readers will come away awed at the role of libraries as repositories of knowledge. A moving tribute to a cultural treasure."—*Kirkus Reviews*

ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

LEE & LOW BOOKS is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at leeandlow.com.