The Hans Christian Andersen Award 2024
Author nomination - Lebanon

Samar Mahfouz Barraj
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Samar Mahfouz Barraj is a Lebanese writer and translator for children's and young adults' books. She holds a Bachelor Degree in Public Administration and a Teaching Diploma from the American University of Beirut. After working in two different jobs, she started her career as an Arabic teacher in a private school in 2002. Working with children has ignited her deep passion for writing. Aiming at making her students like and learn the Formal Arabic Language, she wrote short poems, rhymes, songs, plays and stories.

Her first book, “I didn’t mean to-لم أكن أقصد” was published by Asala in 2007. She has worked with many publishers, and has 62 books, many of which have been honor listed, shortlisted and long listed for Awards. Five of her books won Awards: “When my friend got sick”, “Grandma will always remember me” translated to Spanish- both with Yuki press, “Red line” translated to Turkish and Nepali, “My friend” and “A,B...Z” with Dar al Saqi.

Her book, “I love sleeping!” was included in the IBBY Honor List for best text in 2014. She also worked for educational publishers, (Pearson- Hachette Antoine- Dar Al Mufid),

Barraj has translated 106 children’s books from French, English, and Italian to Arabic. The translated Arabic version of “Bears don’t read” by Emma Chichester Clark, was included in the IBBY Honor List for best translation in 2018.

She conducts creative writing workshops, training workshops for Arabic teachers and librarians, and has participated in various activities to promote reading among children in and outside Lebanon.

Barraj is a strong defender of children’s rights and is known for her simple language, smooth writing style, and humor in her stories. She tackled topics that, at the time, were considered taboos in Arabic literature such as children's cancer (When My friend Got Sick-2011), Alzheimer’s (Grandma Will Always Remember Me-2012), sexual abuse (Red Line-2014), and accepting differences in culture and religion (The Purple Color-2018).

She also wrote stories about various other topics such as war, children’s rights, bullying, smoking, gender differences, parental conflicts, special needs, accepting others, passion, jealousy, getting a pet, hobbies, relationship with siblings, friendship, waking up late for school and many others.
Samar Mahfouz Barraj is from Beirut- Lebanon. As many Lebanese, she witnessed the civil war and all the years of instability that Lebanon went through and still does. She loves stories and books.

She got a Bachelor’s Degree in Public Administration from the American University of Beirut. She worked in a private company, then ran a family business before she decided to pursue her education and get a teaching diploma. She started teaching Arabic in a private school in 2002. Teaching was a turning point in her life. Interacting with children made her discover a fascinating world. In her attempt to make kids like and enjoy learning the formal Arabic Language that differs from the spoken Arabic, and due to the lack of adequate resources and enjoyable books and stories, Barraj started to write short poems, songs, and plays. She tried to find nice and funny Arabic books to read in class. When she realized it wasn’t easy to find many, Barraj started to write stories herself. Her first book “I Didn’t Mean To” was published in 2007 By Asala publishing house.

She quit teaching in 2012 to invest more time in writing, attending conferences and book fairs, doing more readings in and outside Lebanon, and conducting workshops. She has conducted workshops in creative writing, how to teach Arabic through fun, and how to read stories and prepare related activities in order to promote reading, besides working with educational publishers (Pearson- Hachette Antoine- Dar Al Mufid).

Barraj worked with several publishers. She has sixty two books, many of which were short-listed and long-listed for awards. Five of her books won Awards, the latest was the Etisalat Award in 2021. Many other books have been selected on Honor lists, among which was the IBBY Honor list for best text in 2014. Some of her books were translated into other languages.

She has also translated 106 books from French, English, and Italian to Arabic. One of which was on the IBBY Honor list for best translation in 2018.

Barraj writes stories for different age groups. She has contributed in filling the gap in the Arabic children literature by enriching the Arabic library with books dealing with various topics, with creative plots, smooth writing style, humor and simple exquisite Arabic language that the child understands.

Since she got immersed in writing, Barraj has been engaged in promoting reading and encouraging children to read. She has seized every chance to meet with children in private and public schools, at public libraries, book fairs, refugee’s camps, and at any other organization that cares about children. She enjoys meeting children as much as they enjoy listening to her stories.
Her entertaining books are appreciated by children and adults alike and are well known in schools and libraries. She collaborated with talented illustrators who brought life to her texts through their beautiful illustrations.
She dared new frontiers in the topics addressed to children in the Arab world and tackled issues that were perceived as taboos in the Arabic children literature like children’s cancer, Alzheimer’s, sexual abuse, cultural and religious differences ...
In her books, Barraj tries to send subliminal messages that break mainstream notions and stereotypes.

Besides writing about the child’s daily issues, she wrote about serious topics like war, bullying, smoking, parental conflicts, disabilities, accepting others, immigration, etc.... Many of her stories are inspired from her childhood, her daughters’ and her students’. Barraj is a defender of children’s rights which she tackles in her books and has been an active member of LBBY since 2007. She has contributed in spreading the love for reading among children through innovative techniques.
She is in a continuous search for a peculiar idea to write about that will make the children smile, imagine, and think.
Samar Barraj: The Storyteller Breaking Taboos

3/6/2015

by Rana Aflour

Last month, at one of the sessions at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair, a female member of the audience commented that she felt the time was ripe for writers to overcome archaic ‘taboo’ issues where children’s literature was concerned. The move, she stressed, was imperative if authors were ever going to grab the attention of the contemporary, globally aware, young Middle Eastern reader.

What happens next is remarkable. As soon as this soft-spoken woman introduces herself and offers the name of her book as an example on overcoming taboos, the female guest speaker, now recognizing who the author is, gets up, hugs her, congratulates and thanks her for a ‘magnificent piece of work’. The woman is children’s author Samar Mahfouz Barraj and the book is ‘Bad Linx’, one of the author’s 45 children’s books to date.

Session over, I make my way to the petite, stylish, charismatic author and introduce myself. I am delighted when she agrees to meet with me the next day for a chat. And this is how it happened that I found myself engaged in a delightful conversation with this Lebanese author about her work; the huge responsibility that comes with writing for children and the reason why she thinks her books have garnered attention and amassed a following of young readers and their parents.

‘Maybe it’s because I like to write books that are both serious yet humorous; this mother of two grown up daughters tells me, I know that the subjects I write about can be considered delicate or sensitive by some readers, but they are subjects that must be talked about nonetheless. I believe that there is nothing that you cannot write about when it comes to children’s books, but it depends on the format that these topics are presented. We should stop hiding behind taboos’.

One of Barraj’s books, shortlisted for the 2011 Etisalat Award at Sharjah International Book Fair, is ‘When My Friend Got Sick’ which won the second prize for children’s books at the 2011 Beirut International Book Fair and the Arab Thought Foundation’s Kitabli award in 2013. The book introduces the subject of cancer to a very young audience. Understandably, she was a bit apprehensive on how it would be received by the public.

‘I totally believed in my product yet I was so conscious of societal sensitivities that I refused to run it by any of my students or even young readers until after it went into print. Yet, when the book came out, the reaction of the public was very positive. Which goes to show that publishers who exaggerate their over-protective attitude to what children should shouldn’t read or are reluctant to rock the boat, can sometimes hinder the production of books that can be a valuable resource to children’s education’.

For the full article, click here
شُرِير جائع

تتعلم حب القراءة مع شمز محفوظ: برامج التلميذ الصغير يُبْدِع الحوادث ويتفكر في بديعته!

هاني الديري

كما أن تُنشِئ إلى الفترة زمن كاملاً كـ “شروق جائع” المستنود لـ “شراب” لـ “سليم الفوايد” على مدار الورش الأدبية، فإن هذه النصائح تتعلق بالمجالات الأدبية، من خلال سعي الناقد لـ “شمس الدين” لـ “ناصيف” لـ “تصوير” لـ “نور الدين”.

ومن خلال هذه النصائح، فإن دلائل الناقد بـ “حاتم في البكاء” لـ “الدبيش” وأثناء تعرفه على “الشراطين” لـ “نشام السينما”، فإن القبول يمكن أن يؤدي إلى التفكير في أشياء أخرى.

ورغم من هذا النص، فإن القبول يمكن أن يؤدي إلى التفكير في أشياء أخرى.

For the article, click here
لكل أدب أو شعراء
في العام الإفتراضي للثقافة والفنون، الديوان العام للثقافة والفنون يمنح جائزة الأدب للرواية ألفاً، وذلك لتكريم الأدباء وأعمالهم. ويعتبر هذا الجوائز، الذي يمنح في العام، من أبرز الجوائز الدولية التي تمنح في هذا المجال.

تهدف جائزة الأدب للرواية ألفاً إلى تشجيع الأدباء في مختلف المجالات، وتشجيعهم على إنتاج أعمال أدبية عصرية وحداثية، تؤدي إلى تطوير الثقافي، والانتشار في العالم．

الجائزة تعتمد بشكل أساسي على الأدباء الذين يعيشون في دول خليجية، وذلك لدعم الأدب العربي والخليجي في العالم، وتشجيع على التعاون والاعتكاف بين الأدباء في هذه الدول، وتشجيع على PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT ودعم الأدب العربي والخليجي في العالم．

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Articles and reviews

[Quand mon amie est tombée malade]

 عندما مرضت صديقتي » سرطان الأطفال في قصة
 03 Juillet 2012

Articles and reviews

Une petite héroïne au pays du cancer

C'est avec des mots simples, justes, touchants mais empreints d'entrain et d'espoir que Samar Mahfouz Barraj abonde un sujet pour le moins délicat: le cancer des enfants. Illustrée par Sarah Hall, l'ouvrage 'Jemala Mariad Salbadi' (Lorsque mon amie est tombée malade) parle en effet de cette maladie qui reste taboue dans notre société, d'autant plus lorsque elle touche nos chères petites filles belles. Que dire à un enfant qui souffre de cancer ? Comment aider à surmonter la peur, la fatigue, les traitements ? Comment assister à son mal ? Comment expliquer la maladie ? C'est cette liste qu'elle tente de répondre dans ce livre.

La parution de ce livre a pour but de faire connaître aux parents, aux parents de la maladie, les difficultés qu'elles rencontrent chaque jour, et de les aider à surmonter ces épreuves. Les auteurs ont voulu transmettre à travers leurs écrans une émotion sincère et véritable en s'adressant directement à l'audience. Ce livre est une véritable aide pour les parents qui ont un enfant atteint de cancer et qui cherchent des informations et des conseils utiles. Il est également destiné aux professionnels de santé qui travaillent dans ce domaine et qui souhaitent avoir une meilleure compréhension de cette maladie.

La couverture du livre est élégante et esthétique. Elle est composée de couleurs douces et apaisantes qui transmettent une certaine sérénité et calme. Le texte est bien écrit et bien conçu, ce qui en fait un livre qui est agréable à lire et à comprendre. Les auteurs ont également fait preuve de sensibilité et de compassion en créant des personnages qui sont facilement identifiables et qui représentent les différentes situations rencontrées par les enfants atteints de cancer.

En résumé, 'Jemala Mariad Salbadi' est un livre qui est une véritable aide pour les parents de l'enfant atteint de cancer. Il est écrit de manière claire et concise, et il est destiné à tous ceux qui souffrent de la maladie. Il est également recommandé aux professionnels de santé qui travaillent dans ce domaine.

For the article, click here
Articles and reviews

"What do say to a child suffering from cancer? How do you explain the illness to her friends? Where do you find the strength to tackle such a difficult subject?" are a few of the questions the newly released children’s book by Yaki Pasha Publishers entitled "(Translation: When My Friend Got Sick)" goes over. Sensitively written in optimistic Arabic rhymes by children’s book author Samir Mahfouz Barraj with dynamic illustrations by Shahd Hallak, this book deftly addresses the fear of cancer in the eyes of its young reader and highlights the ways in which to deal with it.

For the article, click here

For the full article, click here

Samar Mahfouz Barraj | 11
Interview: Samar Mahfouz Barraj Talks Children, Languages, And Literature

This Lebanese children’s author explains how literature is important...

Posted on 20 February 2018

The Emirates Airline Festival of Literature is back again in Dubai this year in its 10th anniversary. And parents and kids are more involved than ever.

The literature event will take place from 1–10th March, 2018. And we’ve got a list of 3 children’s authors to look for this EFOL for parents interested in attending.

We also got the chance to interview one of the children’s authors, Samar Mahfouz Barraj, a Lebanese writer and translator who is interested in creative writing, translating, teaching, training, and promoting reading in Arabic.

1. What got you into children literature?

I always loved reading and writing, but never thought I would become an author. I began writing for children in Arabic after I started teaching. I wanted the children to like the Arabic session and I used to read stories for them, and especially stories related to the lesson I was teaching. They enjoyed that. One day I was looking for a book about professions and when I didn’t find a suitable text, I wrote a story myself. The title was “أم خلقتني” That was my first book, it was in 2007 and this is how it started.

2. How important is children literature in the Middle East?

It is as important as in any other place. Children love stories. Stories are fun, they help in the development of language and critical thinking skills; it also stimulates their imagination.

3. What role do children's books play in the difficult times the region is facing?

It helps them acquire important ideas and values like tolerance, peace, accepting others. Children literature is widely used with children who have faced difficulties as a result of wars, losing relatives etc., it also helps entertaining them and giving them hope, making them feel happy and enjoy their childhood.

4. How important is learning foreign languages for the new Arab generation?

For the full article, click here

For the article, click here

For the article, click here
FISTA students tell the world ‘we are heroes’

With words and pictures, students with learning difficulties tell the rest of the world ‘we are heroes’

From: British Embassy Beirut
Published: 3 July 2015

British Ambassador to Lebanon Tom Fletcher received a warm welcome by First Step Together Association (FISTA) students, the Director Dr. Reem Nashabe Mouawad and the team, and took part in the launch of the children’s book titled ‘Stories from us and About us’, a project supported by the British Embassy’s Bilateral Programme fund.

In their own words and drawings, 12 students with learning difficulties aged 12-14 years told their story expressing the difficulties they encounter in their social and academic lives and the friendships and dreams they have. He listened first-hand to the students’ experiences and passion for this project, followed by a brief presentation on ‘the making of’ the book. The students then handed Ambassador Fletcher a signed copy of the book with all 12 signatures.

Ambassador Fletcher’s quote featured in the book reads: ‘This is a book about hope amid adversity. I’m sure it will bring inspiration to everyone who reads it. These are stories told not by victims, but by heroes’.

Ambassador Fletcher was introduced to the work of FISTA and toured the premises and classrooms to hear more about their work, ranging from educational to prevocational classes and meeting a number of students.

Background

The book is the result of a 3-day artistic workshop planned and coordinated by special education consultant Nada Barakat Khawaja. It consists of 12 short stories, each expressed by a student and written by the well-known children’s authors Fatima Sharafeddine and Samar Mahfouz Barraj who conducted the workshop. The illustrations were drawn/painted/created by the children themselves with guidance from artist and graphic designer Mona Yakzan.

The book’s layout and text are presented in a way that is accessible to children with reading difficulties. It is now available at ‘Step Together’ Dalchouleh and at their upcoming events. It will also be made available at major libraries throughout Lebanon. This project forms a part of the British Embassy’s human rights engagement in Lebanon.
From step together booklet for Gala dinner 2016, click here
One boy loughs for fun summer days in Beirut while a girl wishes she could live another life in Brussels. Fatima Sharafeddine and Samar Mahfouz Barraj’s young adult novel, “Ghady & Rawan,” follows the tender, youthful friendship of the titular characters, friends connected by Ghady’s yearly summer visits to Lebanon. But the end of summer vacation signals the end of comfort and fun as Ghady must return to Belgium and Rawan must fall back into the motions of school. The novel combines a sweet story about friendship and family with a bracing look at the scarier parts of growing up.

Summer, 2008. As 12-year-old Ghady looks out the window of his plane, he can barely hold back tears. More than anything, he wants to remain in Beirut with his friend Rawan, eating ice cream and exploring. This heartwarming story begins at the end of summer, when two close friends, seemingly worlds apart, dive back into the lives they are used to while wishing to inhabit the other’s shoes. For Ghady, Beirut represents all that is pleasant and warm — there, the noisy streets replace the silence of Belgium. Rawan, who dreams of Brussels, thinks instead of the stable life she could have. They exchange their envies in daily emails, desperate to stay connected. “Isn’t it enough that in Belgium you have safety and stability?” writes Rawan. “At least you’ve not got electricity 24/7... Think about how, over here, we’re at the mercy of random electricity blackouts and insane traffic. That’s all on top of the daily back and forth between the politicians.”

“Ghady & Rawan” explores the daily conflicts of adolescents in mature yet refreshing letters between the two characters. The perspective shifts every chapter, giving readers a very personal glimpse while showing just how different each character’s experiences are. Through it all, Sharafeddine and Barraj do not depict life in one city as better than the other; rather, the novel focuses on human struggles that unite them both: fear, loss, and change. Ironically, Brussels becomes far from safe for Ghady as he comes head-to-head with discrimination at his school. Michael, an upperclassman, constantly hurl racist comments at him. When Ghady misplaces his trust in the new student Thomas, who tries to pressure him into trying drugs together with Michael, he must find a way to avoid Michael and his group. Battling against bullying, peer pressure, and marijuana, he stands tall and resilient, refusing to give in.

In Beirut, Rawan’s warm outlook on life becomes cloudy and cold. She catches her parents arguing one night and fears a divorce may be imminent. She increasingly isolates herself from her friends and family, and her grades begin to slip as she descends into hopeless depression. But all is not as it seems, and Rawan learns that through friendship, even the toughest changes can be survived — and fortunately, the changes she had braced herself for turn out to be something else entirely, allowing her to keep her family together.

At the heart of “Ghady & Rawan” is the important message it sends to its youthful readers: problems shouldn’t be faced alone. Despite the scary situations they encounter, neither Ghady nor Rawan tackle them on their own, relying on each other for support. Their friendship reveals something powerful that goes beyond two stories about growing up — how an idealistic view can temper the hardships of life. Even when confronted with pain and danger, Ghady and Rawan do not lose their hope for a better tomorrow.

For the article, click here
By the Candle Lights
Hend Saeed
The bridge_literaryagency

By the Candle lights, is a story of love, family, friendship and war. It is a heartrending story from the author memories during her growing up in time of the war. It is a story of finding the light in the darkness and finding and few laughs mid the night war symphony.

The story is told from a young girl point of view and captures a day in the life of her family during the war. The family spend their day carrying water from the ground floor to the second floor, waiting in long line to be able to buy bread and preparing candles or gas light – if they managed to get gas for the night.

In those summer nights, they light the mosquitos with applying cologne. Taking a shower is a price for who carries most water that day and washing the face is allowed once a day. As dark descends, they lit the war candles or if, they are lucky, they have enough gas for the lights or cook some food.

The young girl and her neighbours' friends gather in the evening. While the symphony of bombing is heard outside, the children create games from the shadow of the candles on the wall featuring superman, batman and other personalities. Playing and laughing for a few hours, forgetting the mosquitoes' bites, the bad smell of the candle, and the outside symphony.

The story captures the details, the emotions and the intensity of the events on young children, who had to grow quickly under these circumstances, but at the same time, find a way to catch their childhood despite the outside destruction.

For the article, click here
My mother and cigarettes: Mom’s Bad Habit

I have often referred to the picture book My Mother and the Cigarettes as an example of the wide variety of themes addressed in Arabic children’s literature. I think this may be one of the few books, or perhaps the only book, that tells the story of a cigarette-smoking mother via illustration and content. But there’s also her daughter, who has just learned to read and is spelling out what’s on the cigarette packets. She wonders how her mother smoke cigarettes can even though it is so clearly stated on the package that it can make her sick. From now on, her big task will be to try to get her mother to quit smoking, something that turns out to be easier said than done.

I was so happy when I had learned to read and could see what was written on all the signs like that billboard... "Here you have the car of your dreams" or the sign outside the pet shop... "Zozo’s Pet Shop". I could suddenly read everything!

But then I read what was written on my mother’s cigarette packet, "Smoking can cause severe illness"... And I got worried. My mom smoked several cigarettes every day! I had always believed that cigarettes were like toys, but for adults because children were not allowed to play with fire. It was a game where the smoke could be blown out in various forms. I figured that as soon as I became an adult, I would also be able to play with cigarettes.

But after reading the text on the pack of cigarettes, I wondered how mom could smoke even though she knew it could make her sick. She as always said I could get sick if I ate too much candy or went out in the rain and got wet. I needed to come up with a plan to get mom quit smoking. I figured it was mainly a bad habit, like picking one’s nose, throwing trash out of the car, or watching TV all day during the summer holidays. As of that moment, when mom lit a cigarette, I started putting my hand over my chest and coughing really bad. Because mom liked me so much, she wouldn’t want me to get sick, and honestly, I didn’t even like the smell of the cigarette smoke.

But mom didn’t quit smoking. She just quit smoking in front of me. Instead, she went out on the terrace and stealthily smoked.

It’s as if the mother in this story doesn’t understand her own good and her daughter’s need to come up with a better plan. What about Cinderella’s and Snow White’s mothers, or Little Red Riding Hood’s grandmother, could it possible that the got sick because of smoking?...But the mother had completely different ideas. Snow White’s mother had surely reached too far out the window in the tower and fallen down, and Cinderella’s mother was probably hit when she crossed the street without looking around. As for Little Red Riding Hood’s grandmother... She had definitely gotten sick because of having too much sweets!

While the theme of this story is really serious, there’s also such a nice humorous undertone. I have many times laughed out loud at the mother’s explanations for what has happened to Cinderella’s and Snow White’s mothers and why Little Red Riding Hood’s grandmother is sick... And the girl’s sly facial expression as she hides away the cigarette packets! Storytelling encourages discussions, not only regarding smoking but also that children can take matters into their own hands to influence adults.

Author Samar Mahfouz Barraj (Lebanon) is a very prolific writer and a fantastically fine storyteller. Her books are published by several different publishers around the Arab world. One of her most acclaimed books, also in collaboration with illustrator and artist Mira al-Mir (and Mona Yakzan) is the book Khatt ahmar (A Red Line) which addresses sexual harassment. It, too, is a unique story, and a very deliberate way of trying to bring up difficult things and break taboos. Read this nice interview with her where she, among other things, talks about that particular book. **[For the full article in Swedish, click here](#)**
Articles and reviews

Bologna – Fifty Years of Children’s Books from Around the World

Articles and reviews

Samar Mahfouz Barraj

Talks about her friend who wears a hat because she has lost her hair after cancer treatment. The two books both have happy endings; the tone is optimistic, and the illness always involves a secondary character, almost as if the reader had to be protected and placed at a certain distance from the sick person with whom he/she tends to identify. These books deserve praise, however, for dealing with the subject of a sick child and bringing the topic out into the open.

The handicapped child is an increasingly frequent feature of children’s books. For example, deals with the friendship between two little girls, one of whom has a motor impairment and finds it difficult to keep up with her classmates. Other books have made a particular handicap the central issue of the story. Another interesting approach has been taken by, who introduces a little girl in a wheelchair as one of the characters but does not make her handicap a key feature of the story. It pursues the idea that people with handicaps are simply members of society.

Diverse has also made its appearance in books for children in the Arab world. (I have Two Horses) deals with the weanling suffered by a child torn between two homes. Here too, the tone is positive and there is a happy ending, as if the author wants to help the child get over the pain of the separation of his parents, with the promise that things will come out right and that he will end up being happy even if he has to live in two places. This same concern to de-catastrophize a real-life experience that could be

أربعون عاماً من الإبداع العربي في مصر وسوريا ولبنان

مайдة شافر

Articles and reviews
Interviews

For then interview, click here

For the reading, click here

Interview on خط أحمر (Red Line) book

For the interview, click here
Lubna Nuwayhid

Executive assistant at Yuki Press from 2006 till 2022

Creative, innovative, and imaginative, primary characteristics that captured my attention while reading some Arabic children’s books for a new author in Lebanon. That was my first impression of Mrs. Samar Mahfouz Barraj’s work many years ago. Following that, and while working at Yuki Press Publishers as an executive assistant to the publisher from 2006 till 2022, I had the opportunity to get to know Samar well, not only as a well-known and gifted author that stimulates children’s imagination while underpinning their education, but also as a genuine kind and friendly person with great ideas, potentials, and ambition to make a difference in children’s lives and the world of Arabic Children’s Literature.

As a publishing house, Yuki Press worked closely with Samar to develop and create unique children’s books that tackle sensitive topics and explore some of the many challenges facing young children today. Shadi’s Foot, Ines’s Mouth and Naji’s Hand-2010 (3-6), a series of three stories that Samar wrote in a smart way to tackle the issue of bullying, thus, making a challenging twist to encourage their positive and effective uses. So, no wonder that Shadi’s Foot story was among the longlist titles in Etisalat Award for Arabic Children’s Literature in 2011.

When choosing to publish books that promote gender awareness for children, Samar invested her long professional teaching experience and deep knowledge of children’s various developmental stages and unique needs to write the series Why she... why he? – 2011 (3-6), She wrote it with passion, using her sense of humour and wittiness to create curious characters that keep on asking curious questions about gender differences.

Writing books that help youngsters come to terms with illness is a big challenge in the Arab World. Samar’s deep understanding of children, her empathy and eagerness to help them face some of the cultural taboos marked her authentic and distinctive style in When My Friend Got sick-2011 (5-7), a story that won several National and International Awards and Grandma will Always Remember Me. This is a poignant story of a young girl coming to terms with her grandmother’s Alzheimer’s.

Written for 9-12 year old, Grandma Will Always Remember Me is designed to break the taboos associated with discussing this difficult medical condition facing many families today. In doing so, it simultaneously confronts the reality of Alzheimer’s while reducing the fear factor associated with the disease.

The story was translated to Spanish “Abuela Siempre Me Recordara”. It won best children’s book award at Beirut International & Arab Book fair in 2012, was on the Honor List of “Kitabi” Arabic Children’s book prize in 2013 and was shortlisted in 2012 for Etisalat Award for Arabic Children’s Literature.
Awards winning, Honor listings short listed and long listed titles
Awards winning titles

**When my friend got sick**  
Illustrated by Sinan Hallak  
Yuki Press | 2011

- Kitabi Award for children literature  
- Arab Thought Foundation | 2013
- 2nd prize, Beirut International Book Fair award  
- Lebanon | 2011

**Grandma will always remember me**  
Illustrated by Maya Fidawi  
Yuki Press | 2012

- Best children book award,  
- Beirut International Book Fair  
- Lebanon | 2012

**Red Line**  
Illustrated by Mona Yakzan and Mira El Meer  
Dar Al Saqi | 2014

- Kitabi Award for children literature  
- Arab Thought Foundation | 2015
Awards winning titles

My Friend
Illustrated by Mona Yakzan
Dar Al Saqi | 2016

Kitabi Award for children literature
Arab Thought Foundation | 2018

A,B...Z
Illustrated by Sinan Hallak
Dar Al Saqi | 2017

Etisalat Award for children literature
UAE | 2021
Other distinctions

I didn’t mean to
Illustrated by Lena Merhej
Asala Publishers | 2007

Selected among the best 101 books by Anna Lindh
Euro-Mediterranean Foundation | 2009

Selected as the librarians’ favorite book in Lebanon
“The World Through Picture Books” programme
IFLA | 2012

I want a hobby
Illustrated by Lena Merhej
Asala Publishers | 2009

Shortlisted for Etisalat Award for children
literature | 2010

Selected among the best 101 books by Anna
Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation | 2010

Shady’s leg
Illustrated by Lmariam Mousalli
Yuki Press | 2010

Longlisted for Etisalat Award for children
literature | 2011
Mom’s Bad Habit
Illustrated by Mira El Meer
Asala Publisher | 2011

Shortlisted for Etisalat Award for children literature | 2011

When my friend got sick
Illustrated by Sinan Hallak
Yuki Press | 2011

Shortlisted for Etisalat Award for children literature | 2011

My grandma will always remember me
Illustrated by Maya Fidawi
Yuki Press | 2012

Selected for the honor list of Kitabi Award by Arab Thought Foundation | 2013

Shortlisted for Etisalat Award for children literature | 2012
Other distinctions

**By the candlelight**  
Illustrated by Mira El Meer  
Asala Publishers | 2010

Selected for the honor list of Kitabi Award  
Arab Thought Foundation | 2012

**I Love Sleeping!**  
Illustrated by Zarifeh Haidar  
Asala Publishers | 2011

Selected for the IBBY honor list for best text | 2014

**Gooooal**  
Illustrated by Sinan Hallak  
Asala Publishers | 2013

Longlisted for Sheikh Zayed award for children books | 2014

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Other distinctions

**Ghady and Rawan**  
Co-writer: Fatima Sharafeddine  
Illustrated by Sinan Hallak  
Dar Al Saqi | 2013

Shortlisted for Etisalat Award for children literature | 2013

Selected for the honor list of Kitabi Award by Arab Thought Foundation | 2015

**The amazing card**  
Illustrated by Mona Yakzan and Mira El Meer  
Dar El Salwa | 2014

Selected for the honor list of Kitabi Award by Arab Thought Foundation | 2015

Longlisted for Sheikh Zayed award for children books | 2016

**Stories by us and about us**  
Co-writer: Fatima Sharafeddine  
Art supervision: Mona Yakzan  
Step Together association (FISTA) | 2015

Selected for the IBBY honor list for best book for Young People with Disabilities | 2017
Other distinctions

Sharbar is Hungry
Illustrated by Sinan Hallak
Academia | 2016


Bears don’t read - Translation
Original text written and illustrated by Emma Chichester Clark and published by Happer Collins
Academia | 2016

Selected for the IBBY honor list for best translation | 2018

The story of Douhoun
Illustrated by Ghida Barraj
Academia | 2020

Shortlisted for the Arab Children’s book publishers Forum Award | 2021
Bibliography
Bibliography

لم أكن أقصد
I didn't Mean to
Illustration: Lena Merhej
Asala Publishers | 2007
Number of prints: 4

أنا أيضا أريد
I Want Too
Illustration: Lena Merhej
Asala Publishers | 2007
Number of prints: 3

أريد حيوانا أليفا
I Want a Pet
Illustration: Lena Merhej
Asala Publishers | 2008
Number of prints: 2

أفتتش عن هواية
I want a Hobby
Illustration: Lena Merhej
Asala Publishers | 2009
Number of prints: 4

أوامر
Do This, Do That!
Illustration: Fadi Salameh
Asala Publishers | 2009

الديك دجاجة...والخروف نعجة
Cock, Hen...
Illustration: Bayan Hummus
Asala Publishers | 2009

رحلة في منقاد كوكو
A Trip in Coucou's Beak
Illustration: Manal Haddadine Kalimat | 2008

عند جدّي في الجبل
At my Grandpa’s House
Illustration: Nivine Abou Salim
Asala Publishers | 2009

على الشاطئ
On the Beach
Illustration: Nadine Sidani
Asala Publishers | 2009

ماذا أرتدي؟
What Should I Wear?
Illustration: Radwa Askar
Asala Publishers | 2009

Bibliography

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What a Tidy Room!
Illustration: Sondos Chaibi
Asala Publishers | 2009

The Rabbit and the King of the Elephants
Illustration: Manal Haddadine
Kalimat | 2009

One or two?
Illustration: Soura Ghazwan
Asala Publishers | 2010

On the school’s stage
Illustration: Fadi Atweh
Asala Publishers | 2010

Family outing
Illustration: Lara Janoun
Asala Publishers | 2010

Drivers, cars and horns...
Illustration: Fadi Salameh
Asala Publishers | 2010

My Lovely Classroom
Illustration: Sandra Ghosn
Asala Publishers | 2010
Number of prints: 3

Other titles:

What a Tidy Room!
Illustration: Sondos Chaibi
Asala Publishers | 2009

On the school’s stage
Illustration: Fadi Atweh
Asala Publishers | 2010

Family outing
Illustration: Lara Janoun
Asala Publishers | 2010

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Asala Publishers | 2010

My Lovely Classroom
Illustration: Sandra Ghosn
Asala Publishers | 2010
Number of prints: 3
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خر حياد
Illustration: Marian Mousalli
Yuki Press | 2010

ما أحب النوم!
I Love Sleeping!
Illustration: Zarifeh Haidar
Asala Publishers | 2011
Number of prints: 2

أمي و التدخين
Mom’s bad habit
Illustration: Mira El Mir
Asala Publishers | 2011

عندما مرضت صديقتي
When my friend got sick
Illustration: Sinan Hallak
Yuki Press | 2011
Number of prints: 3

الحيوانات، لماذا هي؟ لماذا؟
Animals, Why He? Why She?
Illustration: Bahij Jaroudi
Yuki Press | 2011

بيتنا أحلى...
My lovely Home
Illustration: Mona Yakzan
Asala Publishers | 2012
Number of prints: 2

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**Bibliography**

- **كرة....كرة**
  - Goool
  - Illustration: Sinan Hallak
  - Asala Publishers | 2013
  - Number of prints: 2

- **لعبة جديدة**
  - A New Game
  - Illustration: Afraa Youssef
  - Academia | 2014

- **خط أحمر**
  - Red Line
  - Illustration: Mona Yakzan and Mira El Mir
  - Dar Al Saqi | 2014
  - Number of prints: 14

- **البطاقة العجيبة**
  - The amazing Card
  - Illustration: Mona Yakzan / Hiba Farran
  - Dar El Salwa | 2014
  - Number of prints: 3

- **وسام يستحم**
  - Wassim Takes a Bath
  - Illustration: Afraa Youssef
  - Dar Al Saqi | 2015
  - Number of prints: 3

- **ماما نائمة**
  - Mom is Sleeping
  - Illustration: Sahar Abdallah
  - Asala Publishers | 2013

- **الحوت نوتي**
  - Tutti the Whale
  - Illustration: Maya Fidawi
  - Turning Point | 2014
  - Number of prints: 3

- **الحوت نوتي**
  - Tutti the Whale
  - Illustration: Maya Fidawi
  - Turning Point | 2014
  - Number of prints: 3

- **قطعة الحلوى الأخيرة**
  - The Last Piece of Cake
  - Illustration: Afraa Youssef
  - Academia | 2015

- **غيدي و روان**
  - Ghady and Rawan
  - Co-writer: Fatima Sharafeddine
  - Illustration: Sinan Hallak
  - Dar Al Saqi | 2013
  - Number of prints: 4
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Famous by Chance
Illustration: Nrina Kanzi
Dar Kalimat | 2017

ليلة غريبة جداً
A Very Strange Night
Illustration: Rasil Ishaq
Dar Al Saqi | 2018
Number of prints: 2

برقوق
Barkouk
Illustration: Zainab Faidi
Turning Point | 2018

وسيم ينظف أسنانه
Wassim Brushes His Teeth
Illustration: Afraa Youssef
Dar Al Saqi | 2020

الطبّاخ الصغير
The little chef
Illustration: Nooshin Khaefi Ashkezari
Dar Al Saqi | 2021

ألف باء بـ... باء
A,B......Z
Illustration: Sinan Hallak
Dar Al Saqi | 2017
Number of prints: 2

اللون البنفسجي
The Purple Color
Illustration: Dima Abu Al Hajj
Academia | 2018

قصص ملونة- أحلام لبنى
Colorful stories- Loubna’s dreams
Illustration: Mona Yakzan
Dar El Moualeh | 2018

قصة دهون
The story of Douhoun
Illustration: Ghida Barraj
Academia | 2020

أصدقاء في الفضاء
Friends in the Space
Illustration: Ali Zeini
Dar Al Saqi | 2021
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The Amazing Card
Mercan Kitap | Turkey

غدي و روان
Ghady and Rawan
University of Texas
English

جدّتي ستتذكر دائمًا
Grandma Will Always Remember Me
Editorial Amanuense
Spain

خط أحمر
Red Line
Erdem | Turkey

خط أحمر
Red Line
House of stories | Nepal
Titles translated by Samar
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Five books submitted to jury
The narrator, who is the girl in the story, describes an evening during the war. Her family who lives on the second floor of the building, used to gather with the fifth-floor neighbors in times of intense shelling.

Despite the heat, the lack of water, the power outage, the shelling and the candle wax smell, the children found themselves playing an entertaining game that made them enjoy their time and forget all what was happening outside, as if war became part of their daily routine. They escaped their morbid reality by using their imagination, proving that not even war can steal these fleeting moments of happiness and that childhood will always prevail.

The book addresses the topic of war to children in a relevant and a delicate way without diminishing its gravity by using a simple language and an enjoyable storyline.

The white and black illustrations reflect the candlelight and the darkness of war. This book creates a sense of empathy inside the reader and opens the door for a discussion with children about the bad consequences of war.
“By the Candlelight “is based on a true story of the author’s own life, whose childhood and adolescence were disrupted by the civil war in Lebanon. The war lasted for 15 years, and after the fighting ended, it took time for the Lebanese and especially children to overcome the damage it caused them.

In 2007, due to a conflict, an armed fighting broke out for several days on Beirut streets. There was a real fear that things would get worse again. The author found herself living the same experience again, but this time, she was with her husband, trying to find a safe spot in their house and doing their best to protect and calm their two terrified daughters.

She recalled memories from her childhood during the war and wrote about things that happened one evening, when she was a child.

The book reflects the darkness of war; it is a tribute to peace and calls for children’s rights to enjoy their childhood peacefully far from conflicts caused by adults.

Readers who experienced conflicts and wars in their countries relate themselves to the events in this book, and all those who did not will sure realize how hard it is....... The book was used in workshops about human and children’s rights.
The little girl, who is the narrator in the story, is very happy. She is now able to spell and read ads and signboards. She discovers after reading what is written on a cigarettes’ package that smoking is harmful. She gets worried about her mother who is a smoker.

The girl is confused and wonders:
“How could mom smoke knowing that she might get sick, while she doesn’t allow me to eat too much ice cream, saying that I might get sick?”

The girl decides to help her mother quit this ‘bad habit’. She starts playing funny tricks on her to make her stop smoking, using sometimes the same strategies her mother uses with her. Unfortunately, things don’t go as expected.

When the mother asks her daughter about the present she wishes to get on her birthday, she receives a letter from her:
“Dear mom,
I love you so much and I worry about you.
My first present is that you quit smoking...”
Mom’s Bad Habit

After reading the letter, the mother promises her daughter to try to make this wish come true; the girl is happy and offers to help, “Who said that children can’t help grownups?” At the end of the story, the girl finds herself thinking about a new mission: “When I read in a magazine: “… Smoking a hookah does more harm than smoking a cigarette.” I remembered that my grandmother, my uncle, and my cousin, all smoke hookahs!

The book opens the conversation about smoking and sheds light on how harmful it can be so children would avoid it when they grow up. It also shows that parents make mistakes, and children can help them too. The book conveys the message about the harmful effects of smoking in a funny text and simple language.

The book was published in 2011, where tackling the smoking issue about a female smoker was a groundbreaking step especially in the Arab Children Literature where smoking for women was and still considered a cultural taboo within some societies. In the beginning of the book, we can find a heartfelt message to the author’s daughters, Ghida and Ghia who did tricks to convince their father Hisham to quit smoking and succeeded. They were the inspiration behind writing this story, making it a point that children can help their parents too.
Grandma Will Always Remember Me, is the poignant story of a young girl coming to terms with her grandmother’s illness, Alzheimer’s. Narrated in the first person with humor and sensitivity, the 12 years old girl relates how she initially thought her grandma was playing tricks when she put money in the garbage, hid the biscuit box under her pillow and put pepper instead of sugar in the tea. But as the eccentricities increase, so does the girl’s awareness that there must be something wrong.

Learning that her grandma’s forgetfulness was destined to get worse, She asks herself: “Will grandma forget me? Me? Her grandchild whom she took care of for a long time?”

The girl applies her own logic towards combating the effects of Alzheimer’s. She speculates how science might help, and she excavates many of her own memories of quality time spent with her grandma over the years. The girl’s main concern was to make sure that her grandma remembers her and calls her as she always did: “My little princess.” She decides to visit her grandma daily and help her keep her memory active. “I will help grandma remember... As she used to help me remember letters, words, and numbers when I was little.”
Grandma will always remember me

She also wanted to continue the fun things that they loved doing together like making desserts, singing songs, and watching funny movies.

She and her grandma also start to do crosswords puzzle together, play word games, look at old family photos so that she does not forget who is who...

Clinging to the notion that when grandma does strange things, it is because she is only joking, the girl nonetheless prepares herself for the day when her grandma might even forget her granddaughter pet name. She comforts herself with the knowledge that “deep inside her she will still remember her Little Princess.” Thus, the story ends on a note of hope and optimism.

The book aims to break the taboos associated with discussing this difficult medical condition facing many families. In doing so, it simultaneously confronts the reality of Alzheimer’s while reducing the fear factor associated with the disease.

Besides the Alzheimer’s issue that it tackles, this book also invites for a close relationship between grandchildren and their grandparents. The author had a close relationship with her grandma; she spent much time with her when she was a child, and together they used to do most of the things mentioned in the text.
Mazen rushes into the house.
“Mama! Mama! Our neighbor, Mr Bassem, wants to paint his parking spot red!
I heard him say “My parking space is a red line! “

Here starts a dialogue between the mother and Mazen about what is meant by “red line”. Throughout the book the author tries to cover many topics that come under the umbrella of Redline notion like country, home, family, in order to build a momentum and reach the redline evolving around our body and how we should protect it and be aware if someone wants to come near of it.

The story addresses the topic of sexual abuse, which was considered a taboo, in a delicate, simple and real storyline while acknowledging its complexity. The book explains this serious issue to children in a simple and entertaining way.
It creates many opportunities to discuss body safety with the child empowering him and giving him the courage to face any unpleasant situation without showing him as a victim. It also highlights the necessity of speaking openly and more often to the child about this topic and emphasizes the importance of a good communication between the parents and the child as a way to protect him against sexual abuse.
It is a reference for parents, teachers etc..., who need help in finding the right approach to talk about sexual abuse with children without worrying that the child’s ability to trust adults and show affection might be affected.
The illustrations and vivid colors used in this book comes in harmony with the approach used to discuss this delicate topic.

It is worth to mention that the book is now in its 14th edition in the original language and in its 11th edition in the Turkish version.
"Sharbar is very hungry. His tummy is rumbling. The tiny birds in his tummy are asking for food. Sharbar eats Aunt Hayat's chicken. He is still hungry. Sharbar eats Bassem’s sheep. He is still hungry..."

The story develops exponentially, showing the extremely greedy, selfish Sharbar who never gets satisfied. Sharbar is always looking for more; he eats everything, “the fish in the sea, the mountain, the trees...” He becomes big and powerful to the extent that no one is able to deal with him anymore. Everyone realizes that they have to cooperate to confront his chronic hunger and comes up with a plan. But will it end there?

The book tackles some profound and intricate issues in a funny and fast paced storyline. As mentioned on the cover, the story can be read and enjoyed by children as well as by adults from 5 to 105, as there are so many layers and symbols that keep unfolding as the story develops, leaving the readers with so many questions on their mind. They can also enjoy the humorous and imaginary side of the story paired with minimalistic illustrations that are the reflection of the text’s subtlety, and leave room for imagination and interpretation.

The text is simple yet deep at the same time, and it conveys a clear message to the reader to stop any unacceptable behavior from the beginning and learn from previous experiences. The text could be interpreted in so many ways. Each reader can reflect on the symbolism present throughout the story in the way he deems relevant to his own experience.

The book opens the door for discussion about who Sharbar might represent. Every reader can identify at least one Sharbar he knows or maybe one who is not so far way...
Ten important titles by Samar
“I Didn’t Mean To” is the author’s first published book in 2007. It is one of a series of four books that revolve around the daily adventures of the girl protagonist: (I Didn’t Mean to, I want a Hobby, I Want a Pet, and I Want Too).

Throughout the book, we see her happy, ill, embarrassed, despondent, and gleefully intent on mischief. The plot of the story is episodic as the narrator recounts six occasions in which she had gotten into some sort of trouble even though she had not meant to. All along the story, the girl engages in a series of acts that lead to some unfortunate results, after realizing how bad her acts are, she acknowledges her faults by saying “I didn’t mean to”. After each event, we see the mother’s intervention to guide her daughter. At the end of the story, the girl promises to think before committing new foolishness, but the look in her eyes, and the funny illustrations suggest that the promise may be temporary.

The book is humorous, eventful, and entertaining. The story shows us how children learn from their mistakes and highlights the importance of the parents’ flexibility and tolerance towards their children, while providing protection and guidance through this journey of learning and experiments.
In Naji’s Hand, the right hand is the narrator. She explains how much fun it is to work with the left hand. She tells about the things they do together and how they cooperate in helping Naji do his everyday activities: they tie his shoelaces, unbutton his shirt, peel the banana, steer the red bike... The hand tells how Naji uses her to draw a line, a circle, and a flower, and to wave goodbye to his grandma... But sometimes Naji decides to use the hand to pull the cat’s tail, to hit his friends or pull his sister Luna’s hair. When his Mom asks him why he does that, Naji laughs and says that he is just playing. Naji’s hand is sad, she does not like to hurt anyone. She says...“I can do nothing about it. Naji is the one who thinks and acts.”

Naji’s hand, is one of a series of three books. It tackles the topic of bullying. By exploring how different body parts- the foot, the hand, the mouth- work in relation to the child’s social environment, the young reader quickly realizes the difference between good and bad physical responses.

The book is one of a series about body parts, (Naji’s Hand, Inas’ Mouth, Shadi’s foot)
When my friend got sick
Illustrated by Sinan Hallak
Yuki Press | 2011

Narrated in the first person, the book tells the story of a girl whose friend at school gets sick with cancer. Through a sensitive, soft, and rhyming text and cheerful illustrations, different stages are explored such as how the child loses her lovely hair but wears a beautiful hat; and when she could not go to school, her classmates sent her cards to the hospital. The book conveys a message of hope.

When first published in the Arab World, the book was considered first of a kind by breaking taboos and addressing such a sensitive topic to children specifically from 5 to 7. The book is open, factual, and straightforward. It allows the children to get more familiar with the disease and open up the ability to have a good conversation with children about harsh topics.
The book tells the story of Tarek, a boy whose first and only passion is football. Tarek’s passion about football is fathomless. He perceives everything around ball-shaped and any situation in the class as a football game scene. Tarek’s only concern was that his parents wouldn’t approve of registering him in a football club, fearing that this might affect his studies. But his passion was not left unnoticed, as they finally agreed that Tarek join the football club.

This made Tarek enjoy playing football and at the same time concentrate more on his schoolwork. The story is fun, inspiring, and simply written.

The book highlights the importance of giving the children the chance to practice what they’re passionate about and bring out their talents.
The book tells about the friendship of two Lebanese teenagers, Ghady, who lives with his family in Belgium, and Rawan, who lives in Lebanon. Ghady’s family travels every summer to Beirut, where Ghady gets to spend all his time with Rawan and their other friends, enjoying their freedom from school. During the rest of the year, Ghady and Rawan keep in touch by email. Through this correspondence, the reader learns about the daily ups and downs of their lives in Brussels and Beirut, including Ghady’s homesickness and his struggles with racism at school, as well as Rawan’s relationship with her family. The novel offers a glimpse into the lives of Lebanese adolescents while exploring a range of topics relevant to young people everywhere: bullying, parental conflicts, racism, belonging and identity, and peer pressure. Through the connection between the two main characters, the two authors show how the love and support of a good friend can help you through difficulties as well as sweeten life’s triumphs and good times.

The story behind the story: Ghady and Rawan

Ghady and Rawan was written by 2 authors, Samar Mahfouz Barraj and Fatima Sharafeddine. It entails two parallel stories: the story of Ghady, written by Fatima, and the story of Rawan by Samar. The two authors chose the characters to be two Lebanese friends, a boy living in Belgium and a girl living in Beirut. Both kids face problems, which they communicate about and try to help each other through e-mails. Each author picked the topics to be tackled in her character story. Fatima wrote the first chapter of Ghady’s part and emailed it to Samar. Samar read it, then added the first chapter of Rawan’s part and sent the text back to Fatima and so on. None of the two authors knew ahead of time the flow of events in the other’s story. They were both eager to know what would happen next with the other character, and sometimes they get surprised. When both finished writing, they met and edited it together respecting one another’s style. It was an interesting experience and the first of its kind in Arabic children literature, which makes this book special. In the English version, Rawan’s part was translated by Sawad Hussein, and Ghady’s part by Marcia Lynx Qualey.
The story is about a little boy, Marwan, who is the narrator. Before Marwan's parents go on a trip, his dad tells him:

“In our absence, you can take whatever you want from Mr. Farid’s shop in the neighborhood, and from Mr. Hassan's kiosk at school. I'll pay them when I come back. But remember! Within limits.”

Without really understanding what – within limits – means, Marwan starts offering snacks, juice etc... to his friends and classmates and becomes popular at school. He thinks his dad will pay any amount, as he has a ‘magical card’ that he inserts in a machine which gives him as much money as he wants. When his parents return, there will be a surprise waiting for them!

The book brings up the subjects of money, bank, saving and sharing with others in a simple and fun way.
The book tells the story of a cute little whale named Tutti who lives in the ocean with his family and friends, the dolphin Fino and the octopus Tuptup. When Tutti swims with his mother and gets tired, she lifts him up to rest. He watches the horizon far away. Tutti’s grandmother tells him stories about his ancestors who left to discover what is hidden behind the horizon and never came back.

The idea of leaving to where life might be better and safer never leaves Tutti. When he grows up, he decides to leave once he gets the chance to do so. One day he tries to follow a group of whales, but his friend Fino, the dolphin, warns him that the whales are heading to an island where they will get stuck in the sand. Tutti and Fino decide to warn the group of whales and save them.

Tutti the Whale is a gripping story with riveting characters. It is about family, friends, taking risks, and willing to discover the unknown. It can be relevant to many families where their children’s dreams has taken them behind the horizon. Immigration is also one of the topics addressed in this book, where people find themselves compelled to leave their home country in order to find a better place to live in.
Loubna’s dreams is a story in a book dealing with children rights, entitled “Colorful stories”, that includes 6 different stories each written by an author and illustrated by an artist.

The story starts as Lubna was fighting an imaginary monster while playing with water and soap on the stairs of her building. While jumping from one floor to another with her imaginary ‘magical shoes’ to fight the monster, Lubna keeps on pouring soap to water and sweeping it down stairs to reach the ground floor. As the water flushing to the streets and hits Abou Youssef’s cart, Lubna celebrates her victory on the monster. As she was screaming: “Don’t come here again not until next Thursday!” (the day, when Lubna usually cleans the stairs), she hears her dad’s angry voice yelling at her and before she even gets the chance to reply, she feels a hurtful hit on her shoulder coming from him. Lubna doesn’t react, as this isn’t the first time. As the story keeps unfolding, we discover how unfortunate Lubna’s life is. Lubna the daughter of the building concierge lives in a small apartment with her two brothers, mom and dad. Lubna unlike her brothers isn’t allowed to go to school any more. She has to work with her dad and assists him with the residents’ demands. Sometimes Lubna finds herself in some uncomfortable situations, for instance her neighbor at the first floor and his strange suspicious looks. Of course Lubna has no control over her life choices and if it for her to choose, she would choose to go school like her peer children.

The book is an eye-opener on the unfortunate lives of many children like Lubna where their basic human rights are neglected. Children like Lubna are deprived from their right to education, right to play and recreation, right to be protected from abuse and harm. The story takes the reader on an exciting yet emotional journey with Lubna, as the story of this joyful little girl turns to be a sad one. The brilliant and fast moving storyline serves the unfolding of events presented in the story. Stories like Lubna’s Dreams bring the topic of children’s rights to the table and keep the discussion around it ongoing by being the voice of these children.
Noor the main character of the book, who has recently moved to a foreign country and a new school, finds herself lonely on this new journey where many challenges are coming her way. Few weeks later, Noor meets Clara in the school playground, and they instantly become good friends.

One day, Noor’s mother comes to pick her up from school and from that day on Noor’s friendship with Clara takes a weird turn. The intrigued Clara starts asking Nour weird questions that arouse many concerns at Noor’s side and leaves her feeling alone again. Noor’s mother feels that there’s something wrong with her daughter, especially when Nour asks her not to pick her up again from school. Nour demands this from her mother despite how embarrassing it is, but she thinks that this is the only way to keep her friendship with Clara.

The mother tries to comfort her girl and make her feel better; later on Noor comes with the idea of inviting Clara over to her house and introducing the family to her as a way to fix the situation. This smart initiative had a positive impact on the relation of Noor and Clara and eventually on the way Clara perceives others. The book tackles in an indirect and smooth narration some sensitive and critical notions such as cultural differences, preconceived judgments, acceptance and embracing others differences. While using a simple language and a thoroughly worked-out storyline, the book delivers a message of acceptance and love.
Kareem, the narrator, is excited about writing an imaginary story. His main character is a boy called Joud whose friends are: a yellow ghost, a clown, an alien called Ricco, a purple rhinoceros and a blue monkey.

Kareem, tells his family about his story, but each one of them suggests that he does some changes to the storyline making it closer to reality:

“Joud cleaning his room and doing his homework by himself...
Joud taking care of his little sister... eating healthy food...”

Joud and his friends, the characters in Kareem’s story, come to life and don’t seem to like that!
Finally, Kareem decides to write the story with his three school friends, saying that children will surely like it but not all adults will.

The story is funny and sends a subliminal message about the importance of giving children the freedom to choose what they really love to do, listening to their needs and interests, and helping in igniting their imagination through providing them with inspiring books.
## Selected participations

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<tr>
<th>Book Fairs</th>
<th>Reading festivals and workshops</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2012</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Abu Dhabi Book Fair:</strong> Participation in a panel organized by the British Council about encouraging children to read.</td>
<td><strong>Sharjah:</strong> Participation in the IBBY conference for Asia and North Africa by presenting a paper that tackles the importance of school library activities and their role in bringing books closer to the child.</td>
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<td><strong>Sharjah Children’s reading festival:</strong> Presenting a paper in Arabic “Education Vs Cultivation”</td>
<td><strong>Dubai:</strong> Participation in the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature by presenting a creative writing workshop entitled ‘Children can also write’ for children, a session entitled ‘from Idea to story’, in addition to reading in different schools in UAE.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Abu Dhabi Book Fair:</strong> Book Reading and signing “Grandma will always remember me.”</td>
<td><strong>2014</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Gothenburg Book Fair:</strong> Visits to public libraries in Stockholm, reading stories to children from Arab communities, and participating in seminars and discussions about children literature in Lebanon and the Arab world.</td>
<td><strong>Turkey:</strong> Participation in the 1st International Middle East Symposium which was organized by Kirikkale University in Turkey, by presenting a paper on the importance of children’s literature in education.</td>
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<td><strong>2015</strong></td>
<td><strong>Singapore:</strong> Invited by the UAEBBY to participate in the Asian Festival of Children’s Content 2014.</td>
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<td><strong>Saudi Arabia:</strong> Participated in reading festival ‘takhayyal’ in Jeddah</td>
<td><strong>Qatar:</strong> Reading stories in different schools affiliated with Qatar Foundation.</td>
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| **Qatar:** Reading stories in different schools affiliated with Qatar Foundation. | **Romania:** Reading stories to children from Arab communities at an event entitled ‘stories on the map 2015’ organized by Arab and foreign embassies in Bucharest.
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<td><strong>Bookfest International Book Fair</strong>: Reading stories and preparing activities to children from Arab communities in Romania at the Arabic books stand</td>
<td><strong>Qatar</strong>: Reading stories in different schools affiliated with Qatar Foundation, in addition to presenting workshops on story reading and library activities</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sharjah International Book Fair</strong>: Reading stories for children and presenting workshops in creative writing for children and young adults</td>
<td><strong>Romania</strong>: Reading stories to children from the Arab community at an event entitled ‘Fables on the map 2016’ organized by Arab and foreign embassies in Bucharest</td>
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<td><strong>Tunis International Book Fair</strong>: Reading stories and presenting creative workshops for children in the book fair and in private schools</td>
<td><strong>Romania</strong>: Reading stories to children from Arab communities at an event entitled ‘Fables on the map 2017’ organized by Arab and foreign embassies in Bucharest</td>
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<td><strong>Bookfest International Book Fair</strong>: Participating in various activities at the Arab embassies stand in Romania</td>
<td><strong>Dubai</strong>: Participation in the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature by presenting different workshops, a masterclass about translation and reading sessions for kids, in addition to reading in private schools</td>
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<td><strong>Oujda book fair</strong>: participating in many reading and writing activities for children in Morocco</td>
<td><strong>UAE</strong>: Conducting 3 writing workshops with UAEBBY</td>
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<td><strong>Abou Dhabi Book Fair</strong>: Participation in the book launch of قصص ملوّنة (colorful stories) in which Samar wrote the story أحلام لبنى (Loubna’s dreams)</td>
<td><strong>UAE</strong>: Doing reading sessions and workshops with UAEBBY</td>
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Photo Gallery