



Editorial - May 2002

By *admin*

Created *Oct '09*

Article Author:

[Rosemary Stones](#) [1]

[134](#) [2]

Article Category:

Editorial

Byline:

News and comment from the Editor.

This issue of **BfK** carries two articles which continue our focus, following the events of September 11th, <!--break-->on the depiction of Arabs and of Islam in books for children. In our last issue Ann Lazim of the Centre for Language in Primary Education discussed picture books and fiction and the images they convey to young readers of the everyday lives of Arabs and of the conflict in the Middle East. She concluded that, while cultural stereotypes still abound, some books with positive images can be found, if not without difficulty.

In the same issue, writer Shereen Pandit discussed Deborah Ellis's **The Breadwinner**, the first children's novel to be set in Afghanistan and to reflect life under Taliban rule. She found that, given the sensitivity of the political moment and the need for a non-biased view of events, it is not as politically and historically balanced as it could have been.

Apparently Pandit's assessment of **The Breadwinner** was the only one the book has received in the British press not to be wholly favourable. Was it, however, the only critical assessment to be written by a reviewer who is well informed not just about children and their books but also about the recent history of Afghanistan? Shereen Pandit also happens to have been brought up a Muslim. If so, this raises important questions for children's book reviewing about political and cultural perspectives in the discussion of such titles. It also raises questions about the place of experts in the reviewing of children's books, whether fiction or non-fiction, which encompass specialist subject areas.

This issue is also touched on in respect of non-fiction in the Briefing pages of this issue to do with OUP's acknowledgement of mistakes in its **The Young Oxford Encyclopedia of Science** following Felix Pirani's two-star review in **BfK** No.133.

BfK has now invited Shereen Pandit to discuss Latifa's **My Forbidden Face**, an autobiographical account by a young Afghani woman of her teenage years under Taliban rule, the first such account by a Muslim rather than by a Westerner. Meanwhile, the centuries old cultural and historical connections between East and West are underlined by Neil Philip in his history of *The Arabian Nights*. As violence continues to escalate in the Middle East, the acknowledgement of such shared connections has never been more important.



[Rosemary_Stones_7_0.jpg](#) [3]

Rosemary Stones

Page Number:

3

Source URL (retrieved on Dec '21): <http://pop.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/134/childrens-books/articles/editorial/editorial-may-2002>

Links:

[1] <http://pop.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/rosemary-stones>

[2] <http://pop.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/134>

[3] http://pop.booksforkeeps.co.uk/sites/default/files/Rosemary_Stones_7_0.jpg