

LORGNETTE

Quarterly Review of Children's and Young Adults' Books

Author

Bayarri, Jordi

Illustrator

Reviewer

Martinez, Shan

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Classification

Nonfiction (181 or biography)

Grade Level

4-6

Book Review: AVICENNA AND THE BOOK OF MEDICINE

AVICENNA AND THE BOOK OF MEDICINE is part of the Graphic Science Biographies series. These books explore the lives of scientists who changed how people see the world. The main character in this book is Abu Ali Al-Husayn Ibn Sina or Avicenna to people in the West. He lived in the late 10th and early 11th centuries in what is now Iran. He was highly educated and pursued the knowledge of philosophy and medicine of the time. He was supported by various local rulers and in return, he was an advisor and healer for the ruler and his family.

This biography is presented in a graphic novel format which makes it inviting at first glance. However, there are several issues that make this material difficult for American children, no matter the age. First of all, the names of people and places are very foreign to the reader. This makes it hard to keep up with the characters in the story, and the places are completely unknown. Next, the short bits about wars and dynasties are also unknown to the reader. Finally, while Avicenna may have contributed to the knowledge of healing and medicine in the Islamic world at that time, his life story is a series of moves from one patron to another along with a stint in prison. It is not very interesting for children. The man was a philosopher, writer, and healer. This book might interest a reader in middle school.

