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# Rumi: Whirling Dervish



## Synopsis

Born in Afghanistan in the thirteenth century, Rumi settled in Turkey and became a great mystical poet. From a holy man, Shamsuddin, Rumi learned to listen for the sacred sound of God within himself. When his creative spirit was awakened, he recited more than 50,000 rhymed couplets. He also wrote about the love that resides in the soul of everyone, regardless of religion or background. He founded the order of the whirling dervishes, who believed their spinning dances put them in touch with God and brought peace and love into the world. To honor the 800th anniversary of his birth, the United Nations declared 2007 The Year of Mawlana Jalaladdin Rumi. Demiâ™s spectacular art, inspired by the eastern culture of the thirteenth century, was painted with Turkish and Chinese inks and gold overlays. An introductory note by Dr. Laleh Bakhtiar, Ph.D., is included.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 870 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 48 pages

Publisher: Marshall Cavendish; 1st edition (March 1, 2009)

Language: English

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Product Dimensions: 11.2 x 0.5 x 10.4 inches

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Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (41 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #786,708 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #195 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Middle East #246 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Literary

Age Range: 9 - 12 years

Grade Level: 4th - 7th

## Customer Reviews

This is an engaging, artful book to read with children that tells the story of Rumi. Rumi lived over 800 years ago and settled in Turkey, even though he was born in Afghanistan. He is most famous for inventing/establishing the order of the Whirling Dervishes, who believe their spinning brings closeness to God and peacefulness to the Earth. Rumi was also a prolific poet. Here is a brief excerpt about Rumi from the book's jacket describing his poetry: "He wrote about the love that resides in the soul of everyone regardless of religion or background." All of the poems included in

this book were really lovely and not too difficult for children to understand. From a current events perspective, this was a really interesting book to read with my six year old son because Rumi was born in Afghanistan, and his family traveled through the Middle East before settling in Turkey. Reading Rumi was an easy and meaningful way to expose my son to poetry and culture from that region. It was also nice to read a picture book with him again, because he usually won't stand for anything he perceives as "too babyish". In fact, I am going to be adding any book I can find by Demi to my reading list.

Demi churned out a lot of these picture book biographies in the 2000s, and while there are some real gems in the collection, I think that "Rumi" highlights some of the problems with this series. The biography text briefly sketches the outline of Rumi's life, from his birth in 1207 to his death at sixty-six years of age. The reader learns about his early childhood, his marriage, and his great mentor Shamsuddin. And yet...the biography is flawed. Virtually no context is given for the world in which Rumi lived - I understand that in a children's picture book the author can't provide a comprehensive history of Islam or politics in 13th century Persia, but given that the standard American child isn't going to know much about Rumi's time and place, it's difficult to ground this biography in history. On the other hand, I thought Demi did a good job of explaining whirling dervishes to a young audience. So there's that. Now, I know that Demi is capable of beautiful illustration. Books like *Under the Shade of the Mulberry Tree* and *Demi's Dragons and Fantastic Creatures* amazed me as a child and still fill me with wonder as an adult. But I was very disappointed with the illustrations in "Rumi". They're simpler, and rely heavily on using pre-printed paper texture for textile patterns. There are also several pages with figures with huge heads and tiny bodies - what happened to maintaining proportion? To many people, this probably seems like a minor nitpick, but I expect better from this artist. However, the more of Demi's picture book biographies that I read, the more I think that she must be rushing through each book and that the art just isn't up to her old standard anymore.

The pages are small and the writing was almost too small to be readable. No options for zooming in, and only displays in landscape view.

I was looking forward to simultaneously learning more about Rumi and introducing my daughter to him and the Whirling dervishes. After having read the book... I don't know. The illustrations are AMAZING. They seem to float on the page somehow. This is our first Demi book, but it won't be our

last. And yet, the book failed to meet my main objective. Yes, we found out when Rumi was born and when he died, where he moved, and who his spiritual teacher was. But none of these details explain what he was trying to achieve or the cultural or religious context he was trying to achieve it in. In other words, having read the book, we have no clearer picture of what makes Rumi tick than we did to start with. Demi did include some poems and stories of Rumi's, which do help flesh out the man a bit, but without the proper context, they were just as often confusing as illuminating. (We did spend some time analyzing each, but again, context could easily reframe our conclusions, such as they were.) I am sure Rumi is a difficult topic to tackle, and perhaps this is a great book for people who already have a foundation on him and Sufism, and are looking for enrichment, but as an introductory text (regardless of the reader's age), it fell somewhat flat.

I picked this up along with a few different books of Rumi's poetry, as well as some kids books on Iran, so that we could create our own unit study on Rumi. Perfect choice! Like all Demi books, the illustrations are inviting and magical. The story is well told. Only complaint is that there is not as much of his poetry in the book as I would have liked--but then again, this is about his life, rather than a book of poems. We have "The Illuminated Rumi," "The Rumi Daybook," and "Rumi: The Big Red Book: The Great Masterpiece Celebrating Mystical Love and Friendship" for poems. I have read some favorites to the kids, but they get to choose the one(s) they will memorize, illustrate, or what not.

The book must be viewed on a reader with graphic capability. Otherwise it's short and concise with graphic illustrations of the dress of the 13th century along with a brief biography and explanation of this ancient religion.

I was delighted to find a children's book that introduced Rumi and the Whirling Dervishes. I love to share books with my kids that open up new worlds to them. It is a great way to understand history and cultures and the world. First, "Rumi: Whirling Dervish" is a gorgeous book. The pictures are enchanting although they aren't complicated. They have a kind of magical quality that makes them just gorgeous. But, the story let me down. We learned about Rumi. But all that history and culture that I wanted to share was nowhere to be found. There was very little explanation of the world around Rumi and why he was who he was and did what he did.

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