

April | 2020

# Jane Addams Peace Association



## *Opening a Window to the Arab World*

The Jane Addams Peace Association invited the Middle East Children's Alliance to develop content for this month's themed issue, *Opening a Window to the Arab World*. We are inspired by this organization's commitment to peace, justice, and dialogue. We hope this month's newsletter provides insight into the daily life, joy, fear, hopes, and burdens placed on children living in countries besieged by conflict and war. Jane Addams reminds us that our ability to create an ethical world is tied to our willingness and ability to show up for each other. We hope this collaboration opens up new possibilities to partnering with other organizations who share our values. Enjoy!

Renowned children's literature scholar Rudine Sims Bishop reminds us of the importance of children's literature as a mirror that reflects a child's reality and a window that opens the child to the larger world. As our government wages numerous wars in the Middle East and bans immigration from an ever-expanding list of Muslim-majority countries, there's a critical need to center books that bring complex and humanizing Arab protagonists into our classrooms and homes. Arab American students almost never see their history or current reality reflected in curriculum. This leaves all our children at the mercy of anti-Arab and Islamophobic stereotypes perpetuated by racist media and demagogic politicians.

We selected books about Iraq and Palestine that include age-appropriate depictions of children living in war zones. Both books quietly demonstrate the role of culture and extended family in nurturing children's resilience and growth.

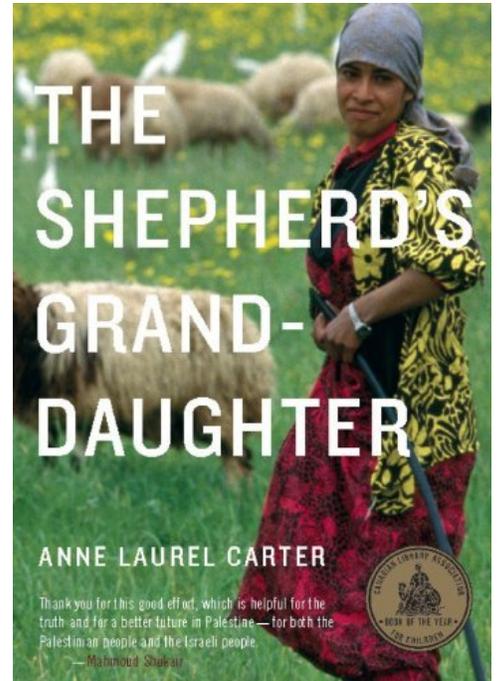
**"We are learning that a standard of social ethics is not attained by traveling a sequestered byway, but by mixing on the thronged and common road where all must turn out for one another, and at least see the size of one another's burdens."-Jane Addams**



# Older Reader

## *The Shepherd's Granddaughter* by Anne Laurel Carter (2008) Groundwood Books

The Shepherd's Granddaughter is the story of Amani, a young Palestinian girl living in the countryside near Hebron, in the West Bank. Her beloved grandfather tends the family's sheep. As the story opens, six-year-old Amani is learning how to be a shepherd, too. But taking care of the sheep becomes increasingly difficult as Israeli roads and settlements take over more and more of the family's land. First her uncle and then her father are beaten and imprisoned. As Amani grows into her teen years and searches for creative ways to protect her herd, she meets a young Jewish boy from the United States who opposes how his father and the other Israeli settlers are stealing Palestinian land. This is a rare Palestinian-centric introduction to the Palestinian/Israeli conflict for upper elementary and middle school students. 4th grade and up.

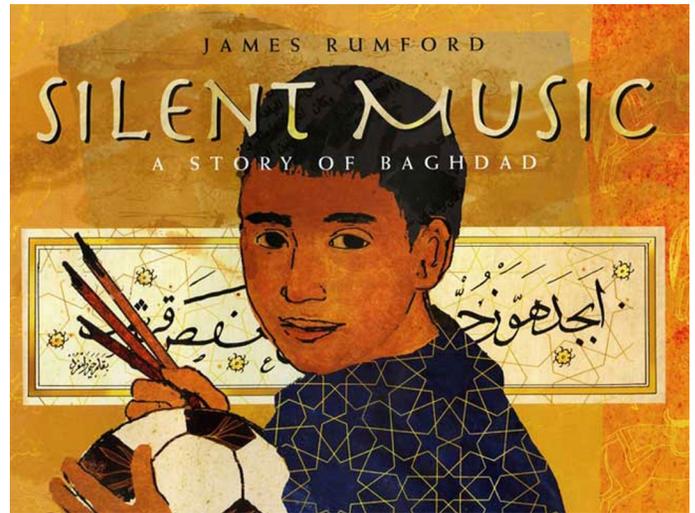


# Classroom Connection

Visualizing Palestine 101 is a set of engaging infographics for teachers and students learning about Palestine. The site includes the data sets behind the infographics, so teachers can create math lessons at many levels of complexity. The graphics are organized into five categories: historical context, a system of control, structural inequality, international impunity, and future possibilities. The site also includes a glossary of important terms and access to relevant videos.

# Younger Reader Book Review

***Silent Music: A Story of Baghdad***  
Written and illustrated by James  
Rumford (2008) Roaring Book Press



Ali, the young boy at the center of *Silent Music: A Story of Baghdad*, loves soccer, loud music, and learning to write in Arabic. This short, gentle book introduces children to the beauty of Arabic calligraphy while sharing a little about Ali's life in Baghdad. As he tells us, one frightening night when bombs and missiles fell on his city: "I filled my room with pages of calligraphy. I filled my mind with peace." The extraordinary illustrations bring the artistry of Arabic writing to life. Pre-K to 3rd grade.

---

## Classroom Connection

Ali practices writing in Arabic to comfort himself during the bombing of Baghdad. "Can you remember a time when you felt scared?" you might ask your students. "What did you do that helped you feel less afraid?" Once students have shared with a partner, brainstorm a class list of all the things we can do to make us feel better when we are scared or upset.

Arabic calligraphy is both writing and art. Explore examples of English calligraphy and have children write their names, and hopes for peace and social justice, in letters that are both writing and art.

## Theme Resources & Connections

### Picture Books:

Bashi, Golbarg. *P Is for Palestine*. Illustrated by Golrokh Nafisi ((2017). Dr. Bashi Diverse Children's Book Series.

Nye, Naomi Shihab (1997). *Sitti's Secrets*. Illustrated by Nancy Carpenter. Aladdin Picture Books.

Winter, Jeanette (2005). *The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq*. HMH Books for Young Readers.

### Chapter Books and Videos:

Bacha, Julia and Rebekah Wingert-Jabi, dirs. *My Neighborhood*. (2012). Just Visions. Arabic and English with English subtitles.

Baillie, Donna, dir. *Secret Hebron: The School Run*. 28 minutes. (2003) Journeyman Pictures.

Barnard, Bryn. *The Genius of Islam: How Muslims Made the Modern World* (2011). Alfred A Knopf.

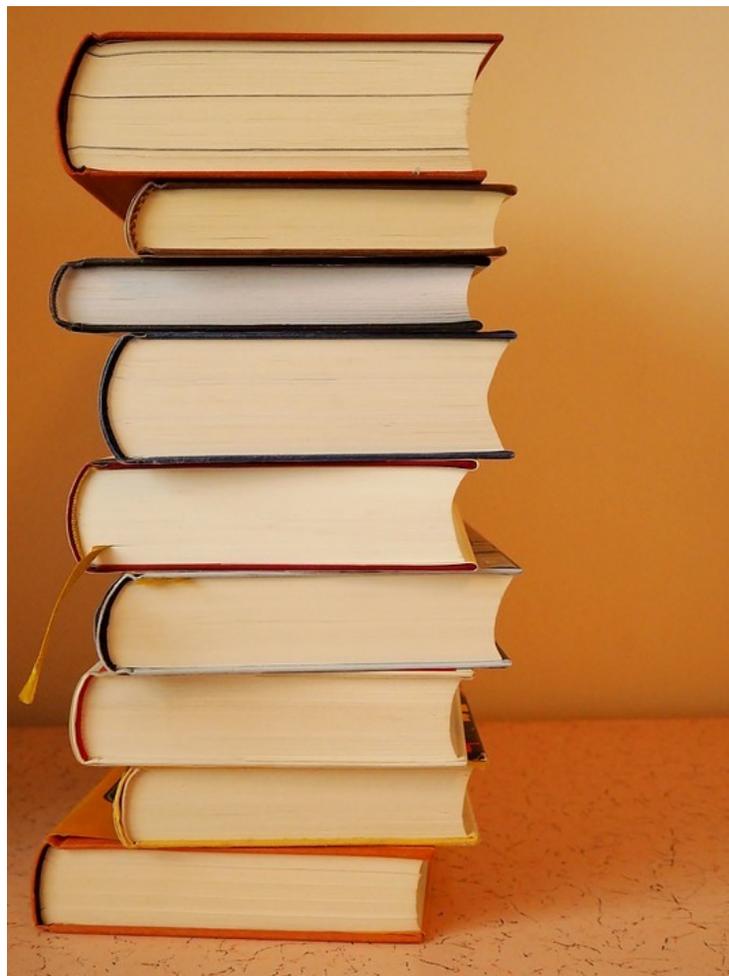
Laird, Elizabeth. *A Little Piece of Ground* (2003). Haymarket.

## Resources for Educators

Lagerwerff, Christina. "[Why Isn't Palestine on Our Map?](#)" An Introduction to Palestine for Third Graders," Teach Palestine Project.

Nogueira, Ana and Eron Davidson, dirs. *Roadmap to Apartheid* (2012). Journeyman Pictures. In English. Some subtitles.

[Teach Palestine Project](#): An internet resource for and by K-12 teachers.



**We would love to know how you are engaging students with these titles in your classrooms and schools. Please share artifacts using the hashtag #JACBA**

# Upcoming Themes

## May 2020: Finding Peace and Beauty Within Yourself

Younger: Woodson, Jacqueline. *The Day You Begin*. Illustrated by Rafael López, Penguin Random House, 2018.

Older: Sachiko: A Nagasaki Bomb Survivor's Story, written by Caren B. Stelson, and published by Carolrhoda Books, a division of Lerner Publishing Group

**Submit your curriculum connections for one of the books in the upcoming themed issues. Send materials with brief 1 paragraph explanation to [price-dennis@tc.edu](mailto:price-dennis@tc.edu)**

---

## Contributing Editors

Jody Sokolower (Teach Palestine Project, Middle East Children's Alliance), Detra Price-Dennis (Teachers College, Columbia), and Emily Smith-Buster (Austin Independent School District)