



Taghreed A. Najjar

*Jordanian Author candidate for the
2020 Hans Christian Andersen Award*

Taghreed Najjar

EXPERIENCE

- 1996 – present Al Salwa Publishing House, Jordan
Founder & Author
- Founded the Publishing House in 1996 to specialize in original Arabic content for children and young adults
 - Wrote and published over 70 books including craft and young adult books.
 - Built a network of illustrators, designers and publishing professionals
 - Participated in regional and international Book fairs like; Goteborg, Bologna, Frankfurt, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Beirut, Cairo, Tunisia.
 - Presented various workshops to teachers, librarians and industry professionals.
- 1985 – 1995 Primary Teacher at Amman National School, Amman - Jordan
- 1981 – 1985 Kindergarten teacher at Little House School, Jeddah - KSA
- 1979 – 1980 Kindergarten teacher at Sultan Qaboos School, Muscat - Oman
- 1978 – 1979 Head of publishing at Haya Cultural Centre, Amman - Jordan
- 1973 – 1977 English Teacher and Head of the English Department at Amman Government Schools

EDUCATION

- 1969 - 1973 American University of Beirut, Lebanon
B.A. English Language with a Diploma in Education & a Minor in Psychology

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Developed a non-curricular reading program for beginner readers called "Da'am"
- Established a puppet theatre group called "Story Puppet Theatre"
- Wrote stories for newly literate adults commissioned by UNESCO and Noor Al Hussein Foundation.

ACTIVITIES

TALKS, WORKSHOPS & WRITTEN PAPERS

- Gotburg Bookfair – talks and presentations 2015, 2017
- Shoman Foundation – workshop for beginner writers 2018
- Jeddah – workshops and presentations at Kaust school 2016
- Doha – American School of Doha workshops and presentations 2016
- Ramallah – presentations and talks 2017
- “Emirates Literature Festival”, UAE 2016 & 2018.
- “The Mantua Literature Festival”, Italy 2008
- “Images of the Middle East” Festival, Denmark 2006
- The Reading Festival at the World Library Program Stockholm / Sweden 2006
- “How to support & develop the publishing & distribution of children books” Alexandria 2007 (in collaboration with SIDA & Anna Lindh Foundation for Reading Development in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria)

WRITTEN PAPERS

- “How to Promote Creativity in Children Books”, Oman in 2008.
- “How New Technologies Affect Children Literature”, Dubai 2006 at the first Gulf Child conference in.
- "How to Enter the World of Children", International Writer’s Workshop, Hong Kong - Beijing 2005.
- "Problems Facing Children Book Publishers "in Frankfurt 2005.
- The art of book production for the Arab child, in Jordan 2002
- Children's literature in Jordan - present and future, Jordan 2005 on the occasion of the centenary of Hans Christian Andersen

1. A statement on the candidate's contribution to literature for young people

Taghreed Najjar has been writing for children for over 40 years now. She started her writing career in the mid-seventies when there was no established publishing industry for children books in Jordan. She overcame great logistical difficulties at the start of her career but managed to keep challenging herself to follow her passion. In the process she founded her own children book publishing company, now one of the respected publishing companies in the region.

Over the years she has written 70 books for a wide range of ages. Her output includes picture books for ages 3-7 that have become classics, read and enjoyed by more than one generation, books for early readers 7-8, two of which have won awards, and inspiring novels for teens and young adults that address difficult subjects reflecting the realities of political and cultural conflicts in the area.

Najjar has succeeded in making her novels exciting and appealing to both teens and adults. Each of her works is unique in its approach. Four of Najjar's novels have all been shortlisted for regional awards. Her books are celebrated and loved by parents and teachers who use them in schools as supplementary readers.

Furthermore, several of Taghreed Najjar's books have been translated into several languages, including English, French, Danish, Swedish, Italian, Turkish and Greek. Several of her books have won awards, including the Itisalat Book Award 2017 for her book *What happened to my Brother Ramez?* and the Kitabi Arab thought Award 2013 for her picture book *Grandma Nafeesa*.

Three of Najjar's books have been chosen for the International White Raven Award, which is given to books that have universal themes and/or innovative artistic style. She has also recently been nominated for the prestigious Alma award for 2019.

<https://arabkidlitnow.com/2018/10/21/3-arabkidlitnow-authors-nominated-for-2019-astrid-lindgren-memorial-award/>

Excerpt from a study by Nisreen Anati
Children's Literature in Education

The Influence of the Arab Spring on Arabic YA Literature

Link to complete study

<https://slideheaven.com/the-influence-of-the-arab-spring-on-arabic-ya-literature.html>

Abstract

This study explores the impact of the political uprisings in the Middle East, known as the Arab Spring, on Arabic YA literary books. It is based on a content analysis of the Etisalat Book Award's shortlisted entries for the period 2012–2016

Mystery of the Falcon's Eye by Taghreed Najjar:

First example:

[**Mystery of the Falcon's Eye**] by Taghreed Al Najjar,



Shortlisted for the Etisalat Children Literature Award 2014.

What is it like to be young in occupied Palestine today? The answer to this question is the focus of this stirring novel about the Palestinian Nakba. It concerns a

whole people, driven out of their villages and their homeland and not allowed to return.

Ziad, aged 17, discovers an exciting secret about his ancestral abandoned village, "Lifta," a few kilometers from Jerusalem city. With the help of his eighteen-year-old sister, Najwa, and Facebook friends residing on the Israeli side, Ziad decides to explore and solve the mystery of the eponymous "falcon's eye". Al Najjar's novel certainly, exhibits some of the themes and characteristics of quality children's and YA literature. Ziad is an admirable, well-rounded character, whose quest to recover his treasure can be interpreted not only as an exciting adventure but also as a journey of self-discovery. The author has excelled in merging Standard Arabic with an authentic Palestinian dialect. Beyond this, Al Najjar not only pays attention to Arabic words, but also to Hebrew. The protagonist, Ziad, has, in fact, just learned his first Hebrew word: "besaider" or okay (p. 120). This close attention to word choice makes the novel read in a sinuous and direct manner, giving it pace and direction, and letting it deal more straightforwardly with complex and important issues. It even manages to include informative footnotes about the actual locations and events mentioned in the story (e.g. telling us that the Qalandia boarder "is located south of Ramallah city..." (p. 1)).

"Mystery of the Falcon's Eye" is a story that works on various levels. Most obviously, it is an action-packed adventure involving a treasure hunt, but it is also a story of faithful friendship. On a deeper level still, it is a coming of age story that involves Ziad in a search for his roots. The novel portrays a mixture of cultures and beliefs. Al Najjar has painted a vivid and immersive portrait of the reality of daily life for Palestinians of many different backgrounds, both in the West Bank, and within the borders of Israel. She gradually moves the reader from one cultural scene into another. So, a reader is presented with a highly authentic picture of the miserable life of Palestinians in the refugee camps on the West Bank, as shown in Ziad's family life. Al Najjar then moves the reader a few miles away, to a scene in occupied Jerusalem, where most Israelis reside. Finally, she takes us to Lifta, which is depicted in very different terms, even down to its smells. We learn that the only reason the village has survived is because of the Al Subar, or cactus bushes, which surround the village. An image of this is captured on the book's cover

According to Al Najjar, the village of Lifta is "unique among the 400+ documented Palestinian villages that were emptied of their original inhabitants.

Lifta has the distinction that it is the only village whose houses are still standing and have not been resettled by Jewish immigrants or turned into a tourist location or art , p. 175). This is a constructive way for both Palestinian and Arab

children to connect with the pre-1948 heritage of Palestine, as well as being a way of informing children worldwide about this controversial issue in an emotionally engaging and moving way.

Al Najjar is also very successful in describing the daily social life and situation in Palestine. Arabs, for example, are famous for their hospitality and honoring their guests. In the novel, members of Yousef's family, including his parents, grandparents, and children, gather to welcome Ziad, who has just crossed the Israeli borders in order to search for his roots in the neighboring village, Lifta. Om

Yousef prepares all sorts of delicious food for Ziad, the taste of her cooking reminding him of his own mother's food (p. 123).

Although Al Najjar describes the traditional lifestyle of the Palestinians, there is still an authentic and contemporary feel to the book in the way she depicts these Arab adolescents. Thus, they are all technologically savvy, using the Internet and smart phones to communicate with each other, with Najwa using the former to learn more about Lifta. She also watches a video on YouTube about the place, as reported by the activist "Yaqoob Audah" (p. 75). Finally, we are shown Majd, Zaid's friend, using his phone to take pictures of the "found gold" for "documentation" (p. 159). *Mystery of the Falcon's Eye* portrays both the social values that Arabs have in common and the distinctive positions and roles of men and women. Parents and society, especially in rural areas, encourage young Arab women to help with household chores like cooking, cleaning and taking care of their younger siblings. Najwa, Ziad's sister, is expected to stay at home to take care of her younger brother, Salem, who has a heart problem (p. 132). Ziad also finds himself the sole breadwinner in his family after his father is arrested by the Israeli authorities. He thus, works temporarily as a house painter in order to collect more money to cover the expense of his brother's heart surgery.

Like many young adults, Ziad struggles with his identity but, like many Arab teenagers, this struggle is exacerbated by the cultural and political realities that often disrupt their lives. The novel thereby mirrors the everyday realities of Palestinian life, including many aggressive acts that Ziad witnesses. For instance, Zaid panics when he is about to cross the "apartheid wall" immediately after his precursor, jumping over this same wall, was unluckily caught by the Israeli soldiers. Family togetherness and caring for the elderly are highly valued in this novel. Zaid, in common with his siblings, is very respectful of their great grandmother, "Jadati." Although they have already memorized her story about the "gold," they listen to her "repeated" story attentively and patiently. They all miss her after she dies and vow never to forget her tales. Caring for others extends to the neighbors, too. When Haj Abu Hamdan notices that Ziad is extremely upset, he urges Ziad to express his feelings openly. Following this, Abu Hamdan gives Ziad some money to pay for Salem's health tests.

Finally, like all Arabic literature, it is always emphasized that the power of any authority is weak in comparison with the power of Allah. Arab faith is passed down through the generations. Ziad's mother therefore prays five times a day and asks Allah to cure Salem. Ziad, too, asks his mother to pray for him before he leaves to search for the "gold." She responds, "Allah YaHmeek or, May Allah protect you" (p. 82). And Ziad himself, when he finally reaches Lifta, visits the Saif El Deen mosque where he recites Al Fateha— that is, the first verse of the Qur'an — for the souls of his ancestors.

In sum, then, Al Najjar's *"Mystery of the Falcon's Eye"* exemplifies many of the characteristics of a culturally authentic, Arabic YA literature, including a sense of developmental appropriateness, relevant socio-political issues, historical and cultural accuracy, and believable characters.

Quality Standards in Taghreed Najjar's writing for children and young adults:

By Loayy Wattad

Published in Hakaya blog 29/11/2018



Taghreed Najjar started her writing career in the 70s and her creative skills are still going on strong. Her professionalism and unique, authentic texts make her a pioneer in children Literature for children and young adults in the Arab World.

In the last few decades Taghreed has written a number of excellent quality books for children.

Reading her books reveals themes and values that are repeated in most of her books. She skillfully and seamlessly incorporates these values in her writing so that the reader of her books will never come across two books that are similar.

Each story stands on its own and the writer respects the young reader and does not talk down to him/her.

Universal Values

When I first started reading her books, I was expecting to find the values in her books change over the years but after reading more than 30 of her stories, I realized that she expresses universal values that have remained constant in her writing over the years.

In this paper I will focus on the characteristics and values found in her writing.

Gender Equality

From my first reading of Najjar's books I found that the main and constant theme in her books is presenting female protagonists that shows them as creative doers rather than passive receivers.

An example of this is "Nashma and Jassem". Nashma the young Bedouin girl looks after Jassem the young camel. She takes part actively in the Bedouin daily life with her father and family. She plays an integral role in the story and when her camel Jassem get lost in the big city and is taken to the zoo. Nashma is the one who discovers where he is and saves him.

Who Hid the Eid Lamb? (2012)

In this picture book Najjar recounts the story in flashback. Grandmother Fatoum is the narrator who tells her grandchildren about her adventures as a child. She tells them how one year she got attached to the "Eid lamb" which was being fattened up for the Eid Feast. She tries to save the sacrificial lamb who had become her friend by hiding it in a cave. Fatoum manages to convince her family through her Grandfather to save her friend the lamb. In this story Najjar manages to transport the children to a time long past when the grandmother was herself a child. Najjar's strength lies not only in presenting the stories in the present but also from the past.

In another picture book "Why Not?" we see how Najjar incorporates her long-time vision in the title of the book. The title asks the question why shouldn't Samia fill in for her "musaheraty" father when he is sick? Why shouldn't the young girls of the village join in to help out Samia and be part of the music and singing in the village? In other words, Najjar is saying that it is ok for girls to participate in all aspects of society and that they can do any job as well as a man.

Finally, in the wonderful picture book "Grandma Nafeesa" Najjar shows us a day in the life of Grandma Nafeesa who is very different from the stereotype of old people found in our culture. Grandma Nafeesa is an active artist who loves to exercise. In this story Najjar introduces children to a strong and different woman.

Nature vs. nurture

We can see this duality very clearly in Najjar's text. She is sensitive to animal rights and the natural environment for animals where they can roam at large and not be caged for the entertainment of humans.

For example we see this clearly in Fifi picture book where Dana gets a cow as a present from her farmer uncle. But Dana lives in the city and Fifi the cow who does not like to be tied up at all. She gets into one mischief after another until she is returned to the countryside with the uncle.

Pride in Arab roots

What sets many of Najjar stories is that they flow naturally from the Arab culture and roots in a deep and meaningful way. This is apparent in the way her stories reflect the customs, and feasts (Moslem and sometimes Christian) as in “Why Not?”

“A Knock on the Door” Who Hid the Eid’s lamb”. She addresses different aspects of Arab society in her books for example Bedouin, village and city life as in “Fifi” Nashma and Jassem” and “Grandma Nafeesa”

The three themes, in my opinion, that are central in Najjar’s texts are gender equality, pride in Arab roots and animal rights. The localization of many of her stories make her reach Arab readers easily. These themes are accompanied by the following values that the author embraces and incorporates in her books like accepting others, expanding the horizon of children and introducing them to the “other” who may be different in some ways but shares certain familiar characteristics with the reader of Taghreed’s books.

In this blog I have concentrated on texts for ages 3 to 7 that Najjar has written. I feel I should also write about the other age ranges that she wrote about. For early childhood she collected Arabic Rhymes and produced them in 6 board books plus an audio Cd and animated DVD to be sung along with the child thus preserving them for generations to come. “Mr. Policeman” is a collection of rhymes about jobs. In” This is the Way Fish Swim” is a collection of interactive rhymes that encourage movement, touching and tickling. “Tasseh Tarantaseh” teaches children a number of words from the Palestinian and Jordanian cultures.

As for writing for teens or young adults Najjar is well known in this field. Her novels have been translated to Turkish and Italian. Her novels “Raghda’s Hat” “Against the Tide” “One Day the Sun will Rise” all deal with the difficulties of life and as mentioned earlier all the protagonists in these novels are females, young girls in their teens.

The reader sympathizes with the protagonists in their suffering because of sickness or war, or family issues. They highlight how these young female protagonists stand up bravely to the difficulties they face and overcome

them.

<https://hkaya.info/-/sttshrq-shms-ulo-bcd-hyn-thymat-adybye-fy-nsvov-tyfryd-?fbclid=IwAR0gDil4W3w2FEOT5AN6XPslsmACF0G-aLNlyQ1JL4LoloSpbdIKrjAZKYc>

Review:

from “Read-for-free” [read_forfree](#)” reading blog published on July 24, 2018 on Instagram

“Against the Tide” (Sitt el Kol)

By: Taghreed Najjar

Illustrations: Gulnar Hajo

Who is “Sitt El Kol”? In our story it is Yusra the proud and resourceful girl who refuses to bow down to circumstances even though she is aware of the reality of living in the biggest prison in the world- Gaza- She is stubborn and at the same time she is a loving person who believes in her abilities and capabilities and interests. She lives for today with an eye on the next day. She is always ready to face any experience that may come her way that needs courage or initiative.

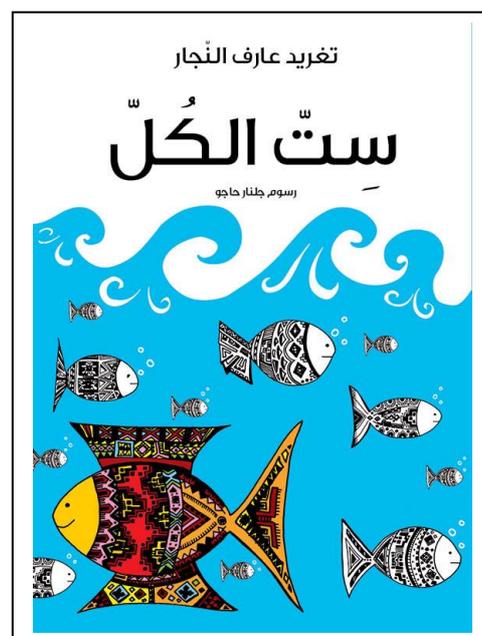
I loved how the story starts with the father’s /the husband’s anger. It is a usual occurrence in our culture that also reflects the reality of life in Gaza.

The novel also reflects the Gazan conservative society and shows how both men and women in Gaza are critical of Yusra’s decision to take up her father’s fishing profession and use religion to denounce her saying that it is against religion for women to imitate men in the way they look and work. The novel addresses many issues in our society, women issues, special needs, young people and their aspirations hobbies and music, politics

The novel is of a high literary standard. It has lots of action and events and is appealing to teens. I find that the writer always ends on a hopeful note no matter how hard and bleak the circumstances.

Against the Tide is an exciting inspiring story, rich with true facts. It very successfully reflects the dreams and thoughts of the youth of today.

- [#booksofinstagram](#) [#childrenbook](#) [#childrensbooks](#) [#arabicbooks](#) [#gaza](#) [#girlpower](#) [#booksforgirls](#) [#teenbooks](#)



Grandma Nafeesa does not resemble other Grandmothers!

By: Jokha Alharithi

What do you expect to read in a children's book entitled "Grandma Nafeesa"? Maybe it would talk about the loss of a Grandmother and tries to help children understand death. But on the other hand, maybe the story is about a Grandma who is still alive as is Grandma Nafeesa.

Majed's mother like many Arab mothers nowadays is a working mother and on the day the story happens she has to attend a conference and Majed has to stay with Grandma Nafeesa.

So what do we now expect the story to talk about after having read many children books about typical grandmothers and watched many cartoon series depict them as such.

Maybe the Grandma would be a fat Grandma who wears thick glasses and bakes pies and cakes and spends the time telling Majed stories about the past while knitting while Majed watches TV or plays on his own or maybe she is taking a nap. But wait a minute the nap is actually in the story but what about the rest of the clichés about Grandmothers.

Grandma Nafeesa welcomes Majed with open arms. She in fact wears glasses but they are fashionable red framed glasses and instead of wearing old peoples' hats – as depicted in books– and bake delicious pies she prepares a health tasty



breakfast for Majed. It is a fruit smoothie. Majed helps put the fruits in the blender and finds Grandma breakfast unlike what he is used to but tasty.

Now what about knitting or boring walks in the park? No, nothing of that instead it is something we do not expect... sports. It is time for Grandma's favorite program an exercise class on TV and she joins in and encourages Majed to do the same making sure she keeps up with the TV trainer. Poor Majed can't keep up with his Grandma and throws himself down on the floor while Grandma keeps at it
1...2....3

The writer does not forget to involve the child reader with sounds and movements. Just as the blender goes whirrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr the exercise on TV goes right, left, right, left...

She is a modern Grandma. The time has run out or almost run out for sweet Grandmas who don't do anything except blabber about the beautiful past and long for it. Grandma Nafeesa lives in the present. And she is unique not only because she is interested in keeping fit and healthy and active but also her interests in life make her a role model to him. So, what is the surprise that Grandma has prepared for him. It is a special section in her art studio for Grandma Nafeesa is an artist and she encourage her grandson to be creative and to express himself through art. Thus, she imparts the message to the young reader that art is worthwhile and fulfilling and changes our outlook to life and allows us no matter how young to express ourselves.

Later Grandma Nafeesa takes Majed in her old VW to the Art Gallery where she must deliver some of her paintings to the curator. There like any Grandmother

she tells the curator proudly that her grandson will be an artist like her one day. But Majed – a modern child– does not agree and has the courage to say to the curator that maybe he will become a pilot first.

What about lunch and ice-cream? later in the cafeteria across the street from the museum. Grandma Nafeesa exchanges her glasses with trendy sunglasses and off she goes with Majed to a scrap shop where she picks different pieces for her art projects. Majed learns what scrap means and gets to pick a small wooden box for himself.

What a long and exciting day! When they get back, Grandma takes a short nap and a very funny scene follows when Majed's father arrives to take him back home and says when he sees Grandma napping. "Poor old lady she tires quickly and needs her rest! Oh, dear Father, you have no idea what an energetic lively person Grandma Nafeesa is. Majed bursts out laughing and the young reader does too. We adults join in too feeling guilty for our generalizations and stereotyping.

Nothing compares to the creativity of the author in the way she describes family connections and the special relationship between Grandmother and her grandchild except for the artist who made every detail of the story full of life, humor fun and appreciation.

OH! How I wish I had a Grandma like Grandma Nafeesa!

المصدر: أكثر من حياة

(More than a Life) blog

<http://hayaah.net/?p=367921>

Children's favourite

Taghreed Najjar has put a mythical monster into the limelight

Published: May 21, 2010 00:00 **Kevin Scott, Staff Writer**

<https://gulfnews.com/entertainment/books/childrens-favourite-1.628454>



Image Credit: Hadrian Hernandez/Gulf News

Taghreed Najjar's 'Al Ghoul' has enabled children to learn lessons of life through a character from their culture.

Taghreed Najjar is the woman who gave the Arab world its very own "monster". The Palestinian-Jordanian writer is the author of 28 Arabic picture books for children, including Al Ghoul (The Monster), which she wrote after deciding it was time for youngsters in the Middle East to follow literary creations from the region in which they grew up.

Al Ghoul has since been turned into a short animated story on the Arabic version of Sesame Street, a famous children's TV series from the United States. But Najjar acknowledges that Al Ghoul was a controversial piece of literature at the time.

She said: "Al Ghoul, meaning monster, is a part of Middle Eastern culture and it is prevalent in many people's psyche. But for a long time it had a very bad reputation because in olden days Al Ghoul was used as a disciplinary method to scare children into obedience. Educators started frowning upon Al Ghoul stories and parents did not accept them.

"As a writer, I began to notice our children started becoming attached to other people's monsters. It was OK for everybody that they related to monsters and fictional characters from other countries. But they still refused to use ours in literature even though we utilised them in any way we wanted.

"I wrote about Al Ghoul using basic story elements. The hero's name was Hassan and in ancient Arabic culture Hassan is always the hero, the real boy who overcomes all the hurdles and gets the princess. Some teachers refused to even look at the story because of the title. They thought it was a scary story.

"But when Hassan faces Al Ghoul he realises the monster is just as scared as he is. When Hassan asks, 'Why are you so scared of me?', it replies, 'Because you have two eyes and you do not have hair all over you.' Al Ghoul is scared because Hassan looks different.

"Many people like the message in the book because it is not about being scary; it is about accepting differences. I think Sesame Street saw that and that is why they adapted it for TV."

Najjar, a former teacher, now runs her own publishing company in Jordan called Al Salwa. Previously, she headed the publishing department of a children's cultural centre. Najjar's most notable works include the Al Halazone series, Who Hid the Eid Lamb? and A Home for Arnoub.

Many of her books are used as supplementary reading in schools but she stresses that was not her initial intention while writing.

She said: "At one point you want your books to be used for education. But as a writer, you do not want your work to be used solely within the school curriculum and to be thought of as books written just for the classroom. It is a tricky balance that I am trying to achieve. I started with the idea that this kind of writing was very much needed in the Arab world. We did not have supplementary reading and the school curriculum in Jordan was very dry and boring for children. I thought my books would be a good way to help teachers who did not have access to relevant materials.

"The most important thing is that my writing is based on a storyline. I always keep my writing fun as it is crucial not to fall into the trap of writing a textbook. I had such a close and intimate experience with books as a child.

"They gave me so much pleasure and were such an important part of my life. I wanted to give that [same experience] to children. I want to be a part of their memories.

"My inspiration comes from subconscious memories. As a child I loved to read stories and I loved to listen to stories. I remember images and I remember my feelings while listening to certain stories such as excitement and fear. I also wanted to keep [Arabic] culture alive."

Najjar also believes the Arabic publishing industry has improved "tremendously" since she entered the business more than 30 years ago.

She said: "Governments and NGOs have made a huge difference because you need people to back you. People need to realise what you do is important. This message filters through schools, parents and families and makes a difference. People with a writing talent begin to think it is worth writing their own book. It is a circle.

"In the UAE, not much attention is given to Arabic literature. Many people here will come to see a renowned international author but Arab authors do not yet have the 'star' factor."

Najjar may think she does not have the "star" factor but legions of children across the Middle East might well disagree as they learn the lessons of life through their very own "monster".

Journeywithinas review on "One day the Sun will shine" on Instagram

11-9-2018

[journeywithinas](https://www.instagram.com/journeywithinas)

And here's where I finished the last pages of my novel: One Day, the Sun Will Shine by

[@najjartagheed](https://www.instagram.com/najjartagheed) [@alsalwa_books](https://www.instagram.com/alsalwa_books)

I had it with me everywhere I went this past week, every playground has seen it on me 😊

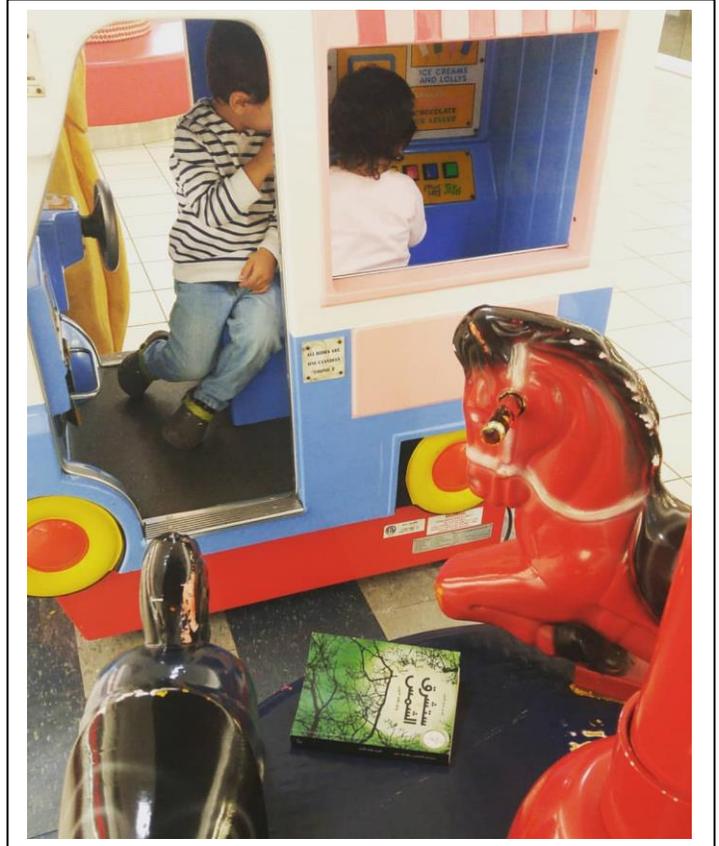
This book is written for teens+
And it made me journey in the life of a Syrian family during the war. It's eye opening, emotional and so well written. I cried, smiled and had hope for the sun to rise up high one day, inshaAllah.

Ps. I'd love to lend it to anyone interested to read it.

وهذا هو المكان الذي انتهيت به قراءة رواية تغريد النجار: ستشرق الشمس ولو بعد حين.

اصطحبت هذا الكتاب معي في كل مكان لاستغل اي وقت اقدر فيه على القراءة

اخذتنا الكاتبة في اجواء عاشتها عائلة سورية مع الاحداث الحالية. كتاب فيه خليط من الالم والفرح . والامل. كتاب مناسب لليافعين .



Reviews:

<https://alsalwabooks.com/en/shop/arabic-childrens-books/mystery-falcons-eye/>

Mystery of the Falcon's Eye

review for The Mystery of the Falcon's Eye

[Show reviews in all languages \(2\)](#)

1.



Rated 5 out of 5

dayglowjoe – August 12, 2016

This novel was wonderful, and as a student of the Arabic language, it was one of the first books I have read cover to cover in Arabic. The language style is sleek and swift, simple but not basic, and it reads incredibly well, even for someone new to Arabic. The plot is well paced, making it a real page turner. It brilliantly mixes an exciting and intriguing children's adventure narrative against a more complex background of politics, the occupation, culture, heritage and identity, in a way that is educational without ever becoming too complicated or. It is a great way for both Palestinian and Arab children to connect with the pre-1948 heritage of Palestine, as well as educating children around the world about this issue in an emotionally engaging and moving way. The characters were warm and realistic and the author has painted a vivid and immersive portrait of the reality of daily life for Palestinians of many different backgrounds, both in the West Bank, and within the borders of Israel. It effortlessly deals with complex and important issues without sacrificing the fast paced plot, and also features informative footnotes giving expanded information about the real life locations and events mentioned in the story. A highly recommended book for children and adults alike!

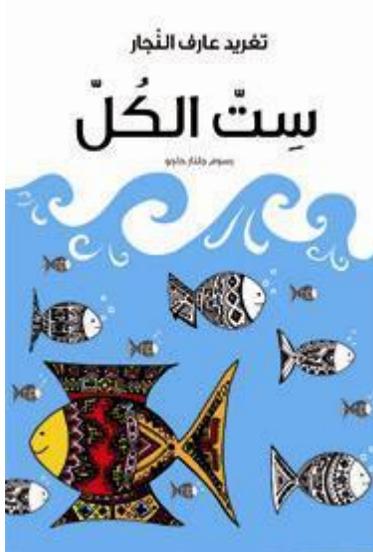
<http://arablit.org/2014/11/05/one-girl-against-the-tide-a-gazan-story-a-universal-story/>

[HOME](#) > [PALESTINE](#) > ONE GIRL 'AGAINST THE TIDE': A GAZAN STORY, A UNIVERSAL STORY

One Girl 'Against the Tide': A Gazan Story, a Universal Story

BY [MLYNXQUALEY](#) ON [NOVEMBER 5, 2014](#)

Today, organizers will announce the winners of the Etisalat Prize for Arabic Children's Literature, including in the Young Adult category. Last year, [Taghreed Najjar's](#) *Sitt al-Kol* was [on a very strong five-book YA shortlist](#) as she is again, this year, for [Hawk Eye Mystery](#). *Sitt al-Kol* has not yet been published in English, although the story certainly would have wide appeal:



When *Sitt al-Kol* opens, we are immediately clear that this is a new sort of Arabic novel for young readers. There are no animals, no easy morals, no nostalgic glances back to childhood. This is not a book written for adults *about* childhood, but a book for sophisticated, curious young readers.

When we first meet Yusra, the protagonist, her father is kicking up a fuss about his watery tea, shouting at her mother and embarrassing the family. Yusra must go to a neighbor and ask for a handout, and the neighbor is none too kind about it.

Although Yusra is a fictional character, the book — [its title translated as *Against the Tide*](#) — is based on the story of Madeleine Kolab, who took up her father's trade after he became too ill to manage his small skiff.

In the book, Yusra's older brother has been killed, and her father ended up in a wheelchair when one of the tunnels beneath the border with Egypt collapsed. Yusra's mother is busy with their small family, and her younger brother is far too young to be of financial help. So it is that 15-year-old Yusra must step forward and help provide for her small family.

Like Madeleine Kolab, Yusra repairs her father's fishing boat and takes it out to sea. Like Madeleine, Yusra also must contend with society's narrow opinions and fierce Israeli gunboats.

As the story progresses, we come to see another, gentler side to Yusra's father. But, by the time this happens, the sympathy is earned. He is not just a distant patriarch who dispenses advice and morals, but a human being. Indeed, the story is full of complex human characters and rich with details about ordinary life in Gaza. But although it's very particular, it's also universal: a girl who both wants to fit in and to go her own way.

Against the Tide is similar to a few other recent YA books that have come out in Arabic. Unlike earlier books for young people, they don't read as moral advice, but instead address enormous political issues, just as Fatima Sharafeddine's award-winning *Faten* tackled class issues and the treatment of servants in Beirut.

Against the Tide slows a little after Yusra moves away from fishing into other ways of organizing her future, but it also shows many unconventional facets of young people's lives in Gaza, including contemporary rap music and musicians. It is also perhaps unwittingly faithful to Madeleine Kolab, who, [according to *The National* in 2011](#), had ambitions that were "always changing." Six months before the story was published, "she wanted to be a fashion designer, but now she is eyeing a diploma in sports, which she hopes will lead to a job, perhaps teaching, before she settles down in marriage."

The story will have clear appeal in translation, because of its depiction of Gaza outside war and its strong female protagonist. English — and other rights — are still available.

Several months ago, [author Taghreed Najjar](#) generously answered a few questions about putting together the book:

ArabLit: When did you first learn about Madeline Kolab? When did you decide to turn her story into the basis for a book?

Taghreed Najjar: One day about four or five years ago, I was listening to the BBC while driving when I heard an interview with Madelene Kolab, a 14 year old girl who had become Gaza's first fisherwoman. I was intrigued, especially since the subject was close to my heart on two counts, women's empowerment and Palestinian rights. I wrote a mental note that it would be a great subject for a story.

In fact, when I got home I added the idea to a file I had on my computer where I put ideas in one sentence to come back to when I am ready to develop the story. Here is what I wrote:

فكرة عن فتاة في غزة تصبح صيادة وعن الصعوبات التي تواجهها وكيف تتغلب عليها

At that time I did not think that I would write a preteen book, so I was thinking in terms of a picture book. I kept coming back to the idea but found it difficult to put all I wanted to say in a picture book.

After I wrote and published *Raghda's Hat*, I was encouraged to develop the idea into a teen book and wrote *Sitt el Kol*.

AL: How much did you base on her story and how much did you invent? Did you do any particular research about fishing, about the situation of Gazan fishermen, etc.?

TN: When I started writing the story, I decided that I would not research and read more about Madelene. I was satisfied by the information I had of her story and wanted to have the freedom

to think of Yusra my protagonist without any constraint. I wanted to develop Yusra as a separate person with her own family story her own likes and dislikes. I did not want her to be a shadow to Madelene.

I read a lot about fishing in Gaza and about the life of fishermen and the difficulties they face with the Israeli army.

As I started writing, I realized how much information about Gaza was stored in my subconscious over the years. It seemed to me that I remembered every little thing I read about Gaza and I let it flow. Every time I introduced a factor from Gaza's life I would research it to make sure that what I wrote was factually correct like the tunnels or rap music location, etc.

AL: Why did you decide to write for young adults after many years writing for younger children? How did you find the leap into writing for young adults? Was the writing process very different? Did you make outlines/structures for the book or did you just start and develop the story as you went?

TN: For so long people would ask me why I never wrote books for older children and I would say, "One day when I feel I am ready I may just do that."

To tell you the truth I surprised myself on two counts, first that I was able to do it and that it was very well received by people. Second, that I enjoyed the process so much. The writing process is of course different. In some ways, it is more relaxed because you can express what you want to say freely and have more words to do that. In picture books, you need to present the idea with a punch but with very few words. As for structure, I did not follow any rules but felt my way through the process with a very loose outline.

One thing I realized in both books is that if you allow it then the story will simply write itself. I was happy that I did not have iron-clad outlines because it gave me the freedom to follow the rhythm of the book. My daughters would laugh at me when I said, "I am eager to get back to my computer, I want to find out what happens next in the story."

ArabLit: What was the hardest part of putting together this book? Is there anything you learned during the process that you wish you could go back and tell yourself at the very beginning?

TN: The hardest part was the language editing. Trying to find an acceptable balance between colloquial dialogue and classical Arabic narration. How much to use to keep the flavor without alienating many readers.

During the process I learned to respect my subconscious and to give time for the story to develop without rushing it or trying to force the outcome.

AL: What has been the reaction from Palestinian readers, and especially readers from Gaza? Did you ever worry that you might misrepresent Gaza in some way, since you're not there

TN: After the story was published, I had a number of presentations about the story in schools and clubs. The best compliment the kids gave me was that the story was not boring and that they could not put it down until they finished it.

It is a compliment because kids in schools tend to shy away from reading Arabic books and deem them as boring.

The story and presentation managed to put light on life in Gaza which to many kids here is so near and yet so far. They learned about current events in our area in context through a story with characters they could identify with. In the story, I tried to show that Gaza was like any other place and not just a battlefield. I tried to show people with different interests and viewpoints.

I got very positive feedback from people in Gaza who read it. During a video conference that took place a couple of months ago, one of them asked me how I knew so much about Gaza without visiting it. Another asked how I knew the Gazan dialect. (I had not used it in the book, but they felt as though I have.)

I was a bit worried that Madelene may object to some parts of it, but she said she enjoyed reading it and found many of the details I wrote reflected her experience.

One of the young men in Gaza asked me during the video conference why I wrote about rap music in Gaza, and objected that it was not representative. I agreed, but said that I was trying to show that Gaza like any other place in the world had many different people with different outlooks and interests. I chose to focus on rappers there because I was writing for young people and this reflected some of their interests.

Book review on social media:

Book Title: ما المانع؟ Why Not?

Author: تغريد نجار Taghreed Najjar

Age: 5-7 years

Rating out of 5: 🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷



Overview: This is such a heartwarming story, I LOVE it and it's the perfect read for Ramadan!! Here's why i love it so much:



1- It is set in a small village in Palestine, called Lifta :)



2- It celebrates an important part of our culture/Ramadan in a beautiful way!



3- It helps keep a fading tradition alive- the مسهراتي Mosaheraty (person who wakes people up at dawn to eat before they fast for the day)



4- It tells a story of a little girl who has the courage and determination to step up, and support her dad!



5- It shows how a little girl, can change perceptions and lead a whole community in the direction that she wants!



6- It empowers our little girls to believe in themselves and break stereotypes!



I ABSOLUTELY love it! 🍷



What stories are you reading for your children in Ramadan?



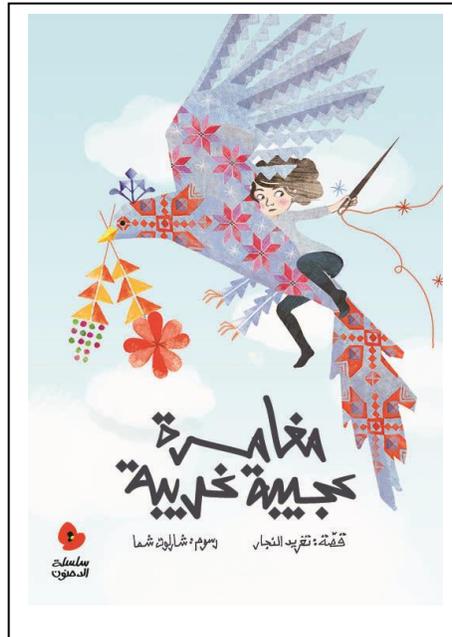
HAPPY READING! 🍷

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Review translated from Al- Dustour Newspaper article
published on

<https://bit.ly/2SYRiIN>

20/7/2017



“An Amazing Adventure” written by Taghreed Najjar and illustrated by Charlotte Shama is from the Early Reader *Dahnoun series* published by Al Salwa Publishing House.

“An Amazing Adventure” transports children and young teens on an exciting adventure in the beautiful world of embroidery where thread spools speak and lobsters play a musical instrument. The writer weaves an original story inspired by cultural motifs as a fantasy that would appeal to young people and make them proud of their rich heritage and aware of their roots.

The story revolves around a little girl called Hind who is fascinated by her Aunts’ passion for embroidery. Her aunt tells her that embroidery is also a way of telling stories. The exciting events that follow are fueled by the writer’s rich imagination where snakes, lions, pigeons and swans all inspired by motifs found on cushions in Aunt Suhayla’s house play a role in the delightful and original story that follows. It is a fantasy that is also an adventure where good and evil have a role to play.

Arabic / Jordan

Muğamara aġiba ġariba

(A fantastic, wondrous adventure)

al-Naġġār, Taġrīd (Najjar, Taghreed) (text)

Šama, Šarlot (Shama, Charlotte) (illus.)

Amān: Al-Salwā, 2017. – 75 p.

ISBN 978-9957-04-089-5

Family | Intergenerational
relationship | Aunt | Niece | Tradition | Handicraft | Imagination

White Ravens issue: 2017

Reading age: 7+

OPAC



[BACK TO LISTNEW SEARCH](#)

Whenever Hênd visits her aunt Suheyła, she finds her sitting on her favourite chair with a piece of fabric in her hand that she is embroidering with colourful threads. One day, Hênd asks her aunt whether embroidering ever becomes boring. From that moment on, a wondrous adventure with many imaginative elements begins. The book is carried by the heartfelt dialogues between aunt and niece, interwoven with short stories, keeping readers' attention to the last page. An accessible and flowing literary language characterize the book, along with soft drawings, whose colours pay homage to the traditional embroidery of Palestine and Jordan. Renowned author Taghreed Najjar, herself hailing from Palestine and living in Jordan, is known for tracing her own traditions in her works and conveying these to the young generation of readers by means of beautiful, entertaining stories.

<http://whiteravens.ijb.de/book/702>

[Manal Saabni](#)

Admin · 14 October

The Ghoul

By: Taghreed Najjar

Illustration by: Hassan Mansrah

Translation of review by "Atafeel" reading blog on (Facebook)

Administrator

[Manal Saabni](#)

Admin · 14 October

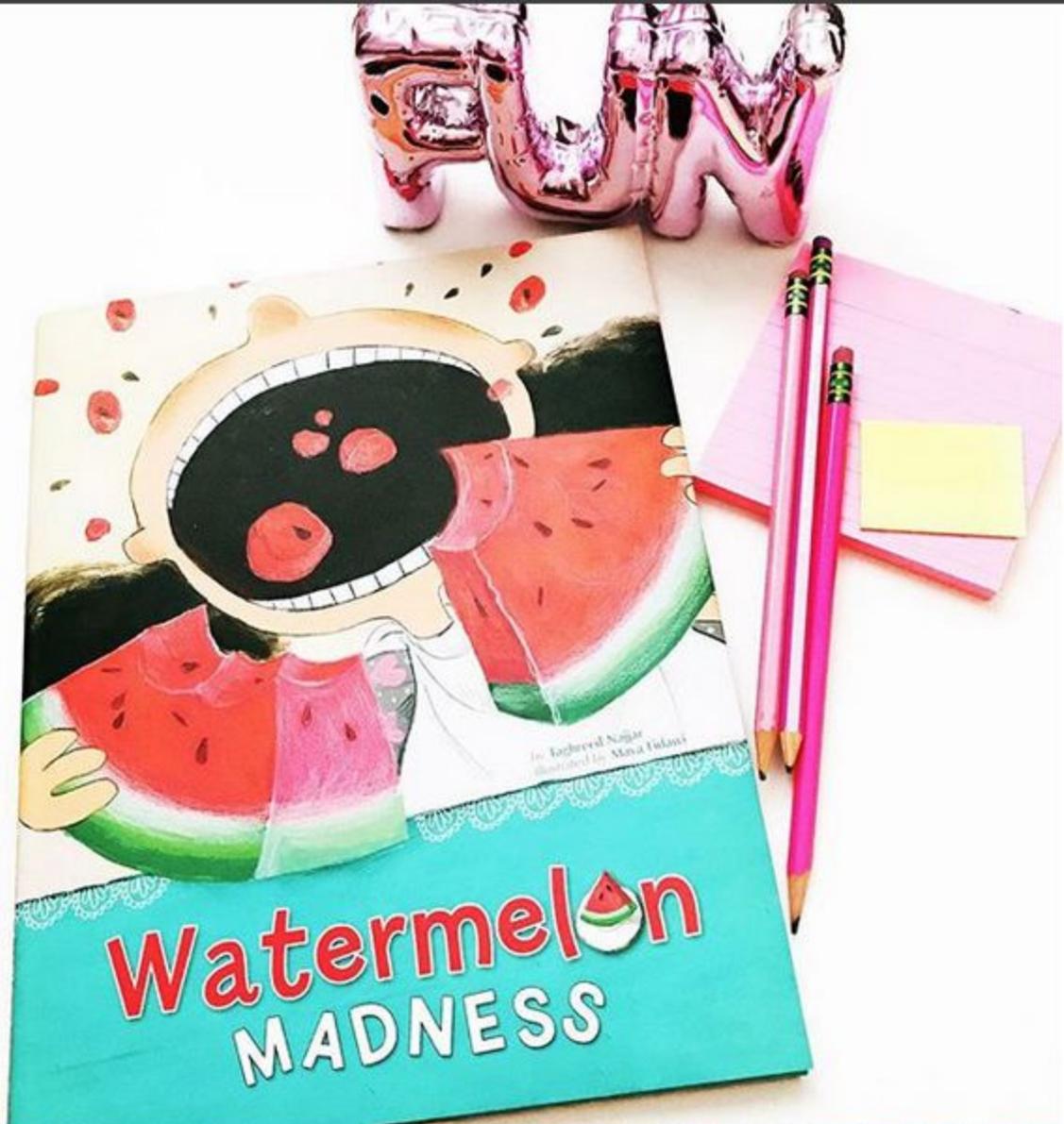
The story talks about a quiet village whose biggest problem is a Ghoul who is said to live at the top of the mountain. People are terrified of the Ghoul and forbid their children to laugh and play out loud so as not to disturb the Ghoul and encourage it to eat them. Hasan asks the adults many questions about the Ghoul and does not accept their ready often repeated answers. He finds out that nobody had seen the Ghoul or been hurt by it. Hasan decides to go up the mountain to look for the Ghoul and prove that it does not exist. Finally, he goes up the mountain and comes face to face with the Ghoul, but it is the Ghoul who runs away in fright. Hasan follows it and laughs when he realizes that they are both scared of each other for the same reason because they look different and strange to each other.

Soon the villagers accept the Ghoul when they realize that it is not harmful and is a vegetarian. They accept the Ghoul despite their having two eyes and not just one and no purple fur like the Ghoul.

The illustrations of Hassan Manasrah are great as usual.

The story is suitable for kids 4+ and for older children too and it provides a great opportunity to discuss many different subjects like:

- * What is normal and acceptable to you might be strange to others.
- * The importance of asking questions and not always accepting ready answers without considering them first.
- * The importance of dialogue and how it is preferable to fighting.
- * Accepting others and not judging others by outside appearance only.
- * The concept of what is strange and what is familiar, normal or weird.



ramonarecommends • [Follow](#)

ramonarecommends Watermelon Madness is such a darling story! When I saw on Amazon new release page, I knew I had to have it because A. I love 🍉 and B. I love picture books. This beauty is included in my NEW Picture Books Teachers Must Have list coming tomorrow! Fun fact/ this book was translated in English from Arabic. @alsalwa_books #picturebooks #openthemagic #kidsbook

primarilyspeaking I think I might need this one for my annual Watermelon Day!

jolly_books Have a nice day~^^

camillency001 Do you have a blog post about what each picture book is about and what topic/benchmarks could be used for each one? I want to incorporate read aloud this year; just need to find a way to organize all your suggestions. 😊 Thanks



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6 HOURS AGO

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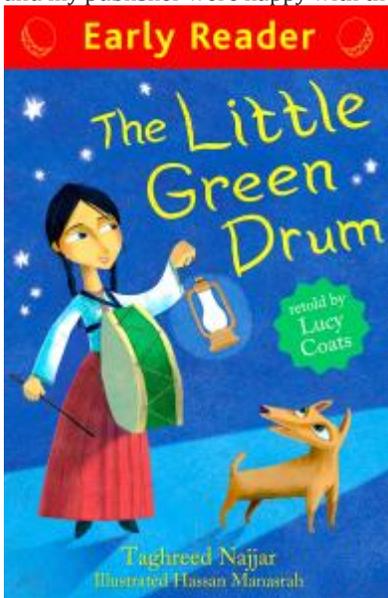
We Need Diverse Books

Posted on [June 3, 2015](#) by [LUCY COATS](#) [3 Comments](#)

I live in the UK, a country which has welcomed in people from many cultures over the centuries, so it always shocks me to realise that until all too recently diversity in children's books was not the norm. Publishers are getting better at it, and progress is being made, but there is still a long way to go, particularly with bringing more ethnically diverse writers into the UK industry. [Last year I interviewed Children's Laureate, Malorie Blackman](#), (who has done much to address this situation during her Laureateship) and I will never forget her telling me how she was never able to find any kids like her in the books she read as a child, and how it never even occurred to her that a person of colour could be published until she read Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple*.



So you can imagine that I thought about it very hard before I accepted the job of retelling the wonderful story from Taghreed Najjar and Hassan Manasrah's picture book *Why Not?* for the UK market. Originally published by Al Salwa in Jordan but bought by Orion Children's books for the UK, it tells the story of Samia, who has a very special job to do just before Ramadan starts. This was not my culture, nor my religion. Shouldn't someone from that ethnicity retell the story for a British audience, I asked myself? But Taghreed was positive about me doing it, and so I accepted, determined to get the spirit of the original across for a slightly older-than-picture-book audience, as Orion had decided to publish the book in their Early Reader series. Above all I wanted to be respectful in my treatment of Taghreed's story and her culture, and to work with her and our editor closely on what was now called *The Little Green Drum* to make sure both she and my publisher were happy with the end result.



Once I'd written the first draft, I met with Taghreed at Bologna Book Fair to talk it over. I'd got a few things wrong, and she gently corrected me, and pointed me in the right direction (I'd used Abu for 'Father' and the correct term would be 'Yaba', for instance). There was also the matter of Lifta, the original setting for Samia's story. Lifta, now long deserted, is in what was Palestine, and it was where Taghreed's

family had originally come from. She wrote the story as a memorial to happier times there, and it was important to her that some mention and acknowledgement was made of the Israeli conflict with the Palestinians which had made her family homeless. We agreed that there would be a part in the back of the book explaining that, and also explaining what Ramadan was, for those who might not know.



This year, I was delighted to find out that Taghreed and Hassan's story had been chosen from children's books published all over the world for the **prestigious White Ravens 2014 list, run by the Internationale Jugendbibliothek** – a huge honour. And I should say here that Hassan's joyously wonderful pictures are a very important part of making the book what it is – never forget the illustrator! I saw the full list at Bologna Book Fair this year – and it's pretty impressive! I'm very proud to be associated with this book. It's a story about a girl doing a job traditionally associated with a man, it shines a positive light onto a culture that is all too often in the news for all the wrong reasons, and I hope it's a small but important step on the road to diversity in children's books here in the UK. Maybe it will encourage a child reader from our Muslim community to take up her pen and write a story, and then another, and another, because she sees herself in brave Samia. That would make my heart shout out a loud and joyful song, just like Samia, Ahmad, Ada, Arya, Omar, Fatima, Adnan, Bahira and Samira do in the book.

<https://girlsheartbooks.com/2015/06/03/we-need-diverse-books/>

Review by
Yasmine Motawy

One Day the Sun will Shine

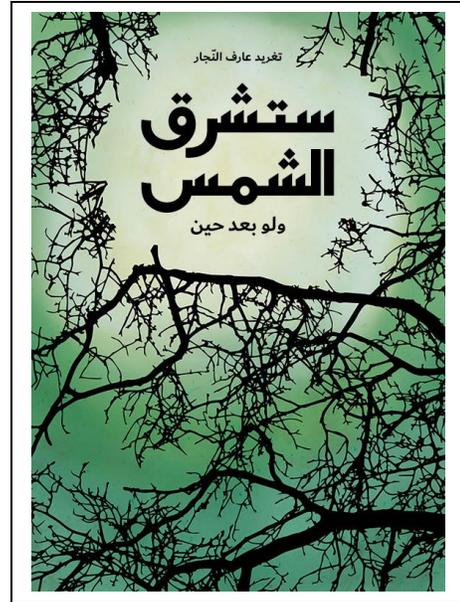
This book was the cream of the very large refugee crop we received for the Etisalat Award for Arabic Children's Literature. The writing is smooth and pleasurable and the subject well researched and cinematically presented.

This is a fictional work that sometimes feels like a documentary that is deliberately slow and drags on in the same way the refugee situation does. The tempo mirrors the state, and the reader's ennui does not stop him from continuing but experiences a sense of frustrated hopelessness that gives him a glimpse of life as a refugee. There is a silver lining the writer is not afraid to touch on, that the

collapse of Syrian society as we know it, is also an opportunity to get rid of the ways that shackle its members unnecessarily; the flexibility that Shaden shows in finding employment and the resilience of her family in the face of dispossession are examples of this.

The writer touches on the benefits of being white-passing, as many Syrians are. The smoothness of Shaden's trip from Rome to Malmo hints to the reader that "looking" like a refugee or an illegal alien worsens this already terrible situation.

The tempo does falter however, particularly towards the end. The story is relentlessly bleak as the situation goes from bad to worse in a way that suffocates the reader, but does mirror reality. From the scene where the mother dies however, the pace picks up excessively, almost as if to wrap it all up. The story begs for a second installment, the reader would like to know how the protagonist will thrive up North.



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Yasmine Motawy, PhD
Department of Rhetoric and Composition
The American University in Cairo

1. Ten of the most important titles by the candidate (even if out of print) and the name of the publishers of all editions

All the books have been published by Al Salwa Publishing House

- 1: Against the Tide (novel)
- 2: Mystery of the Falcon's Eye (novel)
- 3: One Day the Sun Will Shine (novel)
- 4: The Watermelon (picture book)
- 5: The Ghoul (picture book)
- 6: Grandma Nafeesa (picture book)
- 7: A Home for Arnoub (picture book)
- 8: A very Strange Adventure (Early Reader)
- 9: Why Not? (picture book)
- 10: Arabic Nursery Rhymes collections

2. List of translated books

| Title | Language | Date of Publication |
|---------------------------------------|----------|---------------------|
| Why Not? "The Little Green Drum" | English | ? |
| When the Doorbell Rang | Swedish | ? |
| The Watermelon | English | 2018 |
| | French | 2018 |
| | Turkish | 2018 |
| | Greek | 2018 |
| Against the Tide | Italian | 2018 |
| | Turkish | 2019 |
| Grandma Nafeesa | Turkish | |
| Kaak | Danish | 2018 |
| | Swedish | 2018 |
| What Happened to my Brother Ramez? | English | 2019 |
| | French | |
| | Turkish | |

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---------|------|
| Mrs Jawaher and her Cats | Turkish | 2018 |
| One Day the Sun Will Shine | Turkish | 2019 |
| Mystery of the Falcon's Eye | Turkish | 2019 |

3. List of the five books sent to the jurors

1: Why Not?

2: The Ghoul

3: A Strange Adventure

4: Against the Tide

5: One Day the Sun Will Shine