



From Somalia with Love

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My name is Safia Dirie. My family has always been my mum, Hoyo, and my two older brothers, Ahmed and Abdullahi. I don't really remember Somalia - I'm an East London girl, through and through. But now Abo, my father, is coming from Somalia to live with us, after 12 long years. How am I going to cope? Safia knows that there will be changes ahead but nothing has prepared her for the reality of dealing with Abo's cultural expectations, her favourite brother Ahmed's wild ways, and the temptation of her cousin Firdous's party-girl lifestyle. Safia must come to terms with who she is - as a Muslim, as a teenager, as a poet, as a friend, but most of all as a daughter to a father she has never known. Safia must find her own place in the world, so both father and daughter can start to build the relationship they both long for. *From Somalia With Love* is one girl's quest to discover who she is - a story that, while rooted in Somali and Muslim life, strikes a chord with young people everywhere.

From Somalia with Love Details

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From Reader Review From Somalia with Love for online ebook

Salsabrarian says

As far as I know there is a dearth of youth fiction depicting the Somalian immigrant experience, so this is a welcome find. Safia is 14 and her family lives in the projects (or estates) of London. After 12 years, the family is reunited with her long-lost Abo (father) and his re-inclusion in their lives shifts the family dynamic. Safia questions her role in the family and the trajectory of her life, and turns to cousin Firdous, the family bad girl, as a confidant. The characters and narrative could use a substantial fleshing out for a more complete story, but as a contribution to the field this is a good pick.

Ubalstech says

Safia Darie is a 14 years old Londener. She is also an immigrant and a Somali Muslim. For 12 years, she has been living in a council estate with her mom and two brothers. Then the family receives word that Safia's father is alive and is about to reunite with them in England.

This news sends Safia into a tailspin. She worries how her father will react to the Westernized society his children are living in, how he will react to her wild brother Ahmed, and more importantly, how he will react to her. Her worst fears seem to become realized upon her father's arrival. Her mother has no time for her, her father expects her to wait on him hand and foot and Safia finds herself attracted to her cousin Firdous' westernized lifestyle.

Author Na'ima B. Robert has created nice novel about the struggles that many immigrant groups go through. It may be a little too "moral tale" at times, but that is not uncommon in this genre so you can't fault her for it. Robert treats her subject with respect and shows how immigration affects families and cultures. A good book for all teachers and libraries to pick up.

Courtney says

I think everyone can relate to Safia in this story. She deals with friend and family struggles, she starts to somewhat question her Muslim practices, and she lives the life of a normal teen.

After reading this, I have a new respect for Islam religion and Somali culture. They almost seemed to intertwine and it was hard to differentiate, but reading about Safia's life and hardships helped to relate to her and other Muslims. Their prayer rituals really intrigued me, and I like hearing about her viewpoint on hijabs. But it was her devotion to Allah that I really loved. It was a completely different perspective, especially when she is at a movie theater with a boy and feels so bad, she walks out. That is such an astounding dedication to me, and it is truly inspiring.

I thought this book had a great (although somewhat questionable for children) climax and shared some great lessons.

My favorite part is when she says, "And I thought about Firdous: the escape she had offered, how she had

seemed to have everything, how I had yearned for just a taste of what she had-and how bitter it had turned out to be."

We all sometimes desire lifestyles and belongings of others, but when you experience what they have, it's never as great as you thought it would be. To me, this is a great lesson to be thankful for what you have.

Rebecca says

Safia Dirie is a Somali girl who barely remembers Somalia. She's lived in London most of her life, with a strong family and religious community. But the return of her father, who has been separated from the family since their escape from Somalia 12 years ago, throws much of Safia's comfortable life into confusion. Her mother embraces the subservient role of wife, her brother rebels against her father's authority, and perhaps worst of all, her father seems to crave no relationship with Safia beyond her bringing him tea. When she has a fight with her best friend and falls in with her "wild" cousin, Safia's adherence to tradition and faith are tested.

The writing in this book isn't stellar, but it's fast and dialogue-driven, and the central conflict of how to balance old and new influences should resonate with a lot of Somali teens. Good to pair with *Does My Head Look Big In This* by Randa Abdel-Fattah. Now that we have books starring Muslim teens from Australian and British authors, let's hear from some more American authors! There wasn't too much British slang in this one, and the glossary in the back taught me many Somali and Arabic words. I also want to look up some Somali poets now.

Samra Said says

I understand it is intended for teenagers but I was really hoping for much more - it is funny though and I do think it is reliable source of information for anyone that wants to know how it's like to live as a Somali Muslim teenage girl in inner city London - so teenagers will for sure relate to Safia Dirie

Melissa says

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Review: From School Library Journal

Grade 6 Up—Safia has grown up believing her father died in the fighting in Somalia. When she finds out that he is alive and on his way to London to join the family, she is apprehensive about the difference his presence will make in her life. Though she is comfortable with her identity as a Muslim, she struggles with how her values differ from those of her rebellious brother and cousin. Her father is not prepared for his family's hybrid British-Somali culture, which causes a great deal of conflict. Safia must learn to cope with the new dynamics in her home and learn to love a father she has never known. At times, the author's intent of creating a window into Somali culture and the immigrant experience is a bit heavy-handed. The book does do a good

job of showing the richness of Somali culture as something positive and separate from the war that has torn the country apart for decades. This is a unique title that will be popular in regions that have large Somali populations or where Randa Abdel-Fattah's books are popular. A glossary of Arabic and Somali words and phrases is included, but it is unclear from which language each one comes.—Kristin Anderson, Columbus Metropolitan Library System, OH

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Recommend: I wouldn't recommend the book

Notes: Hard to read and very uneventful story line

Anne-Marie says

Safia Dirie describes herself as “a Muslim, Somali, British girl”. She lives in Tower Hamlets with her Mum and two older brothers and has no memory of the home in Mogadishu she left behind when she was only two years old. Having heard nothing from Safia’s father in 12 years, the family assumed that he had perished in the civil war along with countless other innocent victims. Yet against the odds, word gets through that he is safe and well and coming to rejoin the family in Tower Hamlets. But Safia is concerned. What is he expecting to find when he arrives? What will he make of his Westernised family? And will his long lost children be a source of pride or shame?

Kyle Turck says

From Somalia with Love is a very well-written coming of age story that centers around a teenage Somalian girl named Safia who lives with her mother and siblings in London, who's world is thrown upside-down when her assumed-to-be-dead father arrives after a 12-year absence. This book takes a very common "girl growing up and finding out who she really is" story, but since it is coming from the seldom seen perspective of a Somali Muslim refugee, it gives the book some very nice added depth.

I would recommend this book to a slightly older school crowd, maybe sticking with the middle school grades as a good starting point. While there isn't much that is considered racy in the story, it does deal with some issues that might not be suitable for the elementary ages, so I would say 6th grade and higher for this one. Still a very good read, definitely opens up your eyes to respect some different cultures.

Starsha Vang says

This is a book about a girl discovering herself. She is going through so many different things as a teenage muslim girl. In this book she is trying to find the way of life that works best for her. She wants to have the best life possible even with all of the challenges she faces. This is a good book for someone to read who is going through life choices or someone who would like to see a little more into the muslim life style.

Sarah says

A girl I know from homework volunteering liked this book, so I thought I'd check it out. Safia's conflict between Somali culture and modern London culture was worth exploring, but resolved in an easy and pat way. I felt like the author was limited to 150 pages and set everything up to resolve in the quickest way possible. Maybe a series of books about a girl like Safia would work better, but I'm not sure that publishers are clamoring for books about Somalia girls (although I know a few Somali girls who are).

If you read this, there's a glossary in the back. I didn't know that when I read it. I figured out the terms through context clues, but it would have been nice to know. But it's in the back, so I didn't know until I read the whole thing.

Terry says

This feels like a forced and abbreviated attempt at dealing with immigration of the Somali people in England. I had to read it for a class for my Masters in Education. Not genuine at all and somewhat insincere.

Michelle (Fluttering Butterflies) says

Awhile back, I read a few reviews of *From Somalia, With Love* and thought 'that sounds like a book I'd like to read' and promptly forgot about it. So I was absolutely thrilled earlier this year when Frances Lincoln offered to send me copies of both this and Na'ima B. Robert's latest book *Boy vs Girl*.

From Somalia, With Love is a really gentle and lovely story of a girl who's trying to find her place in the world. Safia left Somalia when she was very young and remembers little about it. Home is in London with her mother and her two older brothers. She still struggles with fitting in, wearing hijab and writing poetry, finding that balance between Somalian and Islamic cultures and finding the right place living in England. And everything is made more of a struggle, when her father, Abo comes to live with them after 12 years apart in Somalia.

Safia admits herself, that in some ways she feels a lot older than 14 with the amount of responsibility she has at home and in other ways she feels a lot younger than other girls her age because of her lack of experience. I loved the innocence of Safia as she deals with all the changes in her life. Her mom, Hoyo, directs all of her attention on Safia's dad. Her brothers are always arguing. Her favourite brother Ahmed doesn't see eye-to-eye with Abo. Safia begins a relationship with a cousin who has given up the hijab and has been passed between family members with the vague rumours of bad behaviour. Where does Safia fit in? And how are the broken pieces of her family going to come together again?

What I loved most about *From Somalia, With Love* is how much I was able to relate to Safia's character. She isn't sure of her position in the family after Abo's return and with that uncertainty, she begins to make decisions that are possibly not the best choices for her. I completely and utterly relate to this lack of stability causing a change in normal behaviour. Safia is really torn between this conflict with her parents and Ahmed and things just aren't right in her world until everyone is home and safe.

The most fascinating aspect of this book is this glimpse into what it's like to be a Somalian British Muslim teenager living in London. I think it's absolutely wonderful that Na'ima B. Robert is able to give a voice to a large minority group. There's a particular scene that really moved me. Safia is at a bus station, waiting for her cousin and she walks past a group of Asian teenage girls wearing hijab when a group of teenage boys come along and start harassing them for what they're wearing. One girl stands up to them only for the boy to spit in her face, and a woman witnessing this scene mutters something along the lines of 'that girl deserves it wearing that.' But mixed in with everything are all these great details of what it's like to be a Muslim girl, with the praying and the customs and Arabic greetings. It paints a very vivid picture.

The book is quite slim, and it's really only Safia that we come to see developing in any way apart from a more detailed description of Abo towards the end of the book. I would have liked to have heard more of the experiences of Safia's brothers or mother. But all in all, a wonderful little book. A gentle story of growing up and fitting in and of family.

Debbie says

An interesting peek into the daily life of a Somali Muslim teenager.

Safia has been raised in England, and lives with her mother and two older brothers. Out of the blue, she finds out that her father, who has been in Somalia, is finally coming to rejoin the family.

With the arrival of her father, the family dynamics are suddenly upside down. While Safia wants to support her mother's happiness, she feels left out and unsure of her place, especially after her favorite brother clashes with her father and runs away from home.

Safia's choices lead her to a dangerous situation. This is the part of the story that lost me, as there was some overt victim blaming. The resolution that followed was vaguely satisfying, but just didn't resonate with me. Of course, I'm an atheist, so I bring a lot of skepticism to stories where faith wins out.

Sandra Y. says

From Somalia with Love is a coming of age story that centers around a teenage Somalian girl named Safia who lives with her mother and two older brothers in London, who's world is thrown upside-down when her assumed-to-be-dead father arrives after a 12-year absence. I found this book extremely relatable as Safia battle between her upbringing and expectations as a Somali Muslim, and the world around her- who hasn't had this problem in one way or another throughout their lives. Additionally I enjoyed learning a little about the Somali Muslim culture. I would recommend this book for sixth grade and up due to some of the heavier topic addressed within the text.

W.B. Abdullah says

I'm kind of disappointed with this book, but I think, maybe I would have enjoyed it more when I was 16 and grappling with the same issues. It is, after all, a young adult book. That being said, it's refreshing as an Islamic alternative to the usual teenage chick-lit in secular stores. It's a good pick for mothers looking to

teach their hormone-charged half-children half-women to have pride in their faith. It's a solid book for Muslim youth grappling with identity (and boy!) issues. Safia is a very strong protagonist who could be a sort of role model for young Muslim girls straddling the cultural tensions between Islamic and non-Islamic cultures. Though she tries to take a walk on the wild side, Safia can't shake wear she comes from. Na'ima B. is non-preachy style, using Safia as the teaching tool for Islamic morals without brow-beating readers. Being a Muslim teenager in the West is normalized. The only hiccups for young American readers may be the British slang and Somali words used, but there's a glossary in the back. With enough drama to hold a teenager's interest and get my heart racing as well, *From Somalia, With Love* is a good read for the young adult in your life.

Moushumi Ghosh says

I was curious about how Muslim girls in Britain are growing up ever since those three British Muslim school girls ran away to join ISIS. This book though is about growing up without a father and then adjusting to him when he gets back. It's more a tale about how not to fall off the straight and narrow path as a good Muslim girl. I am glad that such books are being written even though I am not the intended audience.

Erin Sterling says

14-year-old Samia is a British Somalian Muslim teenager, trying to come to terms with her identity and how life will change when her father returns home, a father she has not seen in 10 years and was presumed dead for a long time. What I loved about the book was the honest perspective and the interweaving of Somalian Muslim phrases and the challenges and rewards of being Somalian and Muslim. However, at the same time, the writing at times felt a bit forced.

Madison Jones says

This book had a great story, and was very interesting. I would not require it for students under the age of 7th grade, just because there are some things in there that could put ideas into children's minds. I would for sure have this in my classroom if I was teaching older grades, but not so much k-6.

Kricket says

the premise is so great: safia escaped war torn somalia with her mother and two older brothers before she was old enough to have memories. her father was thought dead. safia is 14 when her family learns that abo is alive and coming to join them in east london.

unfortunately, the characters are one-dimensional stereotypes and the writing is dreadful. the characters are punished bitterly by life every time they disobey their parents or push the rules; muslims are taunted on the street for wearing hijab, but everything is resolved quickly and perfectly by obeying parents and praying. the author uses somali terms throughout, some of which she forgot to include in the glossary in the back. ugh, ugh, ugha.

Mckenzie Quade says

I do not know much about the Somalian culture so this book was of great interest to me. It made me want to look up and research more about their culture. I believe that we should teach children about racism and new cultures other than their own in the classroom at a young age so I would like to have many diverse books in my classroom in the future. This book gave great insight into the Somalian culture. It was also beneficial to have a glossary in the back of the book for terminology that some people would not be familiar with.
