



# Big Red Lollipop

*Rukhsana Khan , Sophie Blackall (Illustrator)*

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Rubina has been invited to her first birthday party, and her mother, Ami, insists that she bring her little sister along. Rubina is mortified, but she can't convince Ami that you just don't bring your younger sister to your friend's party. So both girls go, and not only does Sana demand to win every game, but after the party she steals Rubina's prized party favor, a red lollipop. What's a fed-up big sister to do? Rukhsana Khan's clever story and Sophie Blackall's irresistible illustrations make for a powerful combination in this fresh and surprising picture book.

## Big Red Lollipop Details

Date : Published 2010 by Viking

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Author : Rukhsana Khan , Sophie Blackall (Illustrator)

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# From Reader Review Big Red Lollipop for online ebook

## **Destinee Sutton says**

As the older of two sisters, I not only loved this, but totally identified with the main character--a little girl whose mom makes her take her li'l sis to a friend's birthday party. Ugh, Mom! Why?!

The mom in this story actually doesn't know about the custom of celebrating birthdays in the United States, which should be an intriguing point for most young American readers. Some people don't celebrate birthdays? Really?

The central conflict in this occurs when the middle sister eats most of the oldest sister's birthday party lollipop. The illustrations hilariously show the angry chase that ensues, culminating in the oldest sister throwing the lollipop under the couch in frustration. Then the middle sister fishes it out and eats the rest. Gross! Funny!

In a move not often seen in picture books, the story elapses over an entire year (maybe two--we see the youngest sister grow up noticeably) which allows us to see the development of the characters. When the middle sister is told she has to take the youngest to a birthday party, you'll be surprised what happens.

A fantastic book about fairness, maturity, and sibling relations.

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## **Edward Sullivan says**

Fun story about sisterly conflict. Wonderful illustrations, particularly the spread depicting the chase around the house.

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## **babyhippoface says**

Sisters.... :)

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## **Angela says**

A great story about how your siblings can surprise you and also about culturally differences when it comes to birthday parties.

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## **Bernadette says**

Do you have siblings? Do they make you crazy? Well, in Big Red Lollipop Rubina's little sister, Sana, might either remind you of your own pesty sister or make you never want to have a younger sibling! Rukhsana

Khan's picture book, *Big Red Lollipop*, shows children that even though your country of origin may be different than your friends and classmates, you may still struggle with similar issues at home. With the backdrop of her story being a family who immigrated to the United States from Pakistan, Rukhsana asks children to consider what it might be like to be an immigrant and not share some of the same cultural customs as your classmates. Illustrator Sophie Blackall's pictures subtly capture elements of Pakistan in Rukhsana's mother's Pakistani clothing and also explore universal emotions in the range of faces Rubina and her sisters make throughout the story. This picture book offers teachers and their K – 3 grade students an excellent avenue to discuss culture and what it means to be an immigrant.

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### **Candice says**

This is an excellent book highlighting: 1. the problems immigrants face when thrust into a new culture, 2. sibling rivalry, and 3. the way older children are expected to acquiesce to their younger siblings because they are "old enough to know better." Because the author was born in Pakistan, and because of the illustrations, I assume that the immigrant family here is Pakistani. When oldest daughter Rubina is invited to a birthday party, her mother's first reaction is surprise that people celebrate the day they were born. Her second reaction is that Rubina must take her younger sister, Sana. Reluctantly, Rubina calls the hostess and Sana is allowed to go. What a disaster! Too young for her sister's friends, Sana is not the perfect party guest. When the girls come home with party bags of treats, Rubina wants to save her big red lollipop to eat later, but Sana eats it. And it is a long time before Rubina is invited to another birthday party. At last Sana is invited to her own friend's birthday party. And Ami (mother) wants Sana to take youngest sister Maryam. Rubina intervenes in a totally compassionate and mature big-sisterly way to insure that Sana will have an easier time fitting in than she did. The story stands on its own as a wonderful book, but the illustrations make it even better. They capture the emotions of the sisters perfectly, and the details of the clothing and furnishings are lovely.

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### **Agn? says**

Such a beautiful and emotionally powerful story about sibling rivalry and forgiveness! I get a little bit teary every time I read it...

Also, Sophie Blackall's illustrations, which are both playful and expressive, fit the story very well:

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### **Jon(athan) Nakapalau says**

Another 'smile-on-you-face-there-is-still-hope' book!

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### **Betsy says**

Yeah, I have a little sister. Have since I was six. And like most older siblings I had the usual older sis/younger sis relationship with her you might imagine. We older siblings get a lot of innate perks, being the first and all, but when you're a kid you have a tendency to only notice the problems. Little sisters want to go

everywhere with their older sibs. That's just the nature of the game. What author Rukhsana Khan has done with her newest picture book *Big Red Lollipop* is tell a new story of little sis/big sis woes with a twist that'll knock young readers' socks off. It doesn't matter if a kid is an older sibling, younger sibling, or only child. This book packs a wallop, in part because of the art of Sophie Blackall, and in part because Khan has given us one of the best stories about forgiveness I've read in a very long time.

What a nightmare! When Rubina ran home one day to tell her mother that she was invited to a birthday party, she couldn't believe it when her Ami told her she had to make sure her little sister Sana was invited too. And not only does her little sister pitch a fit when she doesn't win all the games at that party, but she eats all the candy in her goody bag right away. Rubina's a more patient type. She saves her own big red lollipop on the top shelf of the fridge so that she'll be able to eat it first thing the next day. Imagine her horror then when Sana eats HER lollipop too! And her mother doesn't even take Rubina's side! A couple years later, Sana gets invited to a birthday party of her own and is shocked when her mother says she has to bring HER younger sister Maryam along. Rubina could say nothing and let Sana get what's coming to her, but instead she tells their Ami to let Sana go by herself. Ami agrees. After the party, Sana gives Rubina the big green lollipop she got as a gift at the party. "After that we're friends."

Part of what I love about this book is how it manages to come up with a new universal truth; No matter what country, culture, religion, or background you are from, there is one thing on which we can all agree: little sisters are annoying. Rubina may be Pakistani-Canadian, but this story is a perfect melding of culture clash and something that could happen to anyone, regardless of where they're from. In this particular case Rubina's Ami insists on Sana accompanying her older sister to a birthday party, but there are plenty of parents here in America from other races and religions that would insist on the very same thing. And the outcome, let's face it, might be exactly the same as what you find here. The difference is only in the details.

On a more basic level, I was also keen on how Khan constructed the story. She could have begun by wasting time showing Rubina receiving her invitation at school. Instead, the first line of the book is, "I'm so excited I run all the way home from school." This allows Rubina to tell both her mother and the reader the news about her birthday party invitation at the same time. I like how information is conveyed here. I also like how well Khan is able to show that time has passed without saying something as rote as "three years later". Rubina gives a short "I don't get any invitations for a really long time", and we later see the girls older thanks to this line and thanks to Blackall's pictures. It's a wonderful melding of image and text telling a single tale.

Artist Sophie Blackall has written her own fair share of picture books in her time. In a way, she cut her teeth on inter-girl arguments and friendships when she illustrated the Ivy & Bean series for Annie Barrows. Here, she places most of her characters against a white background, allowing their expressions to really pop off the page. You have the distinct impression that Blackall knows from whence she illustrates too. There's something about little Sana crying about not being able to go to the birthday party with Rubina that looks calculated. I think it's the fact that her left eye is closed, while the right one looks sneakily over at her older sis. And look at that last picture of the two girls with their arms around one another. That, combined with the sentence, "After that we're friends" just hits me where it hurts. Sana is looking at the viewer. Rubina is looking over at the little sister that has unexpectedly made amends after all those years.

The attention to detail within the pages is also remarkable. I love the Formica dining room table where the girls color and do their homework while Ami types on her laptop. It grounds the book in the present, which I really appreciate. I love the sheer variety of colors and patterns on the clothes of the characters and the fancy borders around cutaway images. Personally, I'm convinced that the first page of the book is an unconscious homage to the Sophie Blackall cover of Newbery winner Rebecca Stead's book *When You Reach Me*. Something about the maplike quality of it.

When it comes down to it, this is a book about grace. Self-sacrifice is never felt more keenly by a child than when a story speaks on their level about something they understand. I could read a kid parable after parable about forgiveness and not make so much as a dent in their scaly little brains. But tell them a story about an older sister being wronged by her younger sibling and then going out of her way, in spite of her anger, to keep that same sister from experiencing a similar fate... THAT hits home. Hear that? That is the sound of thousands of tiny jaws plummeting downwards after getting to the end of this tale. It's their little minds trying to grasp the concept of not taking an eye for an eye or, in this case, a lollipop for a lollipop. And I won't blame you a jot if you tear up just a little bit at the end of this book.

I was going to sum all this up by saying that kids like comeuppance stories, but who am I kidding? Adults, for crying out loud, like comeuppance stories. They like to see the "villain" of a piece get a taste of their own medicine. There are hundreds of stories out there like that. Far rarer is the story that believably shows one character letting another one off the hook for no reason other than the fact that it's the right thing to do. And remarkably, Khan does it without plunging into some kind of wild didacticism. This story is different. Show don't tell, they say. Khan shows. The results are telling. One of my favorite picture books of the year.

Ages 4-8.

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## **Zerina says**

The red lollipop by Rukhsana Khan is about an immigrant family that's new to the American traditions. Rubina is invited to a birthday party but her mom insists on Rubina's sister coming with her to the party. Needless to say, Rubina is very upset because she knows that her friends will judge her. Later on, it's Rubina's sister that has to take her siblings to a birthday party. However, Rubina convinces her mom to let her sister go to the party alone.

The book teaches readers about diversity and the relationship between siblings. I think it's important that students learn about multiculturalism because they are going to be in diverse classrooms. Students need to be aware of their surroundings. A lot of times, children say things without thinking about them first. This can lead to people's feelings being hurt. They might not participate in classroom discussions because they don't feel appreciated. Another big theme in this book is the relationship between siblings which I think a lot of students can relate to. Readers will learn about the importance of being patient and sharing with your siblings.

This book is meant for grades one till third. Big red lollipop has Charlotte Zolotow Award and the Golden Kite Award. I think teachers can use this book to introduce culture to their students. They will get to learn about immigrants and their perspectives. I think some young readers might be surprised to learn that not everyone celebrates birthdays. Rubina's mom wasn't aware of birthday celebrations so she didn't know that it wouldn't be cool to bring siblings to a party. It's important to note that Rubina didn't let her sister suffer too. She didn't hold a grudge and helped her sister have a good time.

I like this book because of the social and emotional themes explored in the book. The book helps students realize that there are different cultures in this book. There are several things in the book that can be better. . There are times when the story doesn't seem very engaging. I also don't like that Rubina's mom allows one of her kids to throw a tantrum. Somehow, I feel like that sends the wrong message to the readers. However, I would recommend this book to readers as a way to review the importance of understanding different cultures.

I found a video of the author reading the book! It might be important to let students listen to this to understand the culture better.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature...>

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## **Tasha says**

Rubina has been invited to her very first birthday party and is elated. Until she tells her mother about it and her mother insists that she takes her little sister, Sana, or else she can't go. Rubina tries to explain that here the kids don't bring their little siblings to a birthday party, but her mother won't budge. Sana is the only little sister at the party, but it isn't so bad. Each girl gets a bag of party favors to take home and there is a big red lollipop for each of them. Sana eats hers right away, and Rubina saves hers in the refrigerator until the next morning. But when she wakes up eager for a taste, she discovers that Sana has helped herself to it!

A story based on Khan's own childhood, this book perfectly captures the differences between families of various cultures and backgrounds. Rubina is simply expected to take her younger sister with her. And then she is expected to forgive her sister and share her lollipop. The wonderful piece of the book is when Rubina stands up for her younger sister at the end and helps convince her mother that Sana doesn't have to bring their even younger sister to her first birthday party.

Illustrated with great style, the Arab-American culture is depicted here with real warmth. The illustrations have a creamy background color against which the characters and their expressive faces really pop. The relationships between the characters are strong and interesting. The final result of Rubina's kindness rings true and is very satisfying.

This is a beauty of a book with multicultural elements and a strong story and style. Appropriate for ages 5-7.

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## **N says**

Celebrating your birthday is not a globally recognized tradition. In some countries, date of birth is considered insignificant and not recorded. So if you get a blank stare from an immigrant when you ask for their birthday, it may not be because they can't remember it. They may not "have one". Upon entering the states, if the actual date is unknown, January 1 is often recorded.

Big Red Lollipop is a tale of such immigrants, involving three sisters and their mother who is not familiar with American children's party customs. When Rubina gets an invitation, her mother insists that Sana, the younger sister be allowed to attend as well. Things go poorly as expected and Rubina becomes furious at Sana for ruining her chance of being invited to anymore parties. Things come full circle, and Rubina eventually finds understanding with her sister.

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## **Matthewluke says**

Humorous! insightful! and relatable! These are just a few words that describe the realistic fiction and two time award winning book Big Red Lollipop by Rukhsana Khan. This is a great book to read aloud to any 2-4 grade students and especially to those students who have siblings. While reading this book aloud to your class, your students will immediately be able to picture themselves in the shoes of either older sister Rubina or younger sister Sana. This multicultural book helps tackle the topics of adjusting to a new country with

different cultures, sibling rivalries, as well as forgiveness. Although recommend for grades 2-4, I think students of any age will be able to take something away after reading this book.

Big Red Lollipop tells the story of Rubina, a young Pakistani girl who has just been invited to her first American birthday party. The only problem is Rubina's younger sister Sana wants to come along for the ride. Rubina's mother, only known as Ami in the book and unaware of American traditions forces Rubina to take Sana. While at the party, Sana ruins the party for Rubina and later eats her big red lollipop. Later on in the story, it is Sana turn to take on the role as big sister as she get an invitation to her first American birthday party and is forced to take the families youngest sibling, Maryam. Will Rubina help out Sana or let her feel the same grief she felt? You'll have to read to find out!

After reading the Big Red Lollipop, you will be able to teach your students the topic of cultural differences and traditions. This topic may be new to them as it is to Rubina and Sana's mother, Ami. Throughout the story, Ami does not understand why it is not normal for siblings to take each other to birthday parties let alone even know what a birthday party is. Through the eyes of Ami, students will be able to learn that not all cultures are alike and different cultures have different traditions and ways of celebrating. The book also helps us explore the concept of forgiveness through the relationship of sisters Rubina and Sana. After Sana is forced to take Maryam to a party, Rubina realizes that Sana will now feel the same way she felt. Embarrassment, anger, and awkwardness all rolled into one. Instead of letting Sana go through the grief of bringing Maryam, Rubina makes the right choice and convinces Ami to let Sana go alone. As a sign of thanks and in hopes of forgiveness, Sana gives Rubina a big green lollipop.

I can not stress, how great of a book this was. While reading, I was predicting what would happen next to each of the characters. Would Sana embarrass Rubina at the party? Would Rubina stand up for Sana? This story helped bring back memories of my brother and I as children and I'm sure it will do the same for you! For more information on this book as well as others by Rukhsana Khan visit <http://www.rukhsanakhan.com/index.html>

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## **Susan says**

I really hated this book. I know people are saying it is about cultural differences in such but I just don't buy it. Fairness and unfairness are cross cultural. In fact ideas fairness and unfairness are seen across pretty much all primate groups and among many other non-human animals (e.g. dogs and horses). Yes, I can see that, perhaps, and with a big grain of salt, the mother might not understand about birthdays due to cultural difference, HOWEVER, the mother still has no respect at all for the feelings of the older daughter, completely giving in to the wants of the little sister. Also, the whole idea of the little sister getting to eat her entire lollipop and then that of her older sister as well has nothing to do with cross cultural ideas. It is about fairness and it is not fair that the older sister must give up her lollipop just because the younger one wants it. Even dogs would know that that is unfair; people, no matter their cultural background ought to know that too.

To me the book read as an abusive/at least borderline abusive parent making a golden child of the middle sister and scapegoat of the older one. But, you argue at the end the mother tried to make the middle take the youngest to the party. Hah! That reinforces my point. The middle daughter was at the age of having her own friends, precisely the age that the abusive parent will turn on the golden child in order to force her back in



line (under the mother's thumb), moving her into scapegoat 2 position with the youngest, still most compliant being bumped up into the golden child spot.

No, I did not like this book. I really hated it. Abusive behaviour is abusive behaviour no matter what culture you are from. It is insulting that the book tries to pass it off as 'cultural differences'.

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### **Murabitha says**

My kids were in the midst of a fight. The doorbell rang. Oh look, it was an amazon delivery: BIG RED LOLLIPOP.

I read it to them right then and there...the transformation on their faces was immediate. Smiles and the sense of calm that followed...aaawww. Beautiful book about good character, bravery and compassion.

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