



A Long Pitch Home

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Ten-year-old Bilal liked his life back home in Pakistan. He was a star on his cricket team. But when his father suddenly sends the family to live with their aunt and uncle in America, nothing is familiar. While Bilal tries to keep up with his cousin Jalaal by joining a baseball league and practicing his English, he wonders when his father will join the family in Virginia. Maybe if Bilal can prove himself on the pitcher's mound, his father will make it to see him play. But playing baseball means navigating relationships with the guys, and with Jordan, the only girl on the team—the player no one but Bilal wants to be friends with.

A Long Pitch Home Details

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From Reader Review A Long Pitch Home for online ebook

Laura says

This is an ok story of a boy trying to adjust after leaving Pakistan, and arriving in Virginia, because of some problems with his father's work.

There is no prejudice, as you might expect might happen when there is a story of muslims trying to adjust being in the United States. Instead, it is a matter of having to adjust because Bilal knows how to play cricket, and to fit in he has to learn to play baseball.

The conflict is his learning to play, learning more English and getting along with the girl on the team, who is also a fish out of water.

There is nothing wrong with this book, really. It is an ok book to teach kids about trying to fit in, but nothing really happens. Very safe. The boy misses his father. No worries about the outside world, no worries about how his family will survive. His only worries are about baseball and his father.

A much better book about this same subject, trying to fit into American society would be *It Ain't So Awful*, Falafel. Much better voice of the character. Much closer to the bone about how it feels.

Thanks to Netgalley for making this book available for an honest review

Nick says

I read this book over the course of a single day, which says something about how hard it was to put down, even for things like meals. I rarely give a book a five-star rating, but this one deserves it.

Bilal, the main character, comes to the U.S. with most of his family. His father is unable to leave their native Pakistan, for some of the same reasons that he wants the rest of the family to get out. There is trouble, apparently caused by the father's longtime friend.

In their new home, foods, clothes and even sports are strange and different, and no one, even well-meaning teachers, seems to understand much about his nation, his culture, or even his favorite sport of cricket.

Instead, he's nudged toward learning baseball, and its culture and customs.

The story is an excellent one about home, separation from family, differences in cultures, and a host of other issues, including a very obscure baseball rule.

Bilal is a great character, a believable 10-year-old who is intelligent, but whose knowledge of English is somewhat limited at the start of the story. He learns quickly, though, just as he learns the difference between being a cricket bowler and a baseball pitcher. Idioms are different, though, just as hitting a round ball with a round bat is very strange to him. The rules of friendship are also tricky, as he learns during the story.

I would offer this to any tween to read, boy or girl, because there are strong, interesting characters in it, both male and female, and an intriguing story that remains believable.

Cheryl says

I was instantly sucked into this story of 10-year old Bilal, who, after his father is jailed for several days,

suddenly moves with the rest of his family to the US. His experiences there are of a sensitive but well-adjusted boy making sense of a new culture while longing to have his father join them.

I enjoyed learning about Pakistani and Muslim culture in comparisons... at home Bilal is good at cricket. People think it's an insect in the US. His descriptions of cookie-cutter houses with small mowed lawns and gardens and an "alley" at each house for cars, and dogs as pet... contrasts with his former life in a crowded apartment building in a city filled with brightly painted buses with people hanging off the sides, motorbikes, dust, and stray dogs.

He wants to be friends with a girl, but "the guys" don't like her, so he keeps his friendship with her low-key. When she calls him on it, it's a high (and low) point in the book.

There is no overt immigrant or Islamophobia in the book, which I appreciated. Bilal had enough to deal with just figuring out what everyone is saying, and trying to fit in. The story has depth and heart... and sports... so good for boys, too.

Barbara says

By now, it should be clear that coming to America presents its own unique challenges. In the case of ten-year-old Bilal, the country is confusing in many of the usual ways: its language, rapid speech patterns, clothing, driving customs, holidays, foods, and even sports. But perhaps most disappointing to Bilal upon his move to Washington, DC, is that no one seems to know much about cricket, the sport in which he excelled back home in Pakistan, much less know how to play it. As his father stays behind in Pakistan to clear his name, the rest of the family, including Bilal's mother, his younger sister, and a much younger brother go to stay with his mother's brother. They are as welcoming as can be, but things are just so different, and once school starts, Bilal is embarrassed to be put in an ESL class for language support despite the fact that he studied English back home. While Hira heads off to a Girl Scout camp, Bilal accompanies his older cousin Jalaal to a baseball camp. He is unsuccessful at batting, but his pitching shows potential. As it turns out, one of the players is a girl named Jordan who has something in common with Bilal. Her mother has been deployed, and she goes months without seeing him. Despite her talent in the sport, the other boys tease Jordan or ignore her, and Bilal is conflicted about whether to embrace the friendship she offers him or hide it from the others. Intermediate graders will certainly understand his concerns since he is still on shaky ground himself as a new kid in the community, but he also knows that Jordan is a real friend. Although the ending is a bit over the top with the notion of pulling strings in order for Bilal's father to join the family and a celebrity taking the time to visit a young boy, I still enjoyed the story, which will certainly encourage readers to reach out to immigrants or anyone new to their school or class. Even speaking a little more slowly or explaining concepts might be seen as an act of compassion. As a couple of other reviewers have noted, it might have been helpful to explain briefly in an afterword some details of the political situation in Bilal's home country or first country as his teacher, Mr. Jacobs, calls it. I liked that idea a lot. In fact, I liked Mr. Jacobs and Mrs. Wu and the two baseball coaches a lot too. The author does a fine job of pulling in her readers from the opening lines, but once the baseball team is working toward that final game, she provides less details than might be desired. Still, the book does exactly what it sets out to do--put a very human face to immigration and a family trying to find its way in a completely different culture and place, particularly hard to do without the father.

Jessie says

Bilal comes with his mother and siblings to the US, where they stay with his uncle, aunt, and cousin. Bilal's father isn't able to get a visa yet, so he's still in Pakistan. Bilal learns colloquial American English (which was decidedly not what he had learned before), starts playing baseball (though his heart belongs to cricket), navigates messy friendship dynamics, and tries anything to get his father to the US.

Friendship: Making friends in a new place, making friends with people who aren't friends with each other (and this one involved gender dynamics here), how and when to stand up for people.

Language: I found the book to be really interesting in terms of language learning. Hira picks up a ton of American English really quickly because she's outgoing and talkative, not afraid of making mistakes. Bilal knew more formal English when they arrived in the US, but he's more wary of making mistakes and is more reserved. He's also very aware of the differences in the English he learned and the English he's hearing around him in the United States. Also, it's a very minor point, but I'm glad that Hira losing Urdu (and both her and Bilal's worry over it) was a thread in the story.

I found the pacing to be a little uneven, but there were always time markers, so you knew how much time had passed. (It was sometimes just more than I expected.)

Hlluce30 says

Young Bilal's perspective on having to leave the home you know and try to forge a new life in a strange and unfamiliar world. To make matters worse, his family leaves Pakistan without their father. Bilal's older cousin helps him assimilate through baseball. The process is not easy but eventually, Bilal begins to adjust to this new life. A life that will never be complete until his father joins them. In a bold and reckless move, Bilal finds a solution to the problem and sacrifices an important game for a chance to bring his father to America.

KitaabWorld.com says

When Bilal has to move suddenly from Pakistan to America, he encounters many unfamiliar things that confuse him. Enrolling in an ESL course, a summer baseball camp and having to make new friends, Bilal struggles with language, foreign customs and a longing for home and family. A moving and realistic depiction of the immigrant experience through the eyes of a child.

See other books in our Muslim Kids as Heroes booklist here:

<https://kitaabworld.com/blogs/news/co...>

Sunday Cummins says

Get this book into the hands of 4th, 5th, 6th grade students--book talk it and leave in the classroom library, make a core text for literature circles, read aloud to the whole class in spare moments and ask small groups to turn and talk. This book lends itself to so many higher level thinking questions that could push our students to develop emotional insight into what happens when children from other countries move to the United States. We see the U.S. through the eyes of the main character, Bilal, who moves to the U.S. from Pakistan--on very short notice, leaving behind friends, cricket, and family. The writing is sharp and witty, making you laugh at how Bilal sees what we take for granted like when Bilal reads a sign at the pool that says, "Swim

Meet Tomorrow" and he wonders, "Swim meet? Do swimmers go there to meet each other?" or when he asks his cousin, "Why do the baseball players all wear gloves if only one of them can be the catcher?" I could feel also Bilal's agony as he left his father behind, his embarrassment as he had to take a test in English and scored lower than his young sister and felt as though his score would disappoint his parents. His sorrow at the loss of a game he knew so well--cricket and his confusion over the new game--baseball. His pounding heart as he threw a pitch that might or might save his father who is trapped in Pakistan, unable to get proper travel papers. I made my family WAIT until I finished the book before I'd go do something with them--I had to know how the book ended.

There's also a smaller storyline -about Jordan, a girl who plays baseball and whose dad is also away--serving the military. Jordan and Bilal - from different countries and cultures -- still travel the same path as they grapple with the absence of their dads.

The author gently introduces Islam and the cultural ways of Bilal's family and contrasts these with mainstream American culture--revealing how some of the characters like Bilal's cousin have made sense of both, navigate both and live both cultures. Lorenzi's approach is developmentally appropriate and will be enlightening for her audience of readers.

Overall - the plot and the writing are just really, really well done and I'd highly recommend.

Aeicha says

When ten year old Bilal and his family leave Pakistan, he must adjust to the often confusing and hectic life of America. Making new friends, learning English, fitting in, and learning to like America is not easy for Bilal, especially when he misses his father, back in Pakistan, so much. Hoping to make his father proud and speed up his arrival, Bilal joins a local baseball team, but finds that baseball is not at all like his beloved cricket, especially when one of his teammates turns out to be a talented girl.

Natalie Dias Lorenzi's A Long Pitch Home is a thoughtful and tender middle-grade story that deftly explores the immigration experience through the honest and observant eyes of a child. Bilal's story is an important one, as it reflects the lives and experiences of so many young readers in America today. Lorenzi carefully and respectfully explores Bilal's Pakistani culture and customs, creating an immersive and authentic reading experience. Young readers will enjoy Bilal's unique perspective and learning about his culture, but they will also find many aspects of his life (family dynamics, wanting to fit in, friendship issues, etc) to be very relatable and relevant to their own lives.

Bilal, his family members, and Jordan (the one girl on his team) are all engaging, well-developed characters, that young readers will enjoy getting to know and find very likable.

My final thoughts: With a heartfelt message, excellent storytelling, and unforgettable main character, A Long Pitch Home will amuse, educate, and leave a mark.

The Reading Countess says

A Long Pitch Home checks many boxes:

✓?boy main character

- ✓?girl minor character (thereby making it friendly to both guys and gals...Why girls are more open to reading books with characters in this order vs. boys when the tables are turned is a discussion for another time...)
- ✓?baseball (and by default, cricket)
- ✓?Pakistani family
- ✓?immigration
- ✓?Afghanistan/current events

I liked the confusion Bilal felt with many English words and terms native speakers take for granted. The author's way of handling idioms and colloquial terms reminded me of HOME OF THE BRAVE. I think many kids will love that baseball plays such a vital role. Bilal's cousin and younger sister assimilating into their newfound homeland was an important aspect of the story.

The problem Bilal's dad finds himself in felt a little forced, though. Look, I get that we need tension in plot. But it felt rushed and not fleshed out.

I admire the author's ability to tell Bilal's story so authentically. It is evident that she did much research-read the acknowledgments to see the extent to which she went. While we surely must advocate for more authors telling their own stories, A Long Pitch Home has too many strong qualities not to make this a text in our libraries. We need Bilal's story.

Cindy Mitchell *Kiss the Book* says

Lorenzi Natalie Dias A Long Pitch Home, 248 pages. Charlesbridge, 2016. \$17. Language: G (0 swears 0 "F"); Mature Content: PG; Violence: PG.

Bilal is your average boy from Karachi, Pakistan. He is really into cricket and his favorite player is Omar Khan. One day his family decides to move from their hometown to America because their cousins lived there, this is a challenge for Bilal because there is a language barrier, and he has completely different interests. He joins a baseball league because his uncle Jalaal enrolls him into it. He meets a person on the team named Jordan who is a girl. This is where his experience in America starts.

I liked that I could personally relate to this book in some way. It is about a Muslim boy that is being introduced to American culture. I can also relate to how he has to deal with how a lifestyle of an American muslim is compared to the ones in the middle east. The author did a good job on representing muslims to people. I'm happy with the way this book came out.

MS - ESSENTIAL 7th Grade Student Reviewer IK
<https://kissthebook.blogspot.com/2018...>

Ami Schroder says

Good book for students to gain empathy for the ESOL students at their school.

Ms. Yingling says

E ARC from Edelweiss Above the Treeline

Bilal's family must leave Pakistan suddenly after his father is arrested. His mother and two younger siblings are able to leave, but his father must wait for a visa. They move to Virginia, to stay with an aunt and uncle who have a teen boy, Jalaal. Since Bilal's main interest in Pakistan was playing cricket (and he was very good), his uncle signs him up right away for a baseball camp. Missing his father and finding that the English spoken by his teammate is very different from the English he learned in school, Bilal struggles to fit in. Another new kid on his baseball team, Jordan, also struggles. Since her father is deployed in Afghanistan and she would rather be back home in the midwest, she tries to make friends with Bilal, but the boys on the baseball team don't want a girl on their team, and make fun of Bilal when he hangs around her. School is difficult, and Bilal has to spend some time in an ESL unit, while his younger sister takes to the language much more quickly. Skype visits with his father are nice, but Bilal gets tired of waiting. When Pakistani cricket star and government hopeful Omar Khan comes to the US, Bilal jeopardizes his team's tournament success to get the man's attention, which is influential in getting his father back home.

Strengths: This had a lot of good details about what it is like to move to a different country. Skyping with his father, having to learn a new game, missing friends and life in his first country (and that's a helpful phrase to know) all are things that children in the US who were born here need to know about. I liked the inclusion of the cousin who was well-versed in the ways of the US, as well as the younger sister who settled in so much more easily. Using sports as a way to introduce this topic to readers is a great idea.

Weaknesses: I wish there had been more details about why his father was having trouble in Pakistan, and about cricket.

What I really think: I know that many people balk at the idea of people from other cultures writing from the perspective of a character from another culture. However, until we see more great writers like Gita Varadarajan, it's very helpful for my students to have diverse books written by writers who try to get the details correct and check them with people from the culture about which they are writing. I think Carol Marsden does a particularly good job, as does Lorenzi. I will be buying this.

Serina says

This book gently introduces readers to Pakistani culture while telling a story with universal appeal. Bilal is a lot like any 10 year old that has moved to a new place, instead he has moved to a new country. He wants friends and to fit in at school. Yet there are alot of firsts that I've *never* found in an elementary book. There are literally over 9 million kids in US who speak a second language and 1 million of those don't speak English well at all! Its shocking that all those kids are being completely ignored in literature. ESL is discussed for the first time, and we see how useful it is to not only help with the language but also the adjustment of a new culture. Sprinkled throughout is the sharp differences of living in America. Muslim customs are mentioned but not the focus. No one makes fun of him for being different. Instead he has to decided to stick up for another girl thats being bullied. The conclusion is a bit story book ending but the length of time that is required before it comes about makes it very plausible. Baseball is the running theme. Yet because for Bilal its new, we get to experience it for the first time also. It reads easy despite the foreign words here and there. Give to fans of baseball, reluctant readers and American kids so they can continue to develop empathy for people who are different.

Becky says

Excellent middle reader book about a Pakistani family moving to the U.S. and how 5th grader, Bilal, strives to fit in.
