

Kids' Stories to Educate Generation-Next!

Hoopoe Books Create Educational Transformation

By Crystal Wicker

The Institute for the Study of Human Knowledge (ISHK) is an educational nonprofit organization, which was founded in the United States some thirty years ago. Recognizing the mind's role in overall health, ISHK's endeavors have received support from distinguished experts in education, medicine, psychology, and ecology. Because its main focus is on the development of human potential, in 1998 ISHK began publishing, under the Hoopoe Books imprint, a series of children's folktales that foster cognitive and social-emotional development.

Collected and adapted for children by the late Afghan author Idris Shah (who currently has more than 25 titles in print), these eleven narratives—complete with kid-friendly large format and vivid illustrations—are vastly familiar to most Afghans born before the Soviet incursion. Rooted in the dramatic, ancient storytelling tradi-

tions of Afghanistan as well as other parts of the Middle East and Central Asia, insightful tales like "The Man with Bad Manners," "The Silly Chicken," and "Fatima the Spinner and the Tent" offer moral lessons, embrace the philosophies of teamwork, proper reasoning, peaceful negotiation and compassion, plus enlighten Westerners about Afghan culture. Says Hoopoe Books' publisher

Sally Mallam: "The illustrations of most of our titles show the art, clothing and architecture of Afghanistan, while the stories deal with universal issues that affect people everywhere. The net result is to provide a very positive representation of an important but little-understood culture, and to show what we have in common and can learn from each other."

Falling under a literary genre simply dubbed Teaching-Stories™, educators and psychologists mutually agree that this multi-layered collection is fashioned to develop and improve the analogical,

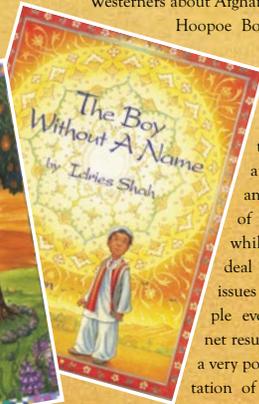
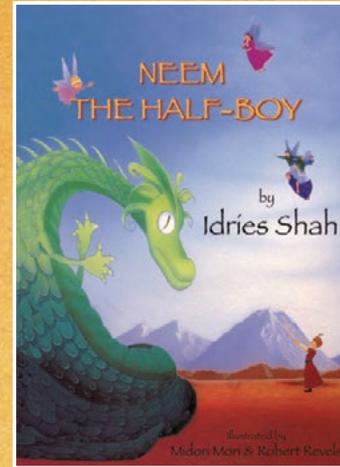
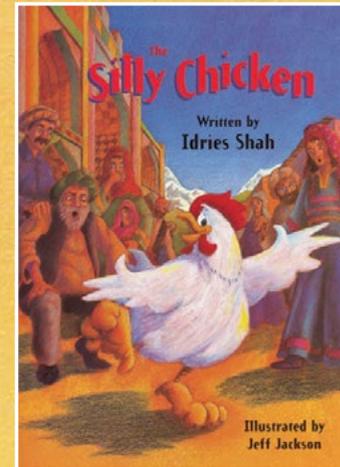


Illustration by Mona Caron



critical and contextual thinking skills associated with the right side of the brain—much like poetry. These stories, Mallam contends, present "a series of patterns and relationships that nurture a part of the mind that's not reachable in more direct ways." For this reason, the tales are intended for



both children and adults. "Take one story, 'The Lion Who Saw Himself in the Water.' Children can identify with the lion, who is afraid of his own reflection, never having seen a reflection before. Children can use him as an example to learn to deal positively with fears and inhibitions that arise from situations they as yet may not understand. Adults can understand the same story at a deeper level. I have been working with these stories for more than thirty years and continue to get insights from them. I am sure that is why they have been told continuously for so long."

The award-winning set has already been eagerly assessed by American media and was even the topic of a highly-attended Library of Congress lecture hosted by internationally acclaimed neuropsychiatric expert and author Robert Ornstein. And just three years ago, ISHK entertained the idea of circulating exclusive bilingual Dari-Pashto editions in Afghan schools, libraries, and orphanages. To date, enough money has been raised to pay for translation and layout expenses for four titles. "Support for this came from private individuals interested in helping this project. Right now we are actively looking for funds to cover the print costs. We have a wonderful team of enthusiastic helpers in Afghanistan, and orders are coming in from schools and orphanages throughout the country. Once we have sufficient funds to finance an initial print run, even of one title, we will be on our way," Hoopoe's publisher explains. Nevertheless, ISHK hopes to provide at least 250,000 copies of each title as these will be the first books that are an overwhelming

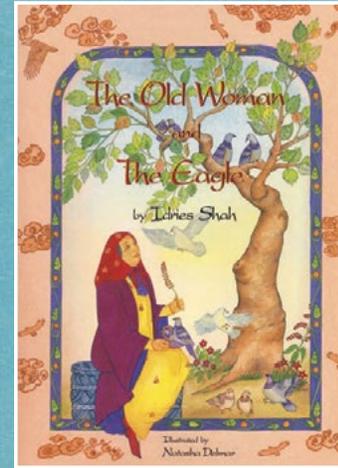
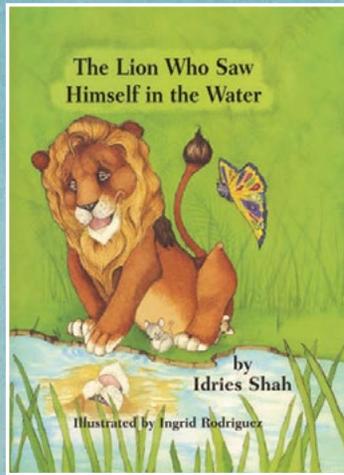
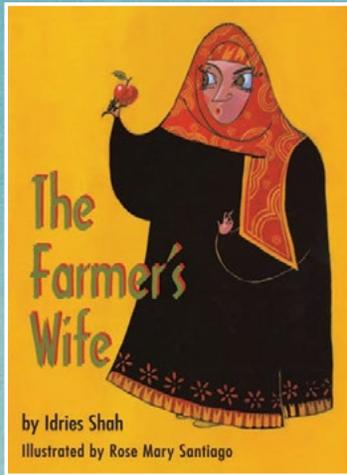


95% of the Afghan students ever own.

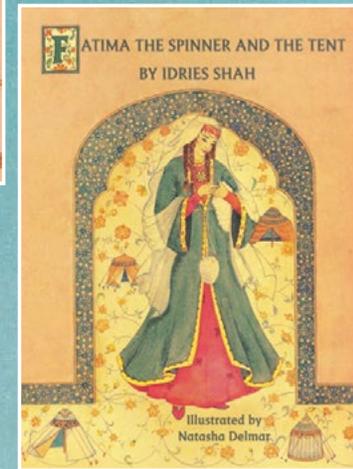
Afghanistan's Minister of Education has officially authorized the charitable organization to allocate books and supplementary instructional materials to the country's schools. In addition, Mallam asserts: "We will provide teacher guides to help Afghan teachers use the books in the classroom. As I am sure your readers know, schools in Afghanistan often lack the basic supplies, let alone books. I would like to organize some way to have individuals here join in an effort to remedy this; we need to give the children of Afghanistan the future they deserve. Of course, we can also provide these bilingual Afghan

editions to anyone here in the U.S., if there is a need."

Established by ISHK in 2000, Share Literacy is a volunteer-based project providing Hoopoe books and related materials to disadvantaged children as well as to their parents and teachers. Grants have been awarded by the Will J. Reid Foundation and the Greater Long Beach Foundation, and all monetary contributions go toward printing and distributing Hoopoe Books. Nonprofit companies catering to poor children serve as program partners and, according to Mallam, "corporate sponsors already include eBay, Wal-Mart and Kaiser Permanente." Since its inception, the literacy operation has reached more than 110,000 American children through institutions such as Michigan's R.E.A.D.Y. program and the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education.



While there are no immediate plans to expand the Hoopoe series, Mallam says a supplemental curriculum for pre-kindergarten through grade 5 is in the works. On top of that, the tales are being incorporated into a San Francisco Bay Area after-school program for children ages 3-17 and in ESL classes with people of all ages. Audio versions of each title are available and DVDs will be coming soon.



ISHK and Hoopoe Books greatly hope their tireless efforts will help restructure the educational system and uplift the spirits of a people whose country has been ravaged by decades of war. Tax deductible donations can be made online at <http://shareliteracy.org/donate.htm#afghan> or by writing: Hoopoe Books for Afghanistan/ISHK, P.O. Box 176, Los Altos, CA 94023. For further information, please visit www.ishk.net, www.shareliteracy.org, and/or www.hoopoekids.com.

HELP PROVIDE HOOPOE BOOKS TO THE CHILDREN OF AFGHANISTAN

Children in Afghanistan need books to support their education. Hoopoe will send these traditional stories back to Afghanistan as beautiful full-color illustrated books. They will be available in bilingual Dari-Pashto editions and delivered to schools and orphanages throughout the country. The first four Pashto and Dari bilingual titles and are now ready to print, and teacher guides have been developed to help Afghan teachers use these books in their classrooms. This project has the approval of Afghanistan's Minister of Education. Afghan schools, libraries, and orphanages are submitting their requests now. We need to raise the money to cover the cost of printing at least these first four titles.

You can help us do this:

- * By making a tax-deductible donation, either online <http://www.ishk.net/donation.html> or by mail to Hoopoe/ ISHK Books for Afghanistan P.O. Box 176 Los Altos, CA 94023; please make your check payable to ISHK - Books for Afghanistan.
- * By purchasing Hoopoe books directly from Hoopoe, either online at www.hoopoekids.com or by telephoning toll-free at 1-800-222-4745, (please specify that you would like all proceeds from your purchase to go to the Books for Afghanistan project).
- * By telling other people about the project and the help we need.
- * By getting corporate and foundation support for the project (e.g., from the company you work for).
- * By holding fundraisers and sending the proceeds to the address above.

Please help us give books to as many children as possible. Thank you!