Why teach with picturebooks about the Middle East?

- Children’s literature can serve as “mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors” (Rudine Sims Bishop)
- To build cultural awareness and understanding of students as global citizens
- To promote critical literacy: engaging in inquiry, interrogating language and representation, valuing multiple perspectives, and taking reflective action (Vivian Vasquez)

What do we mean by the “Middle East”?

- “The area known as the Middle East stretches from Egypt in the west, situated on the African continent, north to Turkey across to Iran then south to encompass the entire Arabian Peninsula with Yemen at its southernmost eastern edge” (Al-Hazza & Bucher, 2008, p. 7).
- It also includes the North African Arab countries (Al-Hazza & Bucher, 2008).
- The regions of Pakistan and Bangladesh are included in some maps as belonging to the Middle East (Raina, 2009).

Considerations for Choosing Books

- Choose books of high literary and visual merit
- Look for recent texts
- Choose books written by cultural insiders or those who have spent considerable time in the Middle East
- Consult “Arab American Book Award for Children/Young Adult Literature”
- Read reviews of books
- Avoid books that perpetuate stereotypes (For additional guidelines, see separate handout.)

Considerations for Incorporating Books in the Classroom

- Gain background knowledge about students and families from the Middle East in your classroom
- Use multiple texts: one text cannot represent an entire culture, country, or experience
- Try not to position students as spokespeople for their countries/cultures.
- Become very familiar with the text and conduct additional research about its subject area
- Create a dialogic atmosphere: Allow sufficient time for conversation, exploration, confusions, questions
- Attend to the visual dimensions of books and reader response
- Consider both the similarities and the differences between characters and students and across multiple cultures/countries in the Middle East

Promising Engagements

Interactive Read-Alouds     Dialogue Journals     Multi-Genre Study     Cultural X-Rays
Essential Questions     Critical Literacy     Sketch-to-Stretch
“By introducing this literature in all classrooms, regardless of whether Arab students are part of the classroom or not, educators validate the importance of this cultural group within society, offer an opportunity for non-Arab students to be introduced to a new culture, prevent stereotypes from forming, and help children develop a broader and deeper understanding of peoples of the world.”


### Children’s Books Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Age/Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Golden Domes, Silver Lanterns</td>
<td>Hena Khan</td>
<td>World of Islam</td>
<td></td>
<td>K-3G</td>
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<tr>
<td>Silent Music</td>
<td>James Rumford</td>
<td>Arabic Language</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>3-5G</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nasreen’s Secret School</td>
<td>Jeannette Winter</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>2-5G</td>
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<tr>
<td>Razia’s Ray of Hope</td>
<td>Elizabeth Suneby</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
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<td>Big Red Lollipop</td>
<td>Rukhsana Khan</td>
<td>Cultural differences</td>
<td>Pakistan/India</td>
<td>1-4G</td>
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<tr>
<td>Night of the Moon</td>
<td>Hena Khan</td>
<td>Ramadan</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>2-4G</td>
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<tr>
<td>One Green Apple</td>
<td>Eve Bunting</td>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td></td>
<td>1-4G</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dear Malala, We Stand with You</td>
<td>Rosemary McCarney</td>
<td>Social justice/ Girls’ Education</td>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td>2-5G</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Party in Ramadan</td>
<td>Asma Mobin-uddin</td>
<td>Ramadan</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>7-9Y</td>
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<td>Lailah’s Lunchbox: A Ramadan Story</td>
<td>Reem Faruqi</td>
<td>Ramadan</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>K-5G</td>
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<td>Deep in the Sahara</td>
<td>Kelly Cunnane &amp; Hodi Hadadi</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>4-8Y</td>
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<td>James Rumford</td>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Multiple</td>
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<td>Urmi Rahman</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>1-5G</td>
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### For Further Exploration: Professional Texts


