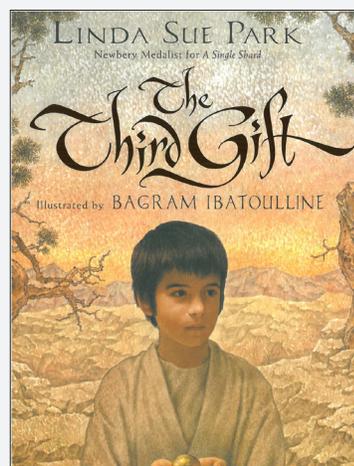
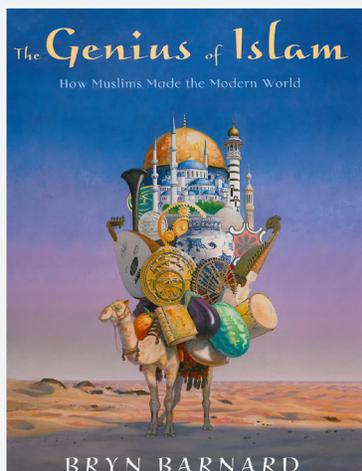


## Second Reaction: *The Third Gift and The Genius of Islam, A Child's Perspective*

Barnard, Bryn. *The Genius of Islam: How Muslims Made the Modern World*. New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2011.

Park, Linda Sue. *The Third Gift*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011.

### Emily Bible



Even while people of various cultures live within the United States, we are often not able to share our cultures with one another. In the *Genius of Islam: How Muslims Made the Modern World*, writer and illustrator Bryn Barnard gives a historical perspective on how Muslims and the Islamic culture made important historical contributions to the world and, therefore, helped shape modern culture by providing a bridge of innovation and commodities.

*The Third Gift*, by Linda Sue Park, also bridges cultures by sharing a story of a father teaching his son a skill and also sharing his knowledge with him. We can observe this father-son relationship play across many cultures.

As the reader moves through the story of a young son being taught the delicate art of harvesting sap or “tears” from a tree, we note that the father takes great pride in his skills and abilities and also in teaching his young son. As the harvested “tears” or myrrh is gathered, Park leads us through an adventure of a young boy living in ancient times, details the tedious process of extracting myrrh from tree bark, and describes how the merchants exchanged goods in the markets of that faraway place in that faraway time.

This sweet story shows readers how the ancient world and modern worlds can maintain family ties throughout the ages, as well as how customs and cultures differ across time.

When I shared the book with two young readers, their responses were positive. Lily, age 7, was very fascinated by the illustration of the big “tear” and recalled details of its extraction. Zoe, age 11, really enjoyed how the father and son were spending time together and also related to the Three Wise Men theme.

The two girls were maybe a little young for the more historical book, written by Bryn Barnard. This book detailed the many contributions of Islamic cultures that historically served to shape modern culture. We find that one contribution was the art of calligraphy (10). Zoe points out that without having things written down, one may “forget stories” from ancestors and history. It was impressive to know that when reading of the contribution of mass produced paper (12), Zoe piped up with, “I thought the Chinese created paper.”

It is fascinating to share information with young readers and know that they are also applying their learned knowledge to new information, creating a spider web of awareness of their world. While having to explain architecture to a 7-year-old can be challenging, it was an opportunity to introduce terms that were unfamiliar; however, now Lily has the opportunity to use her new words in new ways. This is an example of how our knowledge develops, expands, and can be applied to new situations.

While these two books were written in very different formats, they are both great resources for young readers, in that the information to readers is presented in different literary ways. The content also connects modern to ancient Islam and provides an exposure to a culture that may be different to one's own.

Sharing authentically written books for young readers can introduce new concepts and help them understand their own family histories and traditions. Hopefully, insightful readers will conclude that while we are very different, we are, at the same time, very much alike.

### **About the Author**

**Emily Bible** is a graduate of Purdue University with a master's degree in Speech and Language Pathology. She is currently employed at the Veteran's Hospital in Indianapolis and is the mother of Lily and Zoe.