



Big Little Book Awardee . Illustrator . 2018

NINA SABNANI

Nina is a story teller par excellence, a force to be reckoned with in contemporary Indian children's illustrations, and a path-breaker in terms of her attempts to bring Indian history, arts, crafts and culture to children in delightful ways. Nina has been able to display immense versatility in showcasing a variety of traditional art forms. She has worked on very personal stories like *Mukund and Riaz*, using the format of a collage which brings in a sense of separate pieces coming together to form a whole picture. *My Mother's Sari*, is a delightful exploration of a young child's imaginative vision of the different uses to which her mother's sari could be put. In the process, Nina showcases sarees that are designed to evoke nostalgia in those who are aware of the world of sarees, and wonder in those who are not.

Her craft-related books, *Stitching Stories*, *A Bhil Story*, and *A for Ajrakh* are tributes to different communities and their rich traditions. Some of her books can be used as openings to teach history, geography, astronomy and mathematics; *My Gandhi Story*, *Mukund and Riaz*, *Sameer's House*, *Counting on Moru* are examples.

She has also taken risks in wishing to illustrate lives of lesser known people through making her own connections and drawing us into that circle. She has not been exclusive in her choice of publishers and has responded to a range of them, and made significant breakthroughs in the ways in which books are visualised. Her books are noteworthy for the aesthetic sensibility that they evoke, which speaks to the yearning of many middle-class, urban Indians for their roots, and perhaps to their

desire to blend the traditional with the modern in their own lifestyles. Nina's collaboration with a range of people has helped her create fresh art forms. In all this she has never lost sight of touching children with her evocative illustrations. *Best Friends* and *The Boy Who Loved Colour* are firm favourites with many children from varied backgrounds. 'Inclusion' and 'diversity' are not just words to her. She has demonstrated them in all her books in one way or the other. Since Nina has also written some books, it is interesting to look at her approach when she is illustrating for another author. There is respect and openness. Her commitment to the process is exemplary as we can see from her quote, '*I find the process as exciting and important as the work itself.*'



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