

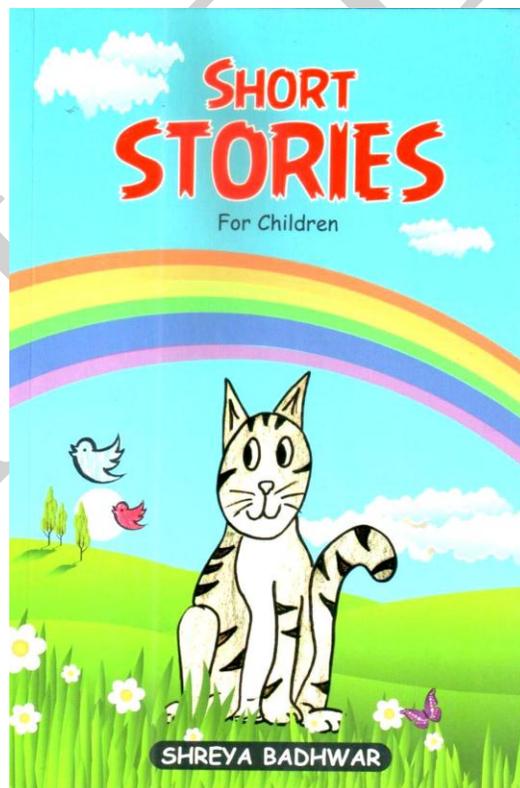
BOOK REVIEW

A CHILD AUTHOR'S LESSONS FOR ANIMAL LOVE

***SHORT STORIES FOR CHILDREN BY SHREYA BADHWAR, TEKSONS,
NEW DELHI, 2015. ISBN 978-81-922903-5-5, 79 PAGES, RS 120 US\$ 3.99***

Reviewed by Manzar Imam

Short Stories for Children is a collection of thirteen short stories and beautiful sketches of a school-going child whose love for nature and animals and her friendly treatment to them is full of lessons about animal care and human behavior. Each story has a sketch drawn by the author herself. These illustrations capture the mood of the stories and increase their impact. The stories and the sketches alongside them throughout the book are testimonies of the young author's great power of imagination and grasp of writing with brevity, brilliance and precision.



Children are any nation's future. And the way their lives are shaped is bound to shape the future of their nations. The stories that are narrated to children leave huge impact on their future course of action and career pursuits. But if those stories are imagined and told by children themselves, they make the impact even more powerful, because a peer group understands the feelings of its members more than others do. It is in this backdrop that this collection of *Short Stories For Children* by eight-year-old (now 11) Shreya Badhwar holds great significance. Badhwar likes 'short stories' and dreams to be 'an artist and an author'.

The collection has thirteen stories besides a beautifully written sort of an epilogue "I Have A Dream" in which the young author, exuding with innocence and confidence shares her future dreams and seeks suggestions from the readers about things that one should love and relate to, when grown up.

A Grade III student (at the time of writing this book) living with mom, dad, older sister, and an almost 2 years old cat called Pepper in Ontario, Canada, Shreya loves birds and animals as they are sweetest and friendly.

It is her love for nature that Shreya came up with her first poetry book "A Wonderful World" a Nature Poetry in 2017. Kindle versions of both *Short Stories* and *Wonderful World* priced \$3.42/CDN\$3.71, \$3.5/CDN\$3.98 respectively are available on amazon.com. A page description of the 11-year-old author says that all proceeds from the books are donated to SickKids hospital, Toronto.

Shreya's journey to writing began with drawing: drawing anything – from big sharks to cute, little kittens and butterflies. However, she considers it difficult to draw two things – people and frogs. The reason: "People have the most complicated faces EVER". The weird shapes of the eyes, the light portion and the shadowy portion, and all of that.

Shreya's celebrated doctor aunt, Dr Geeta Maheshwari, says that the good thing about Shreya's writing is that she does it all on her own almost impeccably.

The child prodigy's genius lies in the twin power of curiosity and imagination coupled with an amazing felicity for writing and narration. The stories and the sketches throughout the book are testimonies of the young author's great power of imagination and grasp of writing with brevity, brilliance and precision. *Diamond Mystery*, *Berkeley Finds Home* and *Pepper's Vaccination* are remarkable gems of animal stories, their lives, behaviours and how they connect to human beings. For example, the constant neighing and annoying behavior one day of Diamond, the horse, in *Diamond Mystery* as a result of her owner's riding a different horse and not noticing that she did not have any oats left. It was only later that Shreya figured out what was wrong.

These and other equally informative, interesting stories have the power to foster feelings of love, care and sympathy for animals which can prove to be great friends. Further, they can serve to encourage and trigger interest in young children to write their own stories and experiences.

Bio

Manzar Imam is a Ph.D. Fellow at the Academy of International Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi and is also doing an online program "Contending Modernities" of the University of Notre Dame, USA.