



مايا

# maya fidawi

LEBANON'S ILLUSTRATOR CANDIDATE  
HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN AWARD 2024



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# Biography



- [www.linkedin.com/in/mayafidawi](https://www.linkedin.com/in/mayafidawi)
- @mayafidawi (instagram)
- mayafidawi@gmail.com
- mayafidawi@hotmail.com

## The girl who draws.

That is what Maya Fidawi used to be famous for in school.

Being born and raised in Lebanon during the civil war meant that she didn't have an ordinary childhood.

Despite all the difficulties that her family faced and the danger they survived, her parents always managed to distract her and her brother from the daily chaos, through art.

Her mom used to wait for a truce at the fronts to take her to the nearest theatre to watch a play, while her dad would take her to classical music concerts. They bought them books, lots of books, and that's where her love story with art started.



Every book that Maya read while growing up made her dream. She would spend hours looking at the drawings, always wondering who the genius who created those beautiful universes was. She started building a strong visual memory. She would observe details around her, and make up stories in her head, especially in class, not paying attention to the subjects taught, but rather living in her own world.

She struggled in school because she was “the girl who draws”, but also the girl who “only” draws and knows nothing else. All school art projects were always assigned to her.

Once Maya graduated from high school, it didn't take her long to decide what her university major would be. She enrolled at the Faculty of Arts at the Lebanese University to master painting and sculpting. She worked at the same time as a decorative painter, executing trompe l'oeil effects on walls and ceilings in many hotels and villas across Lebanon. This experience helped her in learning applied techniques with acrylic and other materials, as well as aging and false effects.

After graduation, Maya worked as a freelance illustrator in many advertising agencies in Beirut, drawing storyboards

and package design illustrations. It allowed her to understand the world of commercial illustrations and how to deal with clients.

She also worked as an art teacher in a school, which in turn familiarized her with the Children's universe and would learn to see everything from their point of view. Maya thinks of them as "genius little humans". She entered into the industry of children's book illustrations by chance; a publisher saw her illustrations on a calendar in a nail spa in Beirut, and immediately contacted her. Maya drew her first book in 2004.

And with word of mouth, Maya started illustrating for other publishers in Lebanon and overseas, in Jordan, UAE, Morocco, Egypt, Palestine, Italy, and most recently the United States.

Maya executed around 48 books in general

**2016 - Mahmoud Kahil**

Won Best Illustrated Children's Book Award for Mahmoud Kahil Award for Comics and Editorials.



**2013 - Arab21 - Jordan**



**2014 - Ettisalat Awards - UAE**

Won the Ettisalat Children's book Award 2014 for the book Very Mischevous Cat

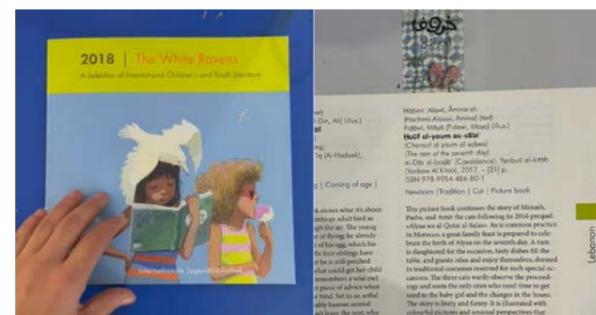


**2017 - Ettisalat Awards - UAE**

Won the Ettisalat Children's book Award 2017 for the book Sheep of the 7th day. Best illustrated book award.



**White Raven Books Selection**



of different categories and age groups. She won her 1st children's book award in 2013 in Beirut, followed by 8 other national and international children's book illustration awards.

She was invited several times to book fairs in many countries, to run workshops and illustration art courses. Maya found a new passion in tutoring. She found herself teaching with an open heart and with complete generosity. Being a self-taught illustrator, it took her years to learn from her mistakes, and always wondered what a difference a mentor would have made to teach her the basic dos and don'ts, sparing her all the time spent learning by trial and error. Hence why it brings her immense joy when she teaches the knowledge that she has earned throughout the years and sees other artists benefiting from it. Breaking art blocks for other illustrators to her is pure satisfaction.

To her, every new project is a new



experiment. Because she gets bored real fast, she tries new styles and new techniques. She experiments and never ceases to discover herself through art.

On that she says: "I don't think I'll ever reach a style where I say, ok, that's it, this represents me. On the contrary, this could be a dangerous comfort zone that could get me stuck somewhere, hence, boredom will knock at my door".

Maya is a detail-oriented person. Living in Beirut, the chaotic crazy city has added so much to her vision and love to details. She tries to find beauty in the ugliness, harmony in chaos. Beirut has always been her love and her home.

Recently, Maya found a beautiful old Lebanese house close to her apartment. A house that was built in 1930. She rented it and turned it into an art studio.

Since then, she has been running workshops and courses in that house for professional illustrators as well as beginners.

The atmosphere in this art space, is slowly becoming a famous little art hub in Beirut, a haven for artists to meet, socialize, learn, and share ideas. The feedback that she keeps getting from the participants who come to the studio is heart-warming: the music in the background, the nice old Lebanese interior, the knowledge shared, the follow ups, the art materials provided in her space, as well as the good food.

Reflecting on that, Maya says: "My country has been going through some tough times the past few decades, and things don't seem to get any better. But I believe, through art, we can always do something. I'm trying my best to keep the art scene in Beirut running like many other artists here. That's what we leave behind us, traces of art, beauty, and good vibes. What is left from old cultures is purely art and history".



Maya is currently working on finishing up her website, where she will be selling online workshops and courses in Arabic, after noticing a huge gap of this in the MENA region, in addition to in-studio courses and others.

Finishing up with a quote from Maya:

**"I'm so happy that I was the girl who "only" draws. I turned my passion into a career, into a source of inspiration to many people around the world, and I'm proud of it."**



#### Workshops at her studio in Beirut

From one of her recent workshops at her Studio in the bustling heart of Beirut city, January 2023.



#### Workshops in Cairo - Egypt

A group photo from her workshop in Cairo, December 2022.



**Award List**

**2024**

Hans Christian Andersen Award Nominee  
**Denmark**

**2022**

**Savja**  
IBBY Honor List 2021  
**IBBY**

**2018**

**Aliaa and the Three Cats**  
Best illustrated children's book for Mahmoud Kahil Award  
for Comics and Editorials  
**Lebanon**

**2018**

**The Sheep of The 7th Day**  
Was selected by "The White Raven Books" catalogue 2018  
**Bologna Children's Book Fair**

**2017**

**The Sheep of The 7th Day**  
Best illustrated children's book for Etisalat Children's Book  
Award  
**United Arab Emirates**

**2014**

**Sheep of my Uncle Khalfan**  
Best children's book for Arabi 21 Award  
**Jordan**

**2014**

**Grandmother Naffissa**  
Best illustrated children's book for Arabi 21 Award  
**Jordan**

**2014**

**A Very Mischievous Cat**  
Book of the year award for Etisalat Children's Book Awards  
**United Arab Emirates**

**2013**

**My Own Special Way**  
Best illustrated children's book  
**Riyadh International Bookfair**

**2012**

**My Grandmother Will Always Remember Me**  
Best illustrated children's book  
**Beirut International Bookfair**





## CONTRIBUTION IN THE INDUSTRY

### **Maya Fidawi turned her passion into a job.**

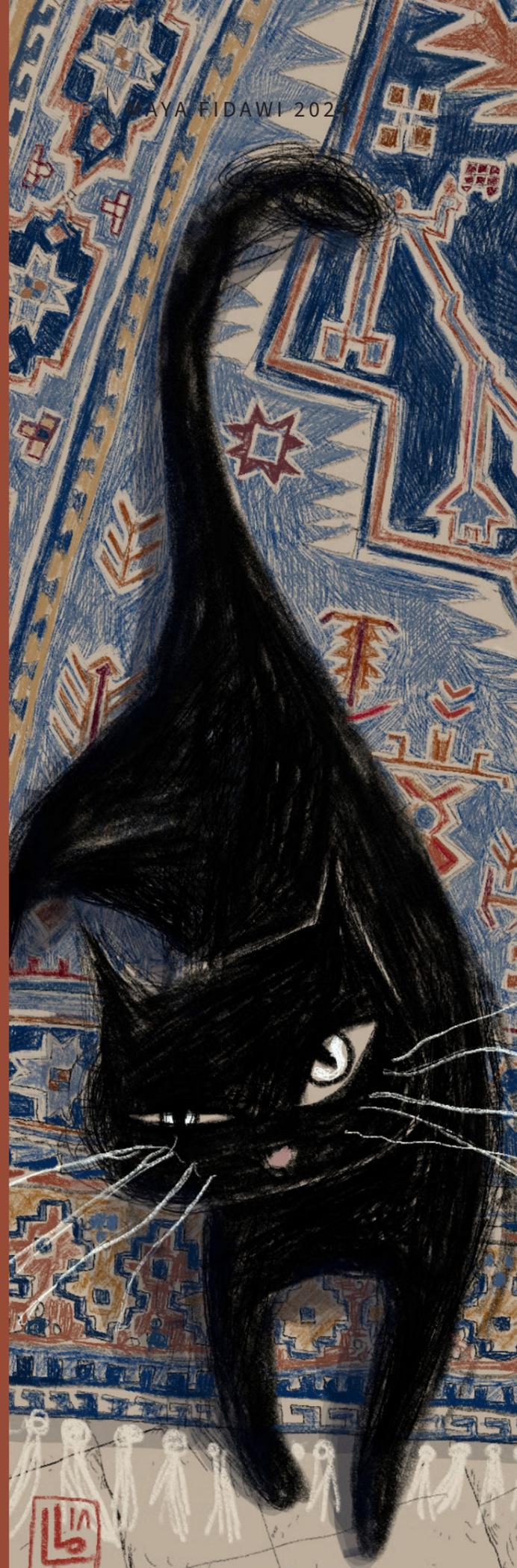
Very lucky are those who are able to realize from an early age what their passion is, and they get luckier when this passion becomes their job.

Maya was able to discover her passion at a very early age. She does not remember when she started drawing. In fact, she does not remember if she was ever interested in learning anything else. She spent most of her time at school drawing rather than studying.

When she studied painting and sculpting at the university, she was working at the same time as a decorative painter in several decoration companies, executing murals and false effects. That's how she earned a wide knowledge in different techniques.

She worked as a freelance illustrator after graduation, in several advertising agencies, which helped her understand how to deal with clients, as well as understanding the concept of industrial art, and that's how she learned storyboarding.

Working as an art teacher in a school was also a plus, it helped her understand how children think and function when it comes to books and drawings, and diving in the world of children and how they draw.



She is a self-taught illustrator, learned everything the long and hard way, it was all a matter of trial and error.

As a professional illustrator, Maya was invited many times to different art fair around the Arab world to run workshops and courses for illustrators.

She was as well a jury member in different events, mainly in children's book illustration competitions. Also a jury member at 3 universities in Beirut and Cairo for illustration art and graphic design graduation projects.

She participated in many panel discussions in different art fairs and seminars, all related to the industry of children's book Illustrations.

She held many workshops for children in many international schools and book fairs in Lebanon and abroad: Jordan, Lebano, Turkey, Italy, Qatar, Morocco, UAE, and Brazil.

She was a jury member at the Sharjah Reading Festival in 2014, electing winners of many illustrators from around the world who participated at the illustrators' exhibition.

She was also a jury member in Sharjah, for best publishers' competition in 2016.

And a jury member at the ALBA, a French Art and Design university in Beirut, for 4 years in a row, for the 4th year graduation graphic design students.

She was also a jury member in December 2022 at the AUC, the American University in Cairo, also for the graduation projects of art and graphic design students.

In Cairo, she did a symposium in Saqiet el Sawi, discussing difficulties that face illustrators, and did a presentation of her work and talked about her journey in this industry.

**In Turkey**

A group photo from her workshop in Istanbul, Turkey 2016.



**In Italy**

Book Signing during her first solo exhibition in Bologna, Italy 2018.



**In Morocco**

An activity that she did with the children at the Tanjier International Book Fair - Morocco 2015



**In Cairo as a jury Member**

Jury member at the AUC, the American University in Cairo for the graphic design department, graduation projects, December 20, 2022.



**In Sharjah - UAE**

Transformed one of the children's drawings into a 2 meter "papier mache" sculpture, as part of an activity she did with the children during the sharjah international bookfair 2014.



**Symposium at Saqiet el Sawi - Cairo**

Discussion in front of a live audience at Saqiet el Sawi in Cairo, on her journey as an illustrator and tutor, December 2022.



She was invited by UAEBBY to São Paulo, Brazil, to represent Arab illustrators at the São Paulo International Book Fair in 2018, and run 2 workshops for children, as well as executing a collaborative book with another Brazilian artist.

In São Paulo, she conducted a panel discussion with international publishers as part of the book fair events that took place.

In January 2023, Maya presented at the Faculty of Art, at the Lebanese University, Tripoli Lebanon, and a mini symposium for the graphic design and art students.

Maya participated in many illustration competitions, such as The Etisalat Children's Book Award UAE, the Mahmoud Kahil Award for Comics and Editorials Beirut, and Arabi 21 Jordan.

She tutored in different art hubs in Beirut and abroad and continues to enjoy teaching and seeing students and participants leaving their comfort zones and trying new techniques and mediums, as well as learning how to see illustration art from a different point of view.

And because of this passion in teaching adults, she now runs her own studio in Beirut where she holds courses and workshops all related to world of illustration art.

The studio is a very old traditional Lebanese house, which she lovingly refers to as her "Gem". People come not only to learn, but also to disconnect from the daily chaos and experiment, along with nice music in the background and overall great vibes.

Teaching different hand painted techniques is her favorite part, using layers and layers of different acrylic colors, then scratching the paint with forks or pencils. Adding pencils strokes on wet paint, throwing splashes of color on the paper, this alone is a therapy.

Maya teaches with all her heart, and shares all her "secret recipes". She would like to think of herself as a generous tutor.



**Activity during the Sao Paulo international book fair 2018**



She tries to spread awareness among illustrators, especially when she feels some illustrators are not taking what they deserve, or how to protect their rights.

She does live streamings on social media every now and then taking about illustration art, dos and don'ts, answers questions, tries to give directions, and to help as best as she can.

So being part of this industry for a good 19 years, she considers it a responsibility to teach what she learned, with total generosity.

**Second Solo Exhibit - Beirut**

She had the opportunity to exhibit her original illustrations from the book "Princess in a Box", which was written by Fatimah Sharafeddine and published by Turning Point, Beirut Lebanon. It was a solo exhibition at the Brazilian Cultural Center, for the book was a story from the Amazon rain forests.



**From her Beirut studio workshops**

Workshop participants hard at work at her Beirut Studio.



# Workshop Testimonials

**“One of the best workshops I ever attended. I would do it over and over. I felt like I was on a cloud in a different world. You are very generous with your teaching. You give and give so much information and tips. Your workshop made me discover a side of me I always knew I had but never knew how to explore. Honestly and truly and unforgettable experience learning from you.”**



**“It was an amazing experience for me I had no idea before that i can go into details as i did during the workshop! As i gained a new way of thinking about creating characters and managing the stuff related to the character to fit in the illustrations Thanks a lot!”**

**“Loved the content and the exercises, and all of the tools and info shared in the workshop! I appreciated mostly the hand drawn sketches – that really made us feel like we might be able to “do this” because we had the chance to see the process and not just the final product. Thank you so much for guiding us through this!”**

**“Hi Maya... I would like to thank you for the wonderful Illustration Art workshop I attended all of last week.. it was a great stress-relieving experience, a challenging but rewarding one too.. I loved the vibes, the music, the art but most of all the care and motivation you gave each and every participant. Thank you again and can't wait till the next workshop.”**



In early 2020, I was approached by someone who had an idea of making customized books, targeted for the children of the Arab diaspora.

The idea of the project was to have 14 Arab illustrators draw the same story happening in 14 different Arab countries.

She was the creative director of the whole project. From the very beginning, She was following up on all aspects of the project; from character designs, to concept designs, all the way to storyboard and composition, until the whole series was finished.

The project took 2 years of nonstop follow up, over long zoom calls with all illustrators one by one, taking into consideration the different time zones, the progress of the illustrator and the details of each country and each character had to be also taken into consideration; from clothes, to patterns, to food and interior architecture, plantation and greenery, the colors of nature of each country, the places and streets illustrators were drawing. Everybody had to be very precise respecting all of the above in each book.

The result was amazing, 14 books are out in the market now, targeting the children of the Arab diaspora, so they can understand about their countries and cultures.

The project is called Joozoori, meaning in Arabic "My Roots".

Following up on this project was so enriching on many levels. She got to meet amazing illustrators, learned about

lot about many Arab countries, their habits and rituals, their different spoken Arabic languages, their nature and historical sites, it was as if they all travelled to these countries from behind their screens.

The project was out in December 2022.

People started ordering their customized copies for their children and it's really doing great.

IG account: [JOOZOORI](https://www.instagram.com/joozoori)





**“Growing up in Lebanon was and still is fascinating on all levels. Witnessing all the ups and downs, wars, art, music, revolutions, festivals, chaos, etc... it all makes it a mad and magical place to be able to create and draw, and get inspired from the smallest details around me. I try to find beauty in chaos, I imagine stories in my head when I’m walking around in my beautiful city,**



**admiring the lovely old Lebanese architecture, abandoned houses, chaotic electric wires, mad people driving, vendors, music of all kinds, I just walk around and store everything in my sharp visual memory, to translate them later on paper or ipad, to put them later in a children’s book, where both children and parents relate to the smallest details I add.”**

# INTERVIEWS & ARTICLES



## Maktabatee Spotlight: Illustrator Maya Fidawi



<https://www.maktabatee.com/blogs/mudawwanati/maktabatee-spotlight-illustrator-maya-fidawi>



When we source books for Maktabatee, we look for a few important components: a storyline children in the West can relate to, compelling illustrations, easy to understand language, and of course the quality of the book itself. When we began this process, we were taken aback by the incredible talent we found, especially the whimsical and creative illustrations that adorned book covers and pages. These illustrations helped the story come alive and made the scenes of the story even more memorable for our kids.

The illustrations of the talented Maya Fidawi stood out among the stories we began compiling for our launch collection. If you've read Uncle Khalfan's Sheep, you know the story will bring out the belly laughs pretty quickly. The sheep take a trip to the dentist, and each of their unique personalities is captured with utmost detail-- from the dainty "Mazyoona" carrying her lady purse and donning a fur jacket, to the athletically inclined "Haddaf" with his gym shorts, dumbbells, and cheeky smile. When

Not only is it hard to artistically capture the exact expression of humans in these books, but more so the animals! We can read the face of Fifi the troublemaking cow as she wreaks havoc in Dana's house with a grin along the way.

And while the characters of a book are important, the setting of the story is equally compelling. In Fidawi's illustrations, you are pulled into the pages of the book and can almost smell the aroma of garlic and chicken in Nora's kitchen as her parents try to convince her to eat her mulukhiyah instead of watermelon for dinner.

In Majid's grandmother's house, parents in particular will feel a sense of nostalgia as they notice all the details of the setting of a traditional Arab home, from the woven rugs, to the antenna on the tv, to the Turkish coffee in the backyard. We wanted to know what inspires these beautiful illustrations and the story behind them, so we interviewed Maya Fidawi, a Beirut-based children's book illustrator.

### Can you tell us a little about yourself? What kind of childhood did you have?

I was not a great student during all my school years. I did not care about anything in school except the art class; it was sacred to me. I was picked on frequently, called names, and never actually had friends. This made me resort to art—I was drawing nonstop, even during class and explanations, sometimes even during exams.

I learned that being an A student is not a requirement to being successful in life. I believe that finding something you are passionate about (and if you're lucky, making a job out of it) is more important than any grade you need in school.

### Where did you grow up and how did it influence your future career?

I was born and raised in Beirut, by a family who admires art in all its forms. We never left Lebanon during the war, so I guess the chaos that I witnessed as a child, and now as a grown up as well, impacted me in many ways. My late grandmother was my first inspiration. She used to draw and play music when I was a baby. Watching her while growing up added a lot of excitement to my worldview and colored childhood memories.

### How did you become an illustrator?

After graduating from the Lebanese University, with a major in Painting and Sculpting, I worked as a freelancer in several advertising agencies, executing storyboards, package design illustrations, etc. A client once saw my work on a calendar and she happened to be a publisher. She asked me to draw a book for her publishing house. It was back in 2004, the book was titled "Life's Like That." And that's how I started illustrating books, word of mouth and a bit of work here and there!



Well, my friends and colleagues call me queen of details. I observe a lot (politely) and discretely, and I depend on my visual memory when I illustrate. I enjoy drawing anything sarcastic, and anything that relates to love and emotions. I'm inspired by different Arab and non-Arab illustrators, and I try to keep myself updated with the latest trends. It's good to be inspired by a certain artist, but it's also tricky and dangerous, because each artist should add their own experience, soul, memories, and culture to their work. It shouldn't be a copy of others.

I get bored quickly and I don't like repeating the same style more than once, that's why I try to change my medium, color palette, style of drawing. For me, each new book is a new challenge and an experimentation field. When I look at the work I did ten years ago, for example, I'm very critical of it, and I wonder, "What was I thinking?!"



### Do you think illustrating Arabic children's books is harder than other books?

Not necessarily, it depends on the content, the size of the book, the amount of text, then comes the age group. Naturally, you will have to put yourself in the shoes of a five-year-old sometimes, which is a cool place to be. I always prefer drawing for the younger ages because they are less complicated beings.

### What do you think makes a great children's book?

Everything that is in between the cover-- the text, the good illustrations, the production, the paper quality-- it's a whole package. If the text is excellent and the illustrations are not very appealing, the book wouldn't be a hit and vice versa. If the illustrations are great but the story is weak, you get a similar result.

### What was your favorite book as a child?

I never had a favorite book as a child. I just grabbed any book I could find and admired the illustrations for hours, wondering how could they do this! But by far, the stories my grandma told me were the best, because there were no illustrations, I had the freedom to imagine the scenes and characters, which was more magical than any book I ever read as a child.

### Has becoming a mother changed the way you illustrate children's books? What is your favorite Arabic book to read to your children?

Becoming a mother has changed my whole life and turned it upside down; it's a huge challenge and it certainly has impacted my work. I use my daily life details in my illustrations-- my children's little toys, clothes, or manners, and mostly their features, are everywhere in my illustrations.

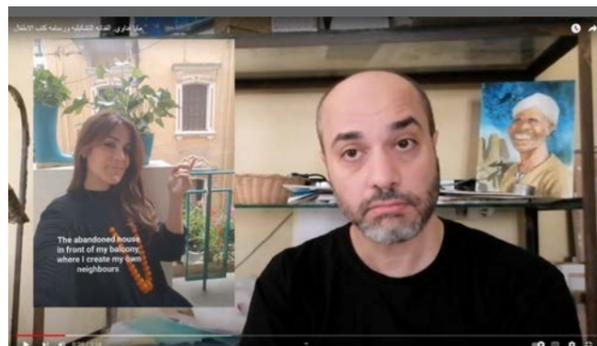
Thank you, Maya, for giving us a bird's eye view of the life of a children's book illustrator!



# VIDEO COVERAGE



**Video Article on Maya and her work**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4TzWyF7s3KM>



**Tomorrow We Will See - Documentary**  
Her excerpt from the documentary.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jldj4jLUKY>



**Interview on Shariqa Tv on "Book Hour"**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-CZYlwnGRM>



**Coverage of her seminar via Madrasati TV**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DiZuBWKU3oE>



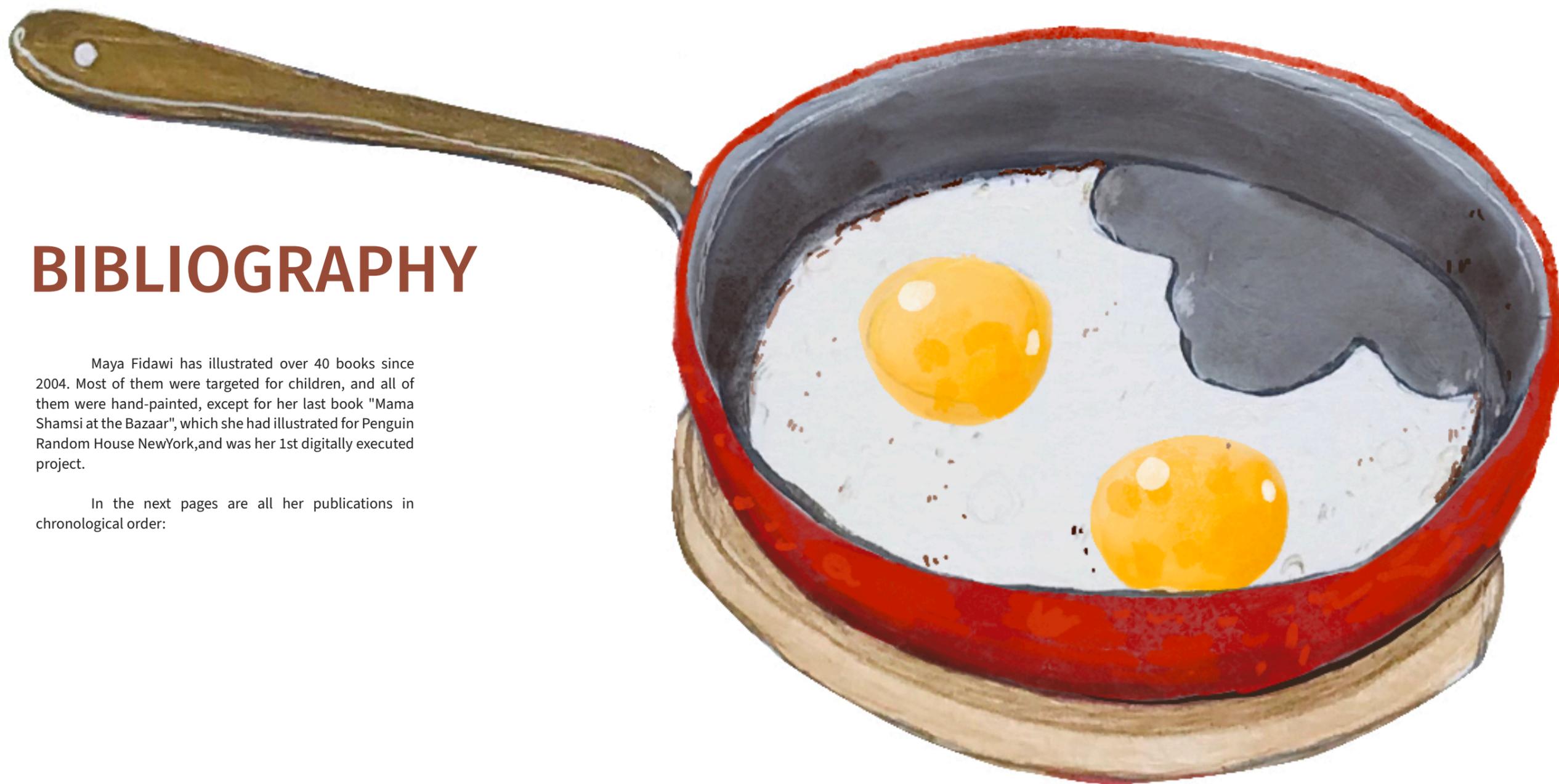
**Interview on RT talking about illustration**  
<https://fb.watch/ii6cxyYYHi/>

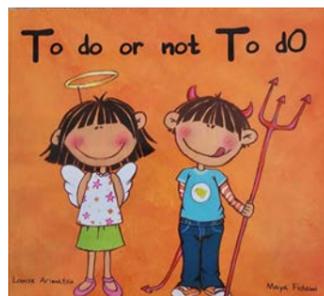


# BIBLIOGRAPHY

Maya Fidawi has illustrated over 40 books since 2004. Most of them were targeted for children, and all of them were hand-painted, except for her last book "Mama Shamsi at the Bazaar", which she had illustrated for Penguin Random House NewYork, and was her 1st digitally executed project.

In the next pages are all her publications in chronological order:





## TO DO OR NOT TO DO

Written by Louise Armatsu.

Published in 2005 by Yuki Press, Beirut, Lebanon

Acrylic on Paper.

ISBN 9953-9022--3-2



## SAVE US

Written by Roula Saadeh

Published in 2006 by Turning Point, Beirut, Lebanon.

Coloring pencils and ink on craft paper.

ISBN 9953-0-0022-0



## I MISS MY DAD

Written by Abeer Ballan

Published in 2008 by Kalimat, Sharjah, UAE.

Watercolor and ink on paper.

ISBN 994803739-1



## I CAN'T SLEEP

Written by Abir Ballan

Published in 2008 by Kalimat, Sharjah, UAE.

Watercolor and ink on paper.

ISBN 994803756-1



## WHAT ABOUT ME?

Written by Abir Ballan

Published in 2008 by Kalimat, Sharjah, UAE.

Watercolor and ink on paper.

ISBN 994803744-7



## MY GRANMOTHER AND THE MOON

Written by Fatimah Sharafeddine

Published in 2008 by Kalimat, UAE

Watercolor and ink on paper

ISBN 994803852-5



## I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT

Written by Fatimah Sharafeddine

Published in 2008 by Kalimat, Sharjah, UAE.

Watercolor and pencil on Paper.

ISBN 994803851-7



## THE MYSTERY OF THE ADULTS

Written by Abir Ballan

Published in 2010 by Kalimat, Sharjah, UAE.

Watercolor and ink on Paper.

ISBN 978-9948-15-777-9



## MY BICYCLE

Written by Fatimah Sharafeddine

Published in 2010 by Kalimat, UAE

Watercolor and pencil on paper

ISBN : 978-9948-15-775-5



## MY OWN SPECIAL WAY

Written by Maithaa Al Khayyat

Published in 2010 by Kalimat, UAE.

Watercolor and ink on paper

ISBN 978-9948-15-537-9



## AHMED EL HELOU

Written by Marwa Al Aqroubi

Published in 2010 by Kalimat, UAE.

Watercolor and ink on paper

ISBN 978-9948-15-811-0



## BUBBLE HERO

Written by Abir Ballan.

Published in 2011 by Kalimat, Sharjah UAE.

Acrylics on paper

ISBN-10: 978-9948161475 ISBN-13: 978-9948161479



## FIFI

Written by Taghreed el Najjar

Published by Al Salwa Books, Jordan

Published in 2012

Watercolor and ink on paper

ISBN : 978-9957-04-065-9



## GRANDMOTHER NAFFISA

Written by Taghreed el Najjar

Published in 2012 by Al Salwa Books, Jordan.

Watercolor and ink on paper

ISBN: 978-9975-04-061-1



## GRANDMOTHER WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER ME

Written by Samar Mahfouz Barraj

Published in 2012 by Yuki Press, Beirut

Watercolor and ink on paper

ISBN 978-9953-478-17-3



## EVERYTHING IS NEW

Written by Fatimah Sharafeddine

Published in 2012 by Kalimat, Sharjah, UAE.

Watercolor and pencil on paper

ISBN 978-9948-85-167-7



## MOM'S WEIRD STOCKINGS

Written by Maithaa Al Khayyat

Published in 2013 by Kalimat, UAE

Watercolor and ink on paper

ISBN: 978-9948-20-221-9



## LONG LIVE LETTER "SH"

Written by Abir Ballan

Published in 2013 by Kalimat UAE

Watercolor and ink on paper

ISBN 978-9948-44-059-8



## HOME

Written by Oumeima Olleik

Published in 2014 by Dar Al Banan, Tyre, Lebanon.

Watercolor and Ink on paper.

ISBN 978-9953-598-04-8



## A VERY MISCHIEVOUS CAT

Written by Abeer el Taher

Published in 2014 by Dar Al Yasamin , Jordan.

Acrylic and ink on paper

ISBN: 978-9957-8666-2-5



## RED, YELLOW, BLUE

Written by Salma Qoreytem

Published in 2014 by Al Hadaek Group, Beirut.

Watercolor and ink on paper

ISBN 978-614-439-016-X



## THE MAN WHO MAKES THE CHERRY TREES BLOSSOM

Written by Fatimah Sharafeddine

Published in 2014 by Turning Point, Beirut, Lebanon.

Watercolor and Ink on paper.

ISBN-13: 9789953030500



## THE KING'S GUITAR

Written by Fatimah Sharafeddine

Published in 2014 by Turning Point, Beirut, Lebanon.

Acrylic and coloring pencils on Paper.

ISBN 9789953030524



## THE SHINING SMILE MAKER

Written by Rayy Abdelal

Published in 2014 by Kalimat, Sharjah, UAE.

Watercolor, acrylic and mixed media on paper.

ISBN 9789948223344



## TOUTTI THE WHALE

Written by Samar Mahfouz Barraaj

Published in 2014 by Turning Point, Beirut, Lebanon.

Watercolor and ink on paper.

ISBN 978-9953-0-2448-0



## THE RED MAPLE LEAF

Written by Fatimah Sharafeddine

Published in 2015 by Turning Point, Beirut, Lebanon.

Acrylic on paper.

ISBN 978-9953-0-3060-9



## WATERMELON MADNESS

Written by Taghreed el Najjar

Published in 2016 by Al Salwa Books, Jordan.

Acrylic and pencil on paper

ISBN: 978-9957-04-077-2



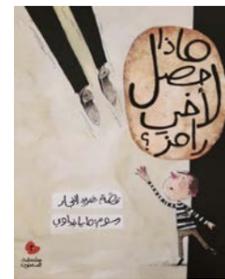
## THE SHEEP OF MY UNCLE KHALFAN

Written by Maithaa Al Khayyat

Published in 2016 by Al Salwa Books, Jordan.

Ink and pencil on paper

ISBN: 978-9957-04-073-4



## MY BROTHER AND MEV

Written by Taghreed el Najjar

Published in 2016 by Al Salwa Books, Jordan.

Watercolor and ink on paper.

ISBN 978-9957-04-086-4



## ALYAA AND THE THREE CATS

Written by Amina Hachemi Alaoui

Published in 2017 by Yanbow Al Kitab, Casablanca, Morocco.

Acrylic and Ink on Paper.

ISBN 978-9954-486-64-1



## SHEEP OF THE 7TH DAY

Written by Amina Hachemi Alaoui

Published in 2017 by Yanbow Al Kitab, Casablanca, Morocco

Acrylic and mixed media on paper.

ISBN 978-9954-486-80-1



## SOMETHING IN MY HAND

Written by Haifaa Mouhareb Sawarkeh

Published in 2017 by Al Salwa Books, Amman, Jordan.

Acrylic and coloring pencils on paper.

ISBN 978-9957-04-093-2



## GINGER

Written by Ahlam Bsharat

Published in 2017 by Tamer Institute for Community Education, Ramallah, Palestine.

Watercolor and ink on paper

ISBN 978-9950-26-094-8



## MY MOM IS MY CLASSMATE

Written by Lubna Taha

Published in 2018 by Al Salwa Books

Watercolor and ink on paper

ISBN 978-9957-04-135-9



## PRINCESS IN A BOX

Written by Fatimah Sharafeddine

Published in 2018 by Turning Point, Beirut, Lebanon

Acrylic and coloring pencils on paper.

ISBN-10: 9789953172107



## SAVJAH

Written by Fatima Sharafeddine

Published in 2019 by Dar Al Saqi, Beirut

Watercolor and ink on paper

ISBN 978-614-03-2070-3



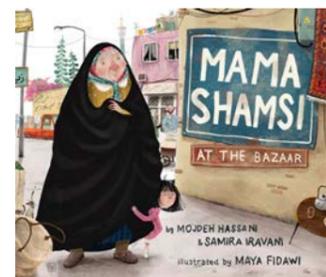
## SARA'S NEWS

Written by Sarah Hagrass

Published in 2019 by Nahdat Masr.

Acrylic on paper.

ISBN: 13 987 9771456926



## MAMA SHAMSI AT THE BAZAAR

Written by Mojdeh Hassani and Samira Iravani

Published in 2023 by Dial Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Penguin Random House, Newyork, USA.

Digital artwork executed on Procreate.

ISBN 9780593110614





## Selected 10

### 01

#### MY MOM IS MY CLASSMATE

Written by Lubna Taha.

Published in 2018 by Al Salwa Books, Amman, Jordan

Watercolor and coloring pencils on paper.

Little girl gets weird nightmares.

Like going to school barefoot, or farting in class accidentally and get laughed at, but she never thought having her mom as her classmate would be the worst nightmare.

How embarrassing is that?

Her mom informs the family one day that she has decided to take English classes. And the place she chooses is her daughter's school.

And when mom decides on doing something, nothing ever stops her.

In the beginning, the girls gets really embarrassed among her classmates. But with time, the girls in her class become best friends with the mom. The girl is still not happy about this.

But in the end, she accepts it cause she sees how popular her mom becomes and how helpful to her classmates and how friendly she is, especially when it comes to Arabic classes.

She helps everyone especially her daughter.

Not a very ordinary thing to happen to any child.

At this age, 9 or 10 year old kids, get embarrassed if their parents kiss them in front of their friends for example. Or if they show any affection.

Our young lady here is standing face to face with her biggest fears. Having her mom with her in class all the time.

It's a fun book about acceptance, about befriending your parents/ children the correct way.

The flow of the story itself is sweet and the climax is funny. Children in general really enjoy it. The illustrations are also a result of many childhood memories and many details that are related to Maya's daily life with her children. She thinks that she and her daughter relate to this book pretty much.

Year : 2018

## 02

### SOMETHING IN MY HAND

Written by Haifaa Mouhareb Sawarkeh

Published in 2017 by Al Salwa Books

This book talks about a little girl who's trying to grab the attention of her family members, by playing a game with them.

She's pretending to have something in her hand and trying to make everyone around to guess what it is.

In the end, the only person who plays it her was is her grandfather, who in his turn, is trying to let her guess what's in his bag.

She tells him in the end that what's hiding in her hand was a little kiss, which she blows from her hand to his cheek.

The text itself is a sweet playful story. Most of the time we dont give our children enough attention cause we get distracted a lot by our daily tasks and jobs. So the children end up seeking attention in different ways. Sometimes it gets out of control, but in this story it's spreading awareness to both children and parents that our children really need our time with them and our attention.

In this book, she wanted to draw the spreads elongated (portrait). So the book opens upwards. Not a very usual way to hold a book, but this was also done on purpose, to grab the attention of both parents and children.

She used light pastel colors, added details from around her own house, and her children's toys and little gadgets.

Acrylic and coloring pencils on paper

Year : 2017





## 03

### MY BROTHER AND ME

Written by Taghreed El Najjar.  
Published in 2016 by Al Salwa Book, Amman, Jordan.  
Watercolor and ink on paper.

Ali is a youngest in the family. He gets all the attention especially from his remarkably older brother Ramez.

They share so many things, Ramez drives his little brother to school, he watches basketball games with his brother and his friends.

Suddenly Ramez gets distracted. He starts taking care of his appearance, wears perfume, and spends most of his time out and about.

One day, Ramez tells his family that he has decided to get engaged. All the attention goes to his fiancé.

Not very surprisingly, Ali gets really jealous. He does everything possible to act weirdly in front of his brother's fiancé Dima and tries to annoy her in every possible way, but she knows how to handle it, the friendly way.

She starts playing his way, and sharing his video games and tells him little funny stories.

So she befriends Ali and they become best friends.

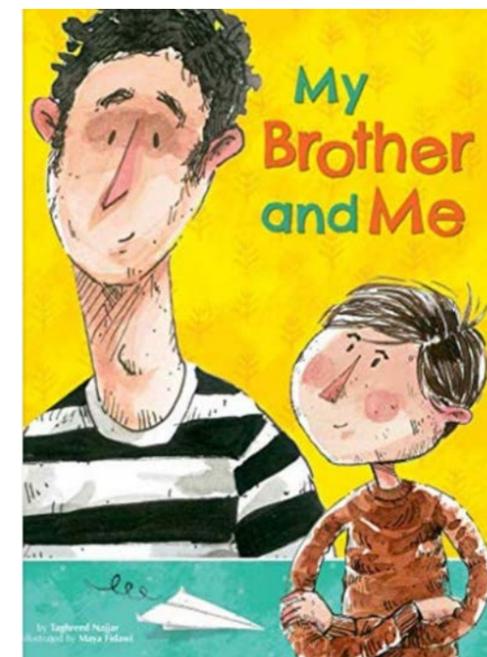
This is a young adult chapter book. It was her 1<sup>st</sup> chapter book she ever executed.

It talks about jealousy and acceptance, especially among children. It also shows some rituals from the Arab world when someone gets engaged and the habits and different kinds of food and drinks served during these ceremonies, not forgetting the devilish little acts that children would do to grab the attention of their family members.

She really enjoyed reading the text before drawing it. Drawing it was so much fun, and She had the chance to read it during the reading week in many schools around Lebanon on stage. Her children love it.

Year : 2017

Translated by Michelle Hartman  
Published in 2019 by CrackBoom books, Canada.  
Watercolor and ink on paper.



## 04

## RED MAPLE LEAF

Written by Fatimah Sharafeddine  
published in 2015 by Turning Point, Beirut Lebanon.  
Acrylic on paper.

A husband and wife who lived in one of China's villages, together with the mother of the husband, weren't very happy because the mother-in-law mistreated the wife in a bad way.

The couple decide to move to another village riding their horses.

On their way, they decide to rest next to a river, and drink from it. The river had a reddish tint color.

After riding for days, they reach an old lady's house, where they decide to rest and stay with her for a while. The old woman tells them that the water that they drank will hold a curse.

The curse was, that a monster was going to kidnap the wife and make her his own spouse, and this will happen once they see a red maple leaf during autumn.

The wife gets kidnapped for real, the husband fights for her and defeats the monster, and they live happily ever after.

Year : 2015





## 05 HOME

Written by Oumaima Olleik.  
Published in 2014 by Dar Al Banan, Tyre, Lebanon  
Watercolor and Ink on paper.

This book projects the importance of the warmth and love among family members regardless of their location or surrounding.

This book talks about a little girl who lives in a chaotic city, just like Maya's.

Afterall family matters the most.

Throughout this book, the little girl compares her house and surrounding with other's.

She explains that because of the condensation of buildings around her house, the sun rays never reach their home. But her mother's smiles enlighten their mornings everyday just like the sun.

There are no trees or gardens around their area, but her father makes sure all the windows are surrounded with plants and flowers. He waters them and takes care of them everyday.

There are no birds to wake them up in the morning, instead there are cars and noise outside.

But her little siblings' little voices and laughters are as enchanting as the songs of little birds.

The house doesn't have a nice view, it's just buildings everywhere. But her elder sister's bed time stories give them an endless view in their imaginations.

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Year : 2014

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## 06

### LONG LIVE LETTER "SH"

Written by Abeer Balkan  
published in 2013 by Kalimat, Sharjah UAE.

While eating his letter soup, a little boy ate all the letters except letter "SH".

Surprise surprise, he is not able to pronounce that letter anymore.

He tells all his friends and he gets very ashamed of how he pronounces it now.

He gets help from his best friend. She shows him how he can, with his tongue pulled inside, and by trying over and over, he is finally able to pronounce it.

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Year : 2013

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## 07

### SHEEP OF MY UNCLE KHALFAN

Written by Maitha Al Khayat  
published in 2013 by Kalimat, Sharjah UAE.  
Pencils and ink on paper.

Uncle Khalfan has a farm where he raises his sheep herd.

One day, the dentist comes to visit, to do a check up on all the sheep teeth.

One by one, the sheep, with their different funny characters and personalities, they all appear to have problems.

Some have cavities, others need braces, etc.

Except for one little sheep, who took good care of his teeth, and was very proud that the doctor gave him a little treat in the end as a gift.

Year : 2013

## 08

GRANDMOTHER  
NAFISA

Written by Taghreed el Najjar.  
Published in 2012 by Al Salwa Books, Amman Jordan.  
Watercolor and ink on paper.

Majed's mom and dad are very busy today, so his mom decides to send him to his grandmother's house to spend the day.

Grandmother Naffissa is not an ordinary grandmother. She's a very active artist, very sporty and super cool. Her house is full of statues and paintings. They prepare a super fast breakfast, made of a blend of healthy fruits and a pinch of honey. They they paint together, and decide to go to downtown Amman to send some of her artwork to an art gallery, where Majed meets the owner of the gallery. His grandmother is so active he could barely keep up with her. The amount of energy she has is just out of this world.

After the gallery, they go eat lunch, then ice cream, then they head to a hardware and antique store shop in downtown Amman where Grandmother Naffissa always buys her things that she uses to create her artwork. In the afternoon, they go back home and grandma takes a little power nap.

Father comes to pick up Majed back home and finds grandma sleeping. He cracks a laugh thinking that Grandma is an old lady who needs to rest all the time.

Majed laughs at his father, cause his dad knows nothing.

This one reminds Maya a lot of her grandmother.

Her Mom was a working woman. So as she grew up, her mom used to send her to spend the days at her grandmother's all the time.

Her childhood memories were popping up everytime she illustrated a different spread.

She remember the carpets at her grandma's, the vintage furniture, the kitchen and the amazing smells that always came out of it.

She remembers how they used to go grocery shopping together with her grandma, She used to be very short so everything she saw was huge. She couldn't see the fruits and vegetables cause she was shorter than the boxes. She tried to put as much memories as possible from those days that are so precious to me.

It's worth mentioning that her grandmother was her very 1st inspiration. she used to watch her paint and play the piano when she was very small. She used to read nonstop. She really miss her.

This book was a mixture of emotions and funny events. It's also many children's favorite, as children always relate to their grandmas in this one.

Year : 2012





## 09 FIFI

Written by Taghreed El Najjar.  
Published in 2012 by Al Salwa Books, Amman Jordan.  
Watercolor and ink on paper.

Dana is a little girl who lives in a house with a garden in Amman

Saleh her uncle lives in a farm away from the city, where he grows ducks and chicken, rabbits and sheep, and a beautiful cow called Fifi.

He decides one day to give Fifi to Dana on her birthday.

Dana is super excited and happy, none of her classmates or friends ever got a cow as a birthday present.

Dana tries her best to keep Fifi under control, but fifi is a little huge rascal; she destroys everything wherever she goes. And Fifi hates to be tied to a tree.

Fifi pulls the rope and runs into the house, and the house becomes a total mess.

Dana's mom calls Saleh thanking him for the amazing gift, and asking him to take his cow back to the farm where she belongs.

Dana now get's to visit Fifi at the farm every weekend.

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Year : 2012

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# 10

## BUBBLE HERO

Written by Abir Ballan.  
Published in 2011 by Kalimat, Sharjah UAE.  
Acrylics on paper

Our little boy has a problem.

His stomach is always full of air bubbles, which makes him fart all the time.

His farts get bigger and bigger until one day he makes a huge air bubble and flies in the sky, higher than the airplanes.

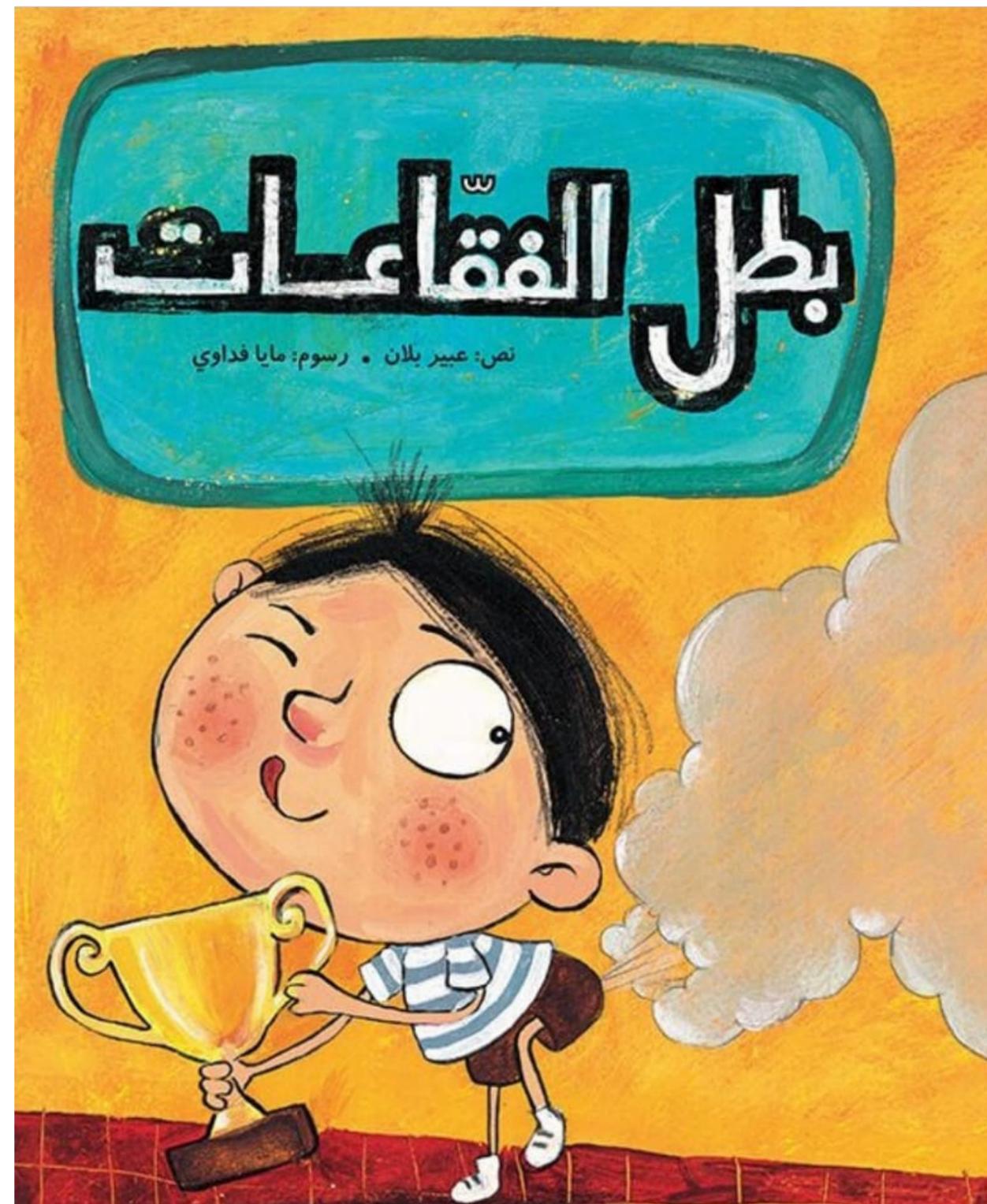
He then becomes a hero, and everyone calls him the Airbubble Hero.

He becomes so famous and his interviews become everywhere in the media.

This book was not just funny, children adored it because the whole subject is a "taboo" to them. Parents would forbid their kids to fart in public, which is normal, but it is also ok to pop some farts when you need to, otherwise your stomach will be filled with gases that might hurt you.

Although it was only printed once, cause the topic is not the parents' favorite; in their opinion, farts will always be a taboo. Nevertheless, She still finds it a funny book, and always enjoyed watching children reading it and giggling over the illustrations.

Year : 2011





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