

Recommended Books for Middle School

* = a Middle East Outreach Council (MEOC) book award winner

Fiction, Poetry, and Personal Accounts

* **Where the Streets Had a Name** by Randa Abdel-Fattah

13-year-old Hayaat, believing that a handful of soil from her grandmother's ancestral home in Jerusalem will save her grandmother's life, travels with her friend Samy across Israeli checkpoints to reach the village. The story is one of humor, adventure, family love, and vivid characters (including a Jewish Israeli couple who assist the young people).

The Son of a Duck Is a Floater by Primrose Arnander, Ashkhain Skipwith, and Kathryn Lamb
The book contains Arab sayings with English equivalents.

* **Tasting the Sky** by Itbisam Barakat

This is a beautifully written book about her childhood as a Palestinian refugee. Young people can relate to her vivid tale of youth, family relationships, and overcoming adversity.

The Little Black Fish by Samad Behrangi

This Iranian short story is made to be read aloud. It has many different levels of meaning - about breaking out of one's narrow environment and learning about the wider world. Even more interesting is the fact that the author, a school teacher might have been murdered in 1968 at the age of 29 by the shah's secret police because of the way he encouraged his elementary school students to think freely and look at the social problems of their country. This small book also is written half in Persian, so kids can see what the language looks like and how the cover of a Middle Eastern book is the back of an American one (since they write from right to left).

Nasreddin Hodja by Mehmet Ali Birant

This is a collection of short (often humorous) anecdotes about an early 13th century Turkish figure. It's as interesting for its beautiful Ottomanstyle illustrations as for the stories. (Note: Nasreddin Hodja is called Goha in the Arab world and Mullah Nasreddin in the Persian world. The stories are beloved classics in the entire region.)

If You Could Be My Friend ed. by Litsa Boudalika

Two teenagers, Mervet Akram Sha'ban and Galit Fink, one Palestinian and one Israeli teenager, corresponded with each other for three years when "introduced" by a Belgian film director, producing a documentary in Israel.

* **Samir and Yonatan** by Daniella Carmi

A Palestinian and an Israeli boy meet in a hospital.

The Shepherd's Granddaughter by Anne Laurel Carter

Palestinian teen Amani tends her extended family's sheep until Israeli settlers encroach on their land. The family's resistance – with the help of sympathetic Israelis – forms the underpinning of this coming-of-age story.

A Stone in My Hand by Cathryn Clinton

A story of an 11-year-old Palestinian girl who has to deal with her father's disappearance in Israel and her 12-year-old brother's desire for revenge.

* **Extra Credit** by Andrew Clements

Abby Carson is a sixth grade student in rural Illinois whose head is everywhere but her schoolwork. In order to be spared the embarrassment of being left behind a grade, she agrees to an extra credit assignment involving writing to a pen pal in another country and so she meets Sadeed Bayat and his sister Meriem in rural Afghanistan. As their friendship flourishes, problems arise on both sides.

Sister Shako and Kolo the Goat: Memories of My Childhood in Turkey by Vedat Dalokay

The author writes of his childhood in eastern Turkey.

Funny in Farsi by Firoozeh Dumas

*This comedic memoir tells anecdotes from the author's life growing up as an Iranian immigrant in the U.S. Also see her follow-up memoir, *Laughing without an Accent*.*

* **The Breadwinner** by Deborah Ellis

*This book is about Parvana, an 11-year-old girl in Afghanistan under the Taliban who has to disguise herself as a boy to support her family. (See the sequel - *Parvana's Journey* - below.)*

Parvana's Journey by Deborah Ellis

*A sequel to *The Breadwinner*, this book follows 12-year-old Parvana. Separated from her family, she sets off looking for them in war-torn Afghanistan during the time of the Taliban.*

Sami and the Time of the Troubles by Florence Parry Heide and Judith Heide Gilliland

This haunting and beautifully illustrated story tells of a 10-year-old boy during the fighting in Beirut, Lebanon.

* **Lugalbanda, The Boy Who Got Caught Up in a War** by Kathy Henderson, illustrated by Jane Ray

This five thousand-year-old story from the land of ancient Sumer, now Iraq, focuses on the boy Lugalbanda who assists his father, the king, during a military campaign.

Folk Tales of Egypt by Denys Johnson-Davies and Tarek Mossad

This is a book of folk tales from Egypt.

Goha by Denys Johnson-Davies

This is a brief, illustrated book of Arab folk tales. (Note: Goha is called Nasreddin Hodja in the Turkish world. The stories are beloved classics in the entire region.)

Goha, the Wise Fool by Denys Johnson-Davies and Hag Hamdy Hany

This is a brief, illustrated book of Arab folk tales. (Note: Goha is called Nasreddin Hodja in the Turkish world. The stories are beloved classics in the entire region.)

* **A Little Piece of Ground** by Elizabeth Laird

A 12-year-old Palestinian boy tries to find a place to play soccer.

* **Figs and Fate** by Elsa Marston

This is a wonderful collection of short stories about teens growing up in the Arab world.

Santa Claus in Baghdad and Other Stories about Teens in the Arab World by Elsa Marston

This is a wonderful collection of short stories. (The title story, "Santa Claus in Baghdad," can be compared with "The Gift of the Magi." Be sure to see the film – below – made from the former story.)

Dawn and Dusk by Alice Mead

A 13-year-old Kurdish boy and his family struggle to survive during the time of the Iran-Iraq War (and the Iraqi poison gas attack on some Kurdish villages).

* **Habibi** by Naomi Shihab Nye

A girl, Liyana, moves with her family to Palestine, a place that Liyana has never seen. Her friendship with Omer, a Jewish boy, helps her adjustment to a strange land, but the friendship is forbidden in a land torn by conflict.

My Name is Aram by William Saroyan

A coming-of-age story set in an Armenian immigrant community in the early twentieth century.

Damascus Nights by Rafik Schami

One of the city's greatest storytellers is struck dumb, and his friends must tell him stories from myth, history and contemporary Syria to reawaken his tongue.

A Hand Full of Stars by Rafik Schami

A Syrian teenager, long before the current troubles, learns that: "If you tell the truth in Syria, you must pay with your life."

* **Shooting Kabul** by N.H. Senzai

An 11-year-old Afghani boy struggles to adjust to life in the U.S. - and tries to continue the search for his missing younger sister - after fleeing his war-torn country.

Watermelons, Walnuts and the Wisdom of Allah and Other Tales of the Hoca by Barbara Walker

This book is collection of Turkish tales about the legendary Nasreddin Hoca (called Goha in Arabic). The book has short, humorous stories with illustrations.

Non-Fiction

Festivals of Egypt by Jailan Abbas

This book describes the different holidays celebrated in Egypt.

*** Al-Kindi: The Father of Arab Philosophy** by Tony Abboud

This book is part of a 6-volume series "Great Muslim Philosophers and Scientists of the Middle Ages."

Suleyman and the Ottoman Empire by John Addison

This is brief overview of the reign of Suleyman the Magnificent along with a series of short, primary source documents.

Afghanistan: The Land by Erinn Banting

This book contains photos and descriptions of Afghanistan.

*** The Genius of Islam: How Muslims Made the Modern World** by Bryn Barnard.

This beautifully illustrated book contains short articles on developments in the medieval Muslim world: from advances in medicine, math, and science to the transmission of ancient knowledge to the development of military bands.

*** The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Arabia** by Mary Beardwood

This detailed encyclopedia entry focuses on the geography, cultures, and, especially, the flora and fauna of the Arabian Peninsula. With many photographs, charts, maps, figures, asides, this exhaustive and beautifully illustrated text will answer every question you never knew that you had about Arabia on subjects from pearling to fossils, migratory birds to the many uses of the date palm. The sheer breadth of information will eliminate the narrow geographic and social stereotypes so many students have about the Middle East.

*** Al-Khwarizmi: The Inventor of Algebra** by Corona Brezina

This book is part of a 6-volume series "Great Muslim Philosophers and Scientists of the Middle Ages."

Judaism by DK Eyewitness Books

Discover the history, faith, and culture that have shaped the modern Jewish world. With over 50 million copies sold in 88 countries and in 36 languages, Eyewitness Books are truly the ultimate visual information encyclopedias for the 21st Century. Carrying on the tradition of integrating words and pictures, these three new titles in the Eyewitness series are timely editions to any library.

Egypt and the Middle East by Daniel De Bruycker and Maximilien Dauber

Beautifully illustrated with cartoons and photographs and easy to reference (question and answer format), this book would be easy for students to use in learning about the basic history of the Middle East.

Muhammad and the Arab Empire by John Duckworth

This gives a brief overview of the rise of Islam along with a series of short, primary source documents.

Children of War: Voices of Iraqi Refugees by Deborah Ellis

This book provides an opportunity for students to read interviews with Iraqi refugee children and see how the war has affected their lives.

Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak by Deborah Ellis

This is a collection of accounts of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by children ages 8-18.

* **Celebrate Ramadan and Eid Al-Fitr with Praying Fasting, and Charity** (National Geographic, "Holidays Around the World" series) by Deborah Heiligman

Although it is at a low reading level, this book is even interesting to adults due to its great pictures and clear explanations. (It is National Geographic book, so the photography is amazing!)

Holy Cities: Jerusalem and Holy Cities: Mecca

Maps, photos, and descriptions of each of these two religious centers.

Understanding Islam and the Muslims by Islamic Affairs Department of the Embassy of Saudi Arabia

An introduction to Islam in a brief booklet with bright photographs.

* **The Iranian Revolution** by Brendan January

This book is part of the Pivotal Moments That Changed the World series, focusing on the Iranian revolution of 1979. Instead of succumbing to the "clash of civilizations" argument, it delves into the deeper causes of the Iranian revolution, and brings the story forward to describe how the forces that triggered the revolution continue to play out in the troubled relationship between the United States and Iran today. This book is a welcome entry to the corpus of research literature for younger people.

* **Avicenna (Ibn Sinna): Muslim Physician and Philosopher of the 11th Century** by Aishe Khan

This book is part of a 6-volume series "Great Muslim Philosophers and Scientists of the Middle Ages."

Oil in the Middle East by John King

This book contains beautiful photos and well-written narrative about modern diplomatic and political developments in the Middle East.

* **Iraq** by Dale Lightfoot

One of the Modern World Issues series. The book gives an overview of Iraq's geography, history, government, and economy. Colorful pictures and maps make it student-friendly.

* **Mosque** by David Macaulay

If you liked his books/films about the building of a medieval cathedral or fortress, you'll like this one about the construction of a 16th century Ottoman mosque.

Inside Story: A 16th Century Mosque by Fiona MacDonald and Mark Bergin

Detailed illustrations and clear explanations make this a terrific resource book with information about the building, religious background, and history surrounding the construction of a mosque.

* **Extraordinary Women from the Muslim World** by Natalie Maydell and Sep Riahi

This book, introduces readers to 13 Muslim women in history who have lived extraordinary lives and influenced their communities in a positive way, often overcoming extreme hardship and inaccurate stereotypes that have been placed on the role of women in Islam. In addition to showing the impact these women have had throughout the years, Extraordinary Women from the Muslim World seeks to make a difference in the lives of Islamic women today, inspiring them to fervently pursue their goals. All proceeds from the special edition hardback series will be donated to Islamic Relief to benefit the women and children of Sudan.

The Arabs in the Golden Age by Mokhtar Moktefi and Veronique Ageorges

Nicely illustrated, easy-to-reference account of Arab history.

The Arab-Americans by Alixa Naff

This book describes the experiences and contributions of Arab-Americans.

* **Islam** by Sue Penney

From the "Introducing Religions" series, this gives an overview of the Muslim faith.

Judaism by Sue Penney

Discover the rich cultural background behind this major world religion. Find out where Judaism originated, trace its history, and explore the meanings.

Jerusalem by Saviour Pirotta

From the Holy Cities series, this is a basic introduction to the city of Jerusalem.

* **Albucasis (Abu Al-Qasim Al-Zahrawi): Renowned Muslim Surgeon of the 10th Century** by Fred Ramen

This book is part of a 6-volume series "Great Muslim Philosophers and Scientists of the Middle Ages."

* **The Grand Mosque of Paris: A Story of How Muslims Rescued Jews during the Holocaust** by Karen Gray Ruelle and Deborah Durland DeSaix

When the Nazis occupied Paris, no Jew was safe from arrest and deportation. Yet during that perilous time, many Jews found refuge in an unlikely place--the sprawling complex of the Grand Mosque of Paris. This beautifully illustrated and well-researched book looks like a picture book, but it tells the complex stories of that time.

* **Historical Atlas of Islam** by Malise Ruthven and Azim Nanji.

This is a beautifully illustrated, informative atlas.

* **Traveling Man: The Journey of Ibn Battuta, 1325-1354** by James Rumford

The true story of the travels of 14th century Arab explorer Ibn Battuta. Beautifully illustrated.

Cleopatra Rules!: The Amazing Life of the Original Teen Queen by Vicky Alvear Schechter.
Written in a breezy, informal style, this book has everything you have ever wanted to know about Cleopatra and the Egyptian/Roman world she inhabited.

* **Al-Biruni: Master Astronomer and Muslim Scholar of the 11th Century** by Bill Scheppeler
This book is part of a 6-volume series "Great Muslim Philosophers and Scientists of the Middle Ages."

Foods of Iran by Barbara Sheen

Beautiful photographs and clear prose show a lot about Iranian culture through a description of the food. There are recipes, cultural descriptions, and details about how the food is grown and sold.

The Travels of Benjamin of Tudela by Uri Shulevits

A fictionalized account of a Spanish Jew, who explored the Middle East and North Africa in the twelfth century (a century before Marco Polo). It's nicely illustrated and in the form of short stories, a book you could read aloud to the class.

Mesopotamia by Jane Shuter

A beautifully illustrated, well organized short book about Mesopotamia from the "Excavating the Past" series.

* **Averroes (Ibn Rushd): Muslim Scholar, Philosopher, and Physician of the 12th Century**
by Liz Sonneborn

This book is part of a 6-volume series "Great Muslim Philosophers and Scientists of the Middle Ages."

* **Alia's Mission: Saving the Books of Iraq** by Mark Alan Stamaty

This graphic novel tells the true story of a woman's struggle to save the books in the Basra library during the 2003 war in Iraq.

Islamic Design: A Genius for Geometry by Daud Sutton

Focusing on Islamic geometric patterns, simple and complex, man-made and in nature, this book offers unique insight into Islamic culture.

Turkish Customs and Traditions by Turgay Tuna

This book describes the traditions of Turkey.

Seven Wonders of the Ancient Middle East by Michael Woods and Mary B. Woods

A nicely illustrated book about the ancient Middle East. It provides history of the societies of the time.

The Tomb of King Tutankhamen: Unearthing Ancient Worlds by Michael Woods and Mary B. Woods

Nicely illustrated and contains great photographs, this book gives a lot of history about King Tutankhamen as well as ancient Egypt in general.

The Arab-Israeli Conflict by Richard Worth

An Open for Debate book which shows the main issues for both Palestinians and Israelis. Grades 7 and up.

Videos

Promises

Promises presents a powerful portrait of seven Palestinian and Israeli children who live in and around Jerusalem. As filmmaker B.Z. Goldberg, who was raised in Israel, notes, "They live no more than 20 minutes from each other, but they are each growing up in very separate worlds." The children's stories and views of life are funny, sad, and ultimately quite profound.

Santa Claus in Baghdad (the short story of Elsa Marston)

This is a beautiful short fictional story that can be compared with "The Gift of the Magi." Iraqis living during the bleak time of international sanctions just before the overthrow of Saddam Hussein try to find gifts for people that they love. (Note: The story can be found in the collection of short stories by Elsa Marston in the Book section above.) 35 minutes.