From Law to Faith-Based Children’s Novelty Publishing: how it all began

The vision for Shade 7 came after I decided to resign from my role as a finance lawyer in London. I wanted to put my time and energy into something where I could learn more about my faith while making it accessible and enjoyable for others. I loved the children’s stories I grew up with, and the combination of writing and novelty publishing around Islamic faith-based stories was perfect to explore.

Growing up with a father who was a trader at a bank I had always had a keen interest in business. I was also passionate about establishing something that would be of a long-term benefit to the community. Driven by faith principals of ongoing charity, the passing on of beneficial knowledge and education, Shade 7 established itself as the world’s first specialist Islamic children’s novelty publishing company in 2013, with the aim of making faith accessible, inspiring and fun for all. The name was inspired by a Prophetic saying that there would be seven types of people shaded on the Day of Judgement, when there would be no shade except God’s shade.

For me, the journey of rediscovery, miraculous adventures and creating a legacy of engaging content which generations could enjoy had begun. I knew I wanted to create something unique, memorable, treasured and of exceptional quality; something that encapsulated the miracles of the stories in an awe-inspiring way. Nothing like this really existed on the Islamic publishing scene.

I also noticed that our faith counterparts all had a huge variety of material on the market—but none of this was accessible to a Muslim readership because of its depictions of many of the prophets we share. I am constantly fascinated by the lack of awareness that Muslims also believe in and hold dear Prophets such as Jesus, Noah, Joseph, Moses and Mary (peace and blessings be upon them all). This made me realise the importance of including another dimension to our publishing work.

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Hajera Memon | Publisher, MD & Author | Shade 7 Publishing
Drawing on the similarities of the three Abrahamic faiths, Shade 7 has a strong social purpose of developing an understanding of interfaith dialogue, respect, tolerance and commonality from a young age, through creative storytelling of some of the most glorious, classical, historical and timeless events common to our faiths.

We published our first pop-up and play book called The Story of The Elephant in summer 2014. It is a well-known short story from the Quran (the Muslim Holy Book) and one that young children will often memorise in Arabic to read in their prayers. The book now sells in 17 countries and is being translated as well.

Novelty publishing was the niche I wanted to focus on as I felt it offered a different level of engagement between parent and child to picture books. Integrating an element of interactivity, either through pull tabs or activities, meant children could return to our books time and time again, and grow to enjoy them independently.

At a time when the interaction and communication levels between parent and child are threatened, I believe our work brings back the traditional enjoyment of shared reading and a love of story time. We find that parents often relate to the novelty books they enjoyed as children and are therefore more willing to engage in the shared experience of reading aloud with their child and create fond memories which both will treasure.

Our second book is aimed at babies and toddlers and also offers a special novelty experience. The My First Wudu Book is a unique, colour changing bath book about the names of the basic body parts involved in a ritual washing called wudu. Muslims will perform this washing in preparation for their five daily prayers. It is based around the theme and Prophetic saying that ‘Cleanliness is half of faith’, and contains simple single words like hands, mouth, face and feet to make it accessible and open to children of all faiths to enjoy. It makes bath time not only fun but an educational and interactive reading experience as well.

Exquisitely designed by Rose Hill Designs, whose work has been commissioned by WWF, ZSL London Zoo and Harrods, Rose’s unique pattern style of pop-art illustrations was the perfect choice for our bath book range. We hope to continue working with Rose to add many new titles to this range, including Prophet Noah’s Ark and Prophet Jonah and the Whale. Our My First Wudu Book has pre-sold more than 750 copies worldwide within the first two weeks, and is due to arrive in the UK in mid-November.

For more information about Shade 7 and our novelty faith-based publishing, please visit our website.

#workinpublishing