

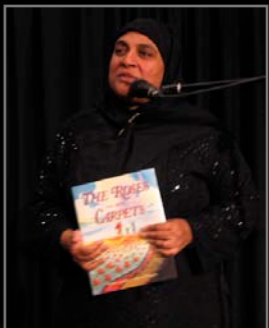
Exploring Contemporary Canadian Voices

the spoken word

Rukhsana Khan



- Khan was born in Lahore, Pakistan and immigrated to Canada with her family at the age of three.
- Award winning author and storyteller who holds all ages spellbound with tales from the Middle East and from her own life.
- Author of numerous books for children, including *The Roses in My Carpet*, which won the prestigious Janusz Korczak award.
- [Khan's website.](#)

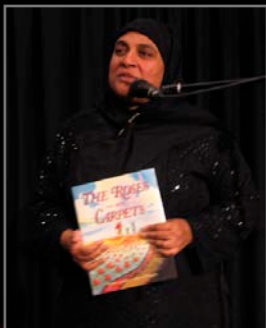


Before Viewing

Rukhsana Khan

Before viewing *The Roses in My Carpet*:

- Think of a story you loved as a child. What made it special for you? Why did you like it? Was it the plot, the characters, the setting, the theme?
- How would writing for children be different from writing for adults or teens? What are the characteristics of a children's story?
- Note that *The Roses in My Carpet* is an illustrated story for children.



View *The Roses in My Carpet*

10 minutes, 38 seconds



After Viewing

Rukhsana Khan

After viewing *The Roses in My Carpet*:

- Although the content of this story is serious and difficult – war, hunger, refugee camps, it is written for children. What makes it work well as a story for children? Comment on the themes, the characters, the plot and the narrator.
- What does the story teach us about the life the narrator describes, and what can we learn from it for our own lives?
- What is the significance of the carpet that the narrator was weaving? What do the colours represent? At the end of the story, what does the carpet represent?
- What do you think makes a good children's story in terms of characters, plot, setting, writing style, tone and point of view?
- J.K. Rowling, author of the Harry Potter stories, said: 'I'm not writing to make anyone's children feel safe.' Do you agree with her point of view? Why or why not? What is the importance of telling such stories as *The Roses in My Carpet* to a younger audience?



Background

Rukhsana Khan

- Style and tone tips for writing for children (From “[Writing Your Story: Tips on How to Write Children’s Stories](#)” by Aaron Shepard. Excerpted from “The Business of Writing for Children”.):
 - ▶ Write simply and directly, in short words, short sentences, short paragraphs.
 - ▶ Use dialogue wherever possible. Use direct quotes instead of indirect. For example, use “Go away!” instead of “He told her to go away.” Aim to make dialogue at least one-third of your story.
 - ▶ Avoid big chunks of narration – especially description. Often you can split it into smaller pieces, or convey information in dialogue. (e.g., “I like your purple hair.”)
 - ▶ Use language that creates an atmosphere or ‘tone’ suited to your story.
 - ▶ For younger children, use poetic devices like rhythm, repetition, alliteration (‘Peter Piper picked a peck’), and rhyme.
 - ▶ Avoid being cutesy, sweet, sentimental or condescending.



- WRITE a short children's story or draft an outline for a children's story (pre-writing). In this pre-writing, describe your main characters, their emotion, physical traits, the setting, and the plot. Decide on the narrator and their point of view. The strongest children's stories have well-developed themes, engaging plots, suitable structure, memorable characters, well-chosen settings, and attractive style.
- WRITE a journal entry in response to the story. Consider the kind of children's story you think needs to be written, and how you feel you, when a child, would respond to this story.
- FIND a children's story on the Internet, or bring one of your old favourites from home and do a presentation or a dramatic reading of the story. You may want to act it out with a group using props or whatever else you feel would be appropriate the story.



View *Interview
with Rukhsana
Khan (Part 1)*

8 minutes, 17 seconds



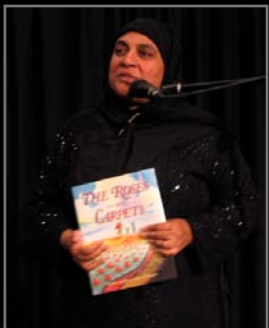
View *Interview with Rukhsana Khan (Part 2)*

7 minutes, 36 seconds



After viewing *Interview with Rukhsana Khan (Parts 1 & 2)*:

- What prompted Rukhsana Khan to start writing?
- What barriers did she have to overcome to develop as a writer?
- How does she 'get' her stories?



- [Articles on writing, publishing and promoting children's books](#)
- [What makes a good children's book?](#)



Credits

Videos – Filmed at the 2007 Words Aloud 4 Spoken Word Festival based in Durham, ON. The videos were produced/directed by Liz Zetlin and Myke Dyer.

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