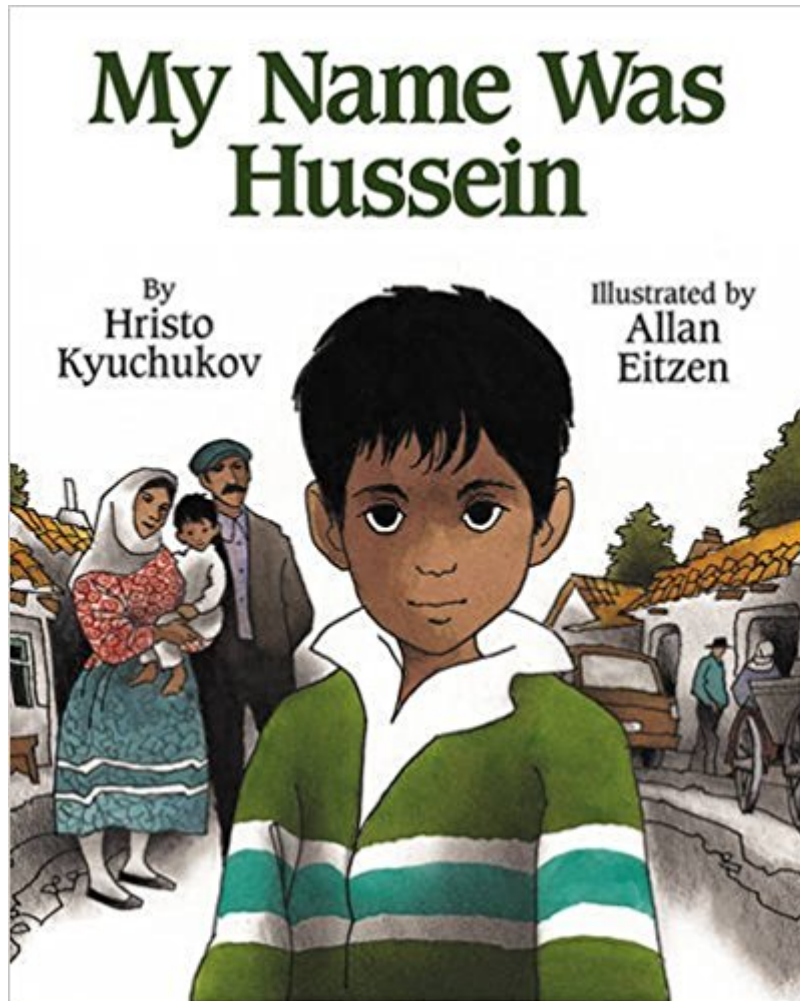




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# My Name Was Hussein



## Synopsis

Boyds Mills Press publishes a wide range of high-quality fiction and nonfiction picture books, chapter books, novels, and nonfiction

## Book Information

Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Hardcover: 32 pages

Publisher: Boyds Mills Press; Library Binding edition (April 1, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1563979640

ISBN-13: 978-1563979644

Product Dimensions: 10.4 x 8.4 x 0.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.5 ounces

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 8 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #345,431 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #16 in [Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Religious Fiction > Muslim](#) #186 in [Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Religious Fiction > Other Religious Fiction](#) #341 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Prejudice & Racism](#)

## Customer Reviews

PreSchool-Grade 3-Based on the author's life, this picture book traces the experiences of a young Roma boy who lives in Bulgaria. Hussein introduces readers to the blend of many cultures and traditions that his family has incorporated over the centuries: the henna hand painting from India, the observance of Muslim religious ceremonies, and an Arabic name passed down through generations. When communist soldiers arrive in their village, their freedom is curtailed. Hussein and his brother miss the celebrations they were used to, but the greatest indignity is being forced to adopt "Christian names." The illustrations provide a variety of interesting viewpoints and reveal the sadness in Hussein's eyes as his life changes in the wake of the purge. The pen-and-ink outlines are softened by gray-toned washes that, combined with soft watercolor hues, evoke an old-world landscape. For children who have always lived with freedom, this poignant story provides a glimpse at what life is like for many ethnic minorities. It also offers youngsters the opportunity to make their own decisions about prejudice when the young narrator, bringing the tale full circle, asks at the end, "What would you call me?"-Laurie Edwards, West Shore School District, Camp Hill, PA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Gr. 1-3. Hussein, who looks about eight years old, lives happily in a Bulgarian village. He enjoys visiting his grandparents, celebrating Muslim holidays, and living in the midst of his loving, extended family. Midway through the story, though, the army arrives and forbids the villagers to speak their language, Romani, in the streets; go outside at night; or pray at the mosque. A policeman destroys the family's identity cards, which are reissued only after they have chosen Christian names.

Illustrating the story are clean, expressive ink drawings washed with watercolors in shades of gray and warmed with brighter colors. Both story and illustrations provide a stark contrast between the child's initial contentment within his family and village and the unhappiness that Hussein, his family, and his whole community feel when the shadow of persecution falls over them. In the appended author's note, Kyuchukov explains that when he lived in Bulgaria in the mid-1980s, the Bulgarian government persecuted minorities and insisted that the one million Muslims living there choose Christian names. Until then, the author's name was Hussein. Written from a child's perspective in simple language and short sentences, this unusual picture book does an excellent job of showing the personal cost of political oppression in terms that are accessible. This book may be disturbing to preschoolers. Still, parents and teachers of older children may welcome the chance to introduce the story of Hussein, a Muslim boy whose joys, comforts, concerns, and fears are universal though firmly set in a particular place and time. Carolyn Phelan Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

My Name was Hussein, by Hristo Kyuchukov, is about a boy who lives in a village in Bulgaria. Hussein was from India. His family is Muslim so they celebrate many holidays. One of the holidays is Ramadan, when they don't eat for a month. The dad goes to mosque/church and brings them candies when he comes back from mosque. For a different holiday women paint their hands and men buy new clothing. In Arabic Hussein means handsome. His grandfather was named Hussein and his great grandfather was named Hussein too. Then one weird day soldiers came with guns. They were surrounded. The rules had changed. They couldn't speak their language and they couldn't go with their relatives. It was Ramadan again. They couldn't go with their grandparents. The mother didn't let Hussein go because the mother was terrified of the soldiers. On Ramadan they couldn't go to mosque because the soldiers would let them go pray. Hussein's father wasn't able to go to the shops to buy clothes. Soldiers came to Hussein's house. They had ordered them to go to the mayor's office. A policeman slashed their identity cards and told them to change their names to Christian names. Now Hussein's name is Harry and he got a new identity card. Hussein's family

didn't like their new names. The rules in Bulgaria were unfair to Hussein's family. In one of the holidays that Hussein celebrates they couldn't buy new clothes. In a different holiday they couldn't visit their grand parents. The dad couldn't go to church because the soldiers didn't let him go in the church. The rules were unfair to his family because he had to change his name and didn't like it. The lesson I learned from this was don't try to change anyone. I would feel miserable if they changed my name. By Luis

This is a wonderful book. It has a real story, a child's perspective. It's the only thing on real Romani life that I've seen that presents a real story for children. It is puzzling that, of all the issues Roma have faced, the changing of names from one religious group to another was the issue chosen, but I don't feel too picky, considering how good this is and how little there is in a similar vein.

Wonderful children's book to help young minds understand the impact of prejudice. Beautiful illustrations. We saw Mr. Kyuchukov interviewed on Deutsche Welle TV. This brilliant man is now living in, I believe, Berlin Germany.

I had chosen this book because I thought, with its simple sentence structure and vocabulary, it would be a good starting point to learn about the Roma people and Eastern Europe - subjects my young daughter was not yet exposed to. However, as we read it, I did not expect the simple words of the child narrator to be so powerful. I was horrified to learn for the first time of the persecution of the Muslim Roma during the communist take-over of Bulgaria, an event that I was shamefully ignorant of until reading this book. As we finished reading, I felt tears in my eyes when my daughter solemnly asked me, "Mama, why do people do mean things?"

My Name Was Hussein is a sincerely written book that is valuable for both children and adults. It is a true story based on the author's life. The author's name was Hussein until the government in his country, (Bulgaria) forced his Muslim family and all non-ethnic Bulgarians to take Christian names. The book presents the persecution of minorities in terms that hold meaning for children, ie. Hussein and his family cannot visit other relatives or visit the mosque, his father does not seem happy anymore, and his family cannot celebrate their holidays. Hussein's name which means "handsome" in Arabic defines him and gives him his history and culture. The book captures the sadness and helplessness of an innocent child, who without his name has lost something real.

This is an important book for any young child's library. It raises the frightening, but very real issues of racism and given the world we live in today, where Muslims are often discriminated against or simply misunderstood to the point where it is racism, this book helps raise those issues. More importantly, the actual story is nicely written and the illustrations are beautiful.

A wonderful book!

Not many books move me and certainly not very many children's books move me, but when I read this to my kids I nearly started crying. The kids handled it much better than I. A very good book to introduce your children to the hardships of persecution and prejudice.

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