

Echoes of October

Complete Companion Guide for Middle
School Teachers

Introduction

Goal of Echoes of October

To help students think critically about conflict, identity, and media by using a powerful graphic novel that tells the human story of Israeli and Palestinian youth living through war.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Develop empathy by seeing different perspectives on a real-world conflict.
- Learn to question stereotypes, misinformation, and biased narratives.
- Explore how environment, culture, and politics shape identity and beliefs.
- Understand key historical and modern-day facts about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in an age-appropriate way.
- Practice critical thinking, media literacy, and respectful discussion on complex issues.

Curriculum Area(s):

- Social Studies
- Media Literacy
- Global Citizenship and Human Rights Education
- Language Arts (Graphic Literature, Writing, Reflection)
- Ethics/World Religions/Philosophy (depending on province)

Our Mission Statement: To equip young readers with the tools to think critically, feel deeply, and speak truthfully about conflict and coexistence—by telling a story that reflects the complex realities of our world, encourages empathy, and promotes peace through understanding rather than hate.

Companion Guide for Teachers

Page 1

Summary: Introduction of the four protagonists on October 7th, 2023. Each child, from different backgrounds, experiences the loss of a father.

Contextual Notes: This emotionally charged opening connects each child to the date of the Nova Festival massacre. The panel visually and thematically communicates that grief and trauma are shared across cultures and religions.

Discussion Questions: Why might the author start the story with all four children experiencing loss on the same day? What does this say about the theme of the book?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67038437>

<https://www.ipost.com/israel-news/defense-news/article-848756>

Page 2

Summary: Each child reacts to news and conflict in their environment: bomb shelter, IDF movements, Druze enlistment, and public celebrations in Gaza.

Contextual Notes: Highlights the diversity of experiences during wartime. Cultural and political contrasts are made vivid through the characters' reactions. This helps readers understand different lived realities of war.

Discussion Questions: How do the environments of the four children affect their understanding of violence and conflict? What might each be feeling in this moment?

External Resources/Links:

<https://idf.il/en/minisites/about-the-idf/>

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hamas>

<https://theweitzman.org/exhibitions/nova/>

Page 3

Summary: Each child asks the same question in a shared thought balloon: 'Why?'

Contextual Notes: This moment encourages introspection. It invites readers to question causes and consequences rather than accepting conflict as inevitable.

Discussion Questions: What might each child be asking 'Why?' about? How can asking questions help us understand others?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/when-massacre-came-to-a-music-festival-in-israel>

Page 4

Summary: Flashback begins a year prior. Each child lowers their head in contemplation.

Contextual Notes: Sets up the narrative shift. Encourages students to notice changes in time and understand how the past shapes the present.

Discussion Questions: Why might the author use a flashback here? How does remembering the past help us understand the present?

Page 5

Summary: Eli and Amir play soccer while their fathers talk. The fathers express weariness about conflict and a desire for peace.

Contextual Notes: Depicts friendship between Jewish and Druze families, emphasizing shared humanity. Amir's father reminds us that identity and connection to land are complex and deeply felt.

Discussion Questions: Why do you think Eli's father wants to leave Israel? What does Amir's father mean when he says 'this is home'?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24613595>

Page 6

Summary: Visual juxtaposition of Gaza and Israeli border. Lily and her father arrive at a kibbutz, and Jannah and her father return home.

Contextual Notes: Illustrates the physical proximity yet sociopolitical divide between Gaza and Israel. Kibbutzim are unique Israeli communal settlements, while Gaza faces blockades and militant control.

Discussion Questions: How do the differences in the physical environments reflect the lives of the characters? What might be some of the similarities?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/16/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-fence.html>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kibbutz>

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/what-is-hamas/>

<https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2018/01/24/579180146/israel-speeds-up-under-ground-border-wall-to-block-gaza-tunnels>

Page 7

Summary: Each family shares food and traditions. The hummus bowl becomes a metaphor for shared human experience.

Contextual Notes: Food serves as a cultural anchor and a metaphor for community. Hummus is a dish enjoyed across ethnic groups, symbolizing common ground.

Discussion Questions: What does the shared hummus bowl symbolize? How does food help bring people together even in divided societies?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20221031-hummus-a-mediterranean-dish-that-unites>

<https://www.bonappetit.com/entertaining-style/gift-guides/article/israeli-chef-yotam-otto-lenghi-talks-with-the-gaza-kitchen-authors>

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/food-adventures-israel-pa_b_4864334

Page 8

Summary: Eli and Amir's fathers part ways. The boys discuss a game, and the fathers exchange a friendly gift, showing deep friendship.

Contextual Notes: This scene shows inter-community friendship and hospitality. Even small interactions can reflect broader hopes for coexistence.

Discussion Questions: Why is the simple gesture of giving a bottle so meaningful between the fathers? What does this say about their relationship?

Page 9

Summary: Jannah brings tea to her father and a Hamas terrorist. Her father praises the idea of his son becoming a fighter.

Contextual Notes: Introduces the idea of indoctrination and the societal expectations placed on children in conflict zones. Hamas has been known to use propaganda targeting youth.

Discussion Questions: Why might Jannah be uncomfortable with the situation? How does peer or parental pressure shape our beliefs?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/09/15/gaza-hamas-indoctrinating-children>

<https://www.ipost.com/israel-hamas-war/article-780613>

Page 10

Summary: Lily listens to Taylor Swift while feeling disconnected from her new home. Her father reads from the Bible.

Contextual Notes: Taylor Swift's song 'You're On Your Own, Kid' symbolizes adolescent loneliness. Her father's attempt at connection through scripture reflects the generation and cultural gap.

Discussion Questions: How does music help Lily express herself? Why do you think her father is trying to read from the Bible at that moment?

External Resources/Links:

<https://genius.com/Taylor-swift-youre-on-your-own-kid-lyrics>

<https://www.peacecomms.org/gaza>

Page 11

Summary: Amir reflects on his friendship with Eli and questions the future of soldiering. Eli plays war games, dreaming of being a hero.

Contextual Notes: Depicts the normalization of military themes in children's lives. Eli's dream of being like Moshe Dayan, a famous Israeli general, contrasts Amir's hope for peace.

Discussion Questions: Why does Amir hope there won't be soldiers? What does Eli's daydream suggest about how he views his father and his country?

External Resources/Links:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moshe_Dayan

Page 12

Summary: Jannah writes in her journal, expressing fear and confusion. Lily tries to write music but feels uninspired.

Contextual Notes: Jannah's private thoughts reveal a desire for peace and fear of both Israelis and internal violence. Lily represents a displaced child trying to make sense of a new life.

Discussion Questions: How does writing help both Jannah and Lily process their emotions? Why might Jannah feel trapped?

External Resources/Links:

<https://copingskillsforkids.com/blog/why-journaling-matters>

<https://warchildhood.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Youth-Journals-Seeing-Conflict-Through-Their-Eyes.pdf>

Page 13

Summary: Eli and his father talk about war, laughter, and memory through a photo of a military friend named Yossi.

Contextual Notes: Shows the duality of war: pain and camaraderie. Humor as a coping mechanism is a powerful concept for young readers to understand.

Discussion Questions: Why might laughter be important in serious situations like war? What does Eli admire about his father?

External Resources/Links:

<https://specialinuniform.com/press/jews-druze-christians-and-muslims-are-joining-together-for-a-worthy-cause/>

Page 14

Summary: Jannah's father talks about education and fighting in different ways. Jannah questions his choices.

Contextual Notes: Presents the internal struggle in families under extremist influence. Her father's dual roles as teacher and militant are a source of confusion for Jannah.

Discussion Questions: What do you think Jannah's father means when he says the struggle comes in many forms? Is it possible to fight for something with your mind?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.congress.gov/event/118th-congress/house-event/LC73706/text>

<https://en.majalla.com/node/237956/politicsexclusive-idf-%E2%80%93%E2%80%93our-mission-enlist-many-israeli-arabs-we-can%E2%80%93>

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/loyal-to-the-state-of-israel-tiny-druze-community-punches-above-its-weight-to-help/>

Page 15

Summary: Amir hikes with his father, who shares stories of war and the Druze people's strength. Amir feels left out.

Contextual Notes: Druze identity, divided across national borders, is symbolized in 'Shouting Hill'. This reinforces Amir's inner conflict between tradition and belonging.

Discussion Questions: Why does Amir feel frustrated during the hike? What might 'control, then kick' mean in other parts of life?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/druze-shouting-hill-makes-voices-heard-across-border/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Druze>

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/oft-overlooked-druze-see-new-nis-3-9-billion-plan-as-step-to-address-old-grievances/>

Page 16

Summary: Lily and her father bond while feeding animals on the kibbutz. Lily begins to open up emotionally.

Contextual Notes: Symbolizes healing through nature and connection. The horse 'Mountie' becomes a link between Lily's Canadian identity and her present reality.

Discussion Questions: Why might Lily feel more connected to animals than people? How does her father try to make her feel at home?

Page 17

Summary: Eli's handwritten dream appears on a blue-tinted splash page, reflecting his ambition.

Contextual Notes: This symbolic dreamscape page helps humanize Eli's hopes and foreshadows his desire to lead and protect.

Discussion Questions: What do Eli's dreams reveal about his personality? How do dreams help people cope with reality?

External Resources/Links:

<https://thelehrhaus.com/commentary/our-eyes-the-kenites-and-the-druze/>

Page 18

Summary: Eli imagines himself as a brave general; Jannah wonders if she could lead Palestinians through education.

Contextual Notes: Powerful contrast: both children dream of leadership but via different paths—military vs. intellectual.

Discussion Questions: What do Jannah and Eli's dreams have in common? How are they different? Why do both kids feel 'trapped'?

Page 19

Summary: Amir draws a Druze-Israeli superhero; Lily composes song lyrics while her dog watches.

Contextual Notes: Creative expression as a form of identity formation. Amir's 'Double Star' reflects pride and aspiration, while Lily's lyrics show her inner confusion.

Discussion Questions: Why might Amir want a superhero of his own culture? What does Lily's struggle to write a song show about how she's feeling?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5529729,00.html>

https://www.comicbookreligion.com/?srch=religion-Druze_27

Page 20

Summary: All four children gaze silently out their windows into the night, each surrounded by dream-like visuals.

Contextual Notes: A contemplative, visual moment that reinforces solitude, shared longing, and introspection.

Discussion Questions: Why do you think the author chose to show the kids looking out the window at night? What do windows symbolize in stories?

Contextual Notes: Powerful contrast: both children dream of leadership but via different paths—military vs. intellectual.

Discussion Questions: What do Jannah and Eli's dreams have in common? How are they different? Why do both kids feel 'trapped'?

Page 21

Summary: Eli and Amir help their families with household chores and work, showing responsibility and daily life.

Contextual Notes: Demonstrates the everyday reality of family life amidst national tension. The boys' roles reflect traditional and modern values.

Discussion Questions: Why is it important that we see Eli and Amir doing chores? How does helping out connect to their values or upbringing?

Page 22

Summary: Jannah helps prepare food while Hamas militants are in her home. Lily shares food with a new friend and her dog.

Contextual Notes: Two contrasting home environments: one filled with violence and fear, the other with cautious kindness. The presence of the Hamas militant giving a toy gun is disturbing.

Discussion Questions: What do these scenes say about the environments the girls live in? How can small acts of kindness make a difference?

External Resources/Links:

<https://nypost.com/2025/02/16/world-news/kids-play-with-guns-bigger-than-they-are-in-gaza-video/>

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/05/11/gaza-hamas-armed-groups-risking-civilians>

<https://www.unicef.org/stories/understanding-impact-trauma-children-conflict-zones>

Page 23

Summary: The children engage in quiet personal moments: video games, homework, reading propaganda, and playing music.

Contextual Notes: Shows the influence of the environment on youth—while some are immersed in learning or leisure, others are subjected to indoctrination.

Discussion Questions: How does each child's environment shape what they do after school? Why is it important to be aware of the messages we receive?

Page 24

Summary: The children prepare for bed. A montage of nightly rituals underscores their similarities despite their differences.

Contextual Notes: A powerful sequence showing that children everywhere brush their teeth, tie their hair, and prepare for sleep—highlighting shared humanity.

Discussion Questions: Why does the author show all four kids getting ready for bed? What does this say about how similar we all are, even if we live in different places?

Page 25

Summary: A quiet reflective splash page: Amir wonders if knowing it was 'the last time' would have changed anything.

Contextual Notes: This page invites readers to reflect on memory, loss, and the fragility of life. It's a moment to consider how we value time and people.

Discussion Questions: Have you ever wished you knew something was 'the last time'? What would you do differently if you did?

Page 26

Summary: Families celebrate Hanukkah together; the lighting of the menorah is shown warmly and intimately.

Contextual Notes: A glimpse into Jewish cultural and religious tradition. Hanukkah celebrates the rededication of the Second Temple and the miracle of the oil.

Discussion Questions: What does the menorah represent in Jewish culture? How can holidays bring people closer during difficult times?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.history.com/topics/holidays/hanukkah>

Page 27

Summary: Jannah receives a Hamas scarf for her birthday. Lily longs for a traditional Christmas with snow and Santa.

Contextual Notes: Contrasting celebrations: one rooted in militant ideology, the other in personal longing. Highlights the politicization of childhood.

Discussion Questions: How might Jannah feel receiving such a gift? Why is Lily disappointed even though she's with her family?

External Resources/Links:

<https://merip.org/1990/05/women-the-hijab-and-the-intifada/>

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2018/10/palestine-gaza-hamas-campaign-women-hijab.html>

Page 28

Summary: Eli and Amir joke about a superhero drawing; their fathers discuss political tension and Hamas.

Contextual Notes: Conversations reveal growing tension in Israeli society and the threat posed by Hamas. The kids' laughter contrasts with their parents' concerns.

Discussion Questions: Why do fathers feel uneasy? What do the boys' jokes show about their friendship and how humor helps cope with fear?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.cfr.org/background/what-hamas>

Page 29

Summary: Scenes in Gaza and Israel highlight inequality in power and electricity. Jannah questions it all.

Contextual Notes: Jannah's quiet defiance and questioning represent a key theme—youth trying to make sense of oppression and injustice.

Discussion Questions: Why might Jannah question her father's authority? How is her reality different from the other characters, and how is it the same?

Page 30

Summary: A visual splash page blending celebratory fireworks with imagery of war and rockets.

Contextual Notes: Celebration and chaos intertwined. Represents the duality of life in a conflict zone—moments of joy exist alongside fear.

Discussion Questions: Why might the author mix fireworks with rocket imagery? What does it say about how people live under constant threat?

Page 31

Summary: Eli's family wakes up after New Year's. His father returns home exhausted from DJ'ing.

Contextual Notes: This shows the contrast between nightlife and family life. Despite external celebration, internal fatigue and anxiety persist.

Discussion Questions: What do Eli's father's actions say about how adults cope with stress? Why might he be exhausted even after something fun like DJ'ing?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.realmusicandmoney.com/news/best-israeli-djs-spreading-positivity-through-music>

<https://www.dw.com/en/october-7-attacks-last-dj-at-supernova-festival-looks-back/a-70314584>

Page 32

Summary: Amir plays soccer with his father but struggles to succeed. His father uses the moment to teach a life lesson.

Contextual Notes: The 'control, then kick' metaphor teaches balance between thinking and action. A meaningful parenting moment.

Discussion Questions: What does Amir's father mean when he says, 'Think, then act'? How can this apply to your own life?

External Resources/Links:

<https://advice.theshineapp.com/articles/the-next-time-you-feel-stuck-remember-taf-think-act-feel/>

<https://news.ucr.edu/articles/2022/10/05/do-you-act-you-think-or-think-you-act>

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6235276/>

Page 33

Summary: Jannah questions her father about a flower vendor's rumored fall. Her father deflects her questions.

Contextual Notes: Hints at deeper political realities and personal danger in Gaza. Her growing awareness adds to her emotional complexity.

Discussion Questions: Why might Jannah's father avoid her questions? What risks could come from knowing too much in her situation?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jun/16/queer-palestinians-lgbtq-israel-pride-flags-gaza-conflict-pink-washing>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/22/nyregion/gaza-war-lgbtq-community.html>

<https://unwatch.org/rights-group-exposes-palestinian-torture-ahead-of-first-un-review/>

<https://www.ipost.com/middle-east/article-790635>

Page 34

Summary: Lily tries to scare her father but an alarm interrupts. He rushes her into safety during a rocket attack.

Contextual Notes: Shows how ordinary moments are constantly interrupted by fear and danger. The alarm highlights the ever-present threat of violence.

Discussion Questions: How do sudden alarms and lockdowns shape the way kids like Lily live? Why might her father be particularly protective?

External Resources/Links:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_color_\(Israeli_civil_defense_warning_system\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_color_(Israeli_civil_defense_warning_system))

<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-08-14/ty-article-magazine/.premium/the-psychological-effects-of-living-under-rocket-fire/0000018d-f8a6-df7e-a9ed-f8fe3f1a0000>

Page 35

Summary: Eli questions whether Jews did something to deserve historical hatred. His father uses both “canaries in a coalmine” and “cherry tomatoes” as metaphors.

Contextual Notes: A creative way to discuss antisemitism and scapegoating. Encourages understanding through metaphor.

In the *canaries in the coal mine* metaphor, Coal miners used to bring canaries down into the mines. Canaries are more sensitive to toxic gases like carbon monoxide. If the bird grew ill or died, it warned miners to escape — the environment had become dangerous, even before humans could detect it. Minorities can act as a society’s moral barometer. If they’re under attack, it’s a sign that justice and tolerance are eroding. Where Jews suffer, others often follow.

In the *cherry tomatoes* metaphor, the Jewish people: small in number, vibrant, culturally rich, and beneficial (like the tomato—healthy and flavorful). A minor annoyance exaggerated into blame. Just as someone might irrationally dislike cherry tomatoes for trivial reasons, people often justify prejudice with fabricated or petty rationales. Here the cherry tomatoes represent how, despite the positive contributions of Jewish communities, they have historically been scapegoated for societal problems. Suggests that antisemitism isn’t about Jewish behavior, but about those projecting hatred. Prejudice reflects the flaws of the haters, not the hated.

Discussion Questions: Why do you think Eli’s father compares Jews to cherry tomatoes? How can metaphors help explain difficult topics?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.adl.org/resources/glossary-terms/antisemitism>

<https://fathomjournal.org/infection-and-addiction-metaphors-for-antisemitism/>

Page 36

Summary: Students in different schools learn about history and religion from various perspectives. Eli, Jannah, Amir, and Lily ask questions.

Contextual Notes: Shows how education varies by culture and geography. Each child hears different narratives about Israel, Palestine, and religion.

Discussion Questions: Why do the children receive different answers to their questions? How might education shape beliefs about history and identity?

External Resources/Links:

<https://en.unesco.org/themes/global-citizenship-education>

Page 37

Summary: Eli sees protesters in Tel Aviv amid a rainy storm—literal and metaphorical chaos.

Contextual Notes: The protest reflects real political unrest in Israel over judicial reform and broader societal divisions. Shows that Israel is a democracy where citizens can vocally disagree with their government without fear of reprisals. Something that is absent in Gaza, where dissent is met with execution.

Discussion Questions: What might the storm symbolize in this scene? How do public protests show democracy in action?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-65027355>

<https://tcf.org/content/report/assault-israels-judiciary/>

Page 38

Summary: Amir walks through the rain in Daliyat al-Karmel. His brother calls him to help at the family restaurant.

Contextual Notes: Despite the weather, daily life continues. The scene shows the expectation for young people to contribute to family responsibilities.

Metaphorically these rain pages, speak to the fact that it rains on all the children equally. No matter how different their experiences they are all sharing time and space.

Discussion Questions: How does Amir feel about his responsibilities? Why might his brother use humor to encourage him?

Page 39

Summary: Jannah walks through Gaza past a flower stall and militant posters. Power cuts plunge the street into darkness.

Contextual Notes: The flower stall symbolizes fleeting beauty amid oppression. Darkness represents the instability and fear under militant rule.

Discussion Questions: Why do you think Jannah focuses on beauty in the street? What do power outages symbolize in this context?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-39730791>

<https://www.pcrf.net/information-you-should-know/electricity-in-gaza.html>

<https://www.tv7israelnews.com/cogat-hamas-puts-terror-ahead-of-gaza-residents/>

<https://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-gaza-israel-bombardment-20140729-story.html>

Page 40

Summary: Lily walks through her kibbutz, past familiar animals and peaceful scenery. She feels comfort in the rain.

Contextual Notes: Her relationship with the landscape contrasts with the tension seen in other children's environments. Nature as an emotional anchor.

Discussion Questions: How does Lily's experience of rain differ from Amir's or Eli's? Why might it remind her of home?

Page 41

Summary: Eli's family shares dinner. He asks why Jews have been historically hated, and his father uses a cherry tomato analogy.

Contextual Notes: Introduces the concept of scapegoating using a relatable metaphor. Encourages students to think critically about prejudice.

Discussion Questions: What makes the tomato metaphor effective or not? Can you think of another metaphor that helps explain prejudice?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/why-do-people-hate-jews>

Page 42

Summary: Amir misses his father, who is often away serving in the army. Amir struggles with pressure and breaks a dish.

Contextual Notes: Shows how absence and responsibility weigh on children. His stress highlights the hidden emotional toll of conflict.

Discussion Questions: How does Amir's frustration come out? Why might he feel conflicted about his father's service?

Page 43

Summary: Jannah and her father visit a doctor. Her health issue is implied. Her father supports her emotionally.

Contextual Notes: Hints at deeper vulnerabilities and the physical impact of stress and living conditions. Emphasizes quiet parental love.

Discussion Questions: What does Jannah's father mean when he says, 'You're holding me'? Why might this be a turning point for her?

Page 44

Summary: Another rocket alert sends Lily and her father rushing to safety again. Her father receives a hospital run request.

Contextual Notes: Civilians live in constant fear while also caring for others. Shows how service and danger overlap in conflict zones.

Discussion Questions: How does Lily react to the repeated alarm? What does this say about the long-term effects of living with fear?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.ipost.com/israel-news/article-755826>

<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-08-14/ty-article-magazine/.premium/the-psychological-effects-of-living-under-rocket-fire/0000018d-f8a6-df7e-a9ed-f8fe3f1a0000>

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/a-small-peace-for-an-hour-israelis-help-palestinian-patients-travel-to-hospitals/>

<https://www.theroadtorecovery.org.il/i-want-to-drive>

Page 45

Summary: Jannah reflects on wanting to return to her 'old life'—a different world now gone.

Contextual Notes: The green-tinted splash page uses color and handwriting to express longing, trauma, and irreversible change.

Discussion Questions: Have you ever wished to go back to a different time in your life? Why does Jannah call it a different world?

Page 46

Summary: Jannah and her father wait in line at a checkpoint for medical treatment in Israel.

Contextual Notes: Depicts the harsh reality of restricted movement between Gaza and Israel. Illustrates the vulnerability and bureaucracy Palestinians face.

Discussion Questions: What might Jannah be feeling at the checkpoint? How does her experience compare to that of the other children?

External Resources/Links:

https://www.btselem.org/freedom_of_movement

Page 47

Summary: Jannah meets Lily and her father, who is volunteering. Jannah is surprised by the kindness shown to her.

Contextual Notes: This moment challenges Jannah's assumptions. A shared journey between two sides introduces possibilities for empathy.

Discussion Questions: Why is Jannah surprised by the kindness she receives? What can happen when we meet people from 'the other side'?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/a-small-peace-for-an-hour-israelis-help-palestinian-patients-travel-to-hospitals/>

<https://www.theroadtorecovery.org.il/i-want-to-drive>

Page 48

Summary: Amir quietly works at the restaurant while thinking about his family's legacy.

Contextual Notes: Reflects internalized pressure and comparison. 'Double Star' symbol continues to represent Amir's search for identity.

Discussion Questions: Why do you think Amir is unsure if he can live up to his father and brothers? How does he define strength?

Page 49

Summary: Eli watches a protest. He wonders why Israel seems to be turning against itself.

Contextual Notes: Introduces internal conflict within Israeli society. Government protests reflect democratic struggle and generational tension.

Discussion Questions: How does Eli feel about what he sees? Why do you think he says, 'we're fighting ourselves'?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/27/world/middleeast/israel-protests-netanyahu.html>

Page 50

Summary: Jannah and Lily share a ride with their fathers. They talk and begin to bond.

Contextual Notes: Humanizes both girls. The scene builds a bridge between characters through shared curiosity and vulnerability.

Discussion Questions: How does this conversation start to build trust? Why is it important for Jannah and Lily to talk directly to each other?

Page 51

Summary: Amir watches protests on TV. He questions the worth of continuing to fight for a country in turmoil.

Contextual Notes: Shows growing disillusionment. Amir is caught between national service and personal fear.

Discussion Questions: What does it mean to question whether a country is worth fighting for? Why might someone feel this way?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/mar/27/israel-parliament-bill-appoint-judges>

Page 52

Summary: Eli and his family eat at a restaurant. Just outside, a terrorist prepares to attack.

Contextual Notes: The casual moment is shattered by approaching violence. Tension builds as danger closes in unexpectedly.

Discussion Questions: Why might the author place a peaceful dinner scene next to a terrorist's approach? What effect does this contrast create?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/9/israeli-emergency-services-say-three-injured-in-tel-aviv-shooting>

Page 53

Summary: The terrorist attack unfolds on Dizengoff Street. Eli's father shields the family.

Contextual Notes: Real events re-enacted in fiction to show the chaos and trauma of sudden violence. Protective instincts emphasized.

Discussion Questions: What might Eli be thinking during this moment? How does his father's reaction shape Eli's view of him?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/three-injured-in-terror-shooting-in-central-tel-aviv-terrorist-shot-dead/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dizengoff_Street_bus_bombing

Page 54

Summary: Lily and her father drive home after taking Jannah to the hospital. Rockets hit the kibbutz stables.

Contextual Notes: The hospital run symbolizes compassion. Mountie's likely death symbolizes the loss of innocence.

Discussion Questions: Why is Lily so shaken by what happened to Mountie? What does her father mean by 'they know not what they do'?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.ipost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/dizengoff-street-attack-evokes-memories-of-tel-aviv-terror-trauma-439122>

<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2021-05-13/ty-article/.premium/living-on-the-edge-why-these-u-s-immigrants-moved-next-to-gaza/0000017f-e5b4-dea7-adff-f5ffd0000000>

Page 55

Summary: Eli hears his parents argue about leaving Israel. He's confused and conflicted.

Contextual Notes: Raises questions of safety, identity, and loyalty. Shows how conflict affects family dynamics.

Discussion Questions: Why is Eli upset about leaving? What does this scene tell us about how families make difficult decisions in crisis?

Page 56

Summary: Zooms out from Eli's window to the entire world. Israel appears small yet central.

Contextual Notes: Visual metaphor showing the vastness of the world and the concentrated importance of the conflict in Israel.

Discussion Questions: Why do you think the author zooms out like this? What does it say about perspective and significance?

Page 57

Summary: Jannah walks past a celebration of the Tel Aviv attacker. She questions what they're really celebrating.

Contextual Notes: A disturbing look at martyrdom propaganda. Jannah's internal resistance is growing.

Discussion Questions: Why is Jannah troubled by the celebration? What does the candy symbolize to her?

Page 58

Summary: Eli is withdrawn at school. A girl tries to reach out to him.

Contextual Notes: Highlights how trauma isolates children. Eli doesn't want to leave his country or friends.

Discussion Questions: Why does Eli say he doesn't want to go? How do friendships help us feel grounded?

Page 59

Summary: Amir throws out trash and chats with his brother. They joke about smiling and smoking.

Contextual Notes: Reinforces the importance of humor and bonding. Even small moments matter in uncertain times.

Discussion Questions: What does Amir learn from his brother? Why might humor be important in hard times?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/07/24/israel-protests-judicial-overhaul/>

Page 60

Summary: Jannah is questioned by classmates about her hospital experience in Israel. She gives a false answer.

Contextual Notes: Internal conflict: her truth is different than what she's expected to say. Duality of public persona vs private thoughts.

Discussion Questions: Why do you think Jannah lies about her experience? What does her conflicting narration tell us?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s44271-024-00080-x>

Page 61

Summary: Lily and Rachel reflect on the constant threat of rockets. Rachel is used to it—Lily is not.

Contextual Notes: Demonstrates normalization of fear for some, shock for others. Ends with a message about embracing individuality.

Discussion Questions: Why does Rachel say, 'Who wants to be normal'? What does this tell us about resilience?

External Resources/Links:

<https://academic.oup.com/icon/advance-article/doi/10.1093/icon/moae090/7997409?searchresult=1>

Page 62

Summary: Amir wonders if trying harder would have changed anything. A moment of self-doubt.

Contextual Notes: Reflects survivor's guilt and helplessness. Young readers may connect with feelings of responsibility and questioning.

Discussion Questions: Why might Amir blame himself? What can we do when we feel powerless?

Page 63

Summary: Eli confronts his father about wanting to leave Israel. His father explains it's about safety, not giving up.

Contextual Notes: Shows the complexity of parental protection vs national loyalty. Themes of generational conflict and emotional honesty.

Discussion Questions: Why does Eli want to stay? What is his father afraid of losing?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.npr.org/2023/11/10/1211900372/israelis-leave-country-security-concerns>

Page 64

Summary: Amir calls his father, who explains why he serves in the army. They disagree on sacrifice and certainty.

Contextual Notes: This highlights intergenerational tension and conflicting views on duty, safety, and national identity in the Druze community.

Discussion Questions: Why does Amir question his father's military service? What would you have said in Amir's place?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/druze-communitys-relationship-with-idf-is-complex-and-evolving/>

Page 65

Summary: Jannah confronts her father about a weapon hidden in the house.

Contextual Notes: This is a key moment of moral awakening and resistance to indoctrination. Jannah demands clarity and transparency.

Discussion Questions: Why does Jannah challenge her father's silence? What does this reveal about her personal growth?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-palestinians-gaza-weapons-idUSKBN1HY0HE>

Page 66

Summary: Jannah's father deflects her questions with cryptic and fatalistic remarks.

Contextual Notes: Explores themes of inherited trauma, fatalism, and how adults sometimes mask fear behind ideology.

Discussion Questions: What does her father mean by 'a bullet for all of us'? Why do you think he avoids Jannah's questions?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/10/13/the-cost-of-armed-resistance-in-gaza>

Page 67

Summary: Jannah asks: 'Why must there be a gun?'

Contextual Notes: This is the moral and emotional climax of the novel, encapsulating its anti-violence message.

Discussion Questions: Why do you think the book ends with this question? Is it more powerful to end with a question or an answer?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.unicef.org/mena/reports/children-armed-conflict>

Page 68

Summary: The four children stare silently out at the reader.

Contextual Notes: A moment of fourth-wall breaking that urges the reader to reflect and feel implicated. They are inviting empathy and accountability.

Discussion Questions: What do their stares say? How do you feel being looked at by them?

External Resources/Links:

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_empathy_develops

Page 69

Summary: Author's note explains the real-life events behind the book.

Contextual Notes: Provides a direct connection to the October 7 attacks and reinforces the book's message of truth through storytelling.

Discussion Questions: Why do authors include personal notes in fiction? How does this shape your understanding of the book?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/15/world/middleeast/october-7-israel-attacks-survivors.html>

Page 70

Summary: List of organizations and calls to action for peace and understanding.

Contextual Notes: Empowers readers to move from empathy to action. Promotes youth-led social change.

Discussion Questions: What's one thing you could do today to build understanding in your community?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.seeds-of-peace.org>

<https://handinhandk12.org>

<https://www.unicef.org/mena/reports/children-armed-conflict>

Page 71

Summary: A visual timeline of the region's history appears alongside the children's story.

Contextual Notes: Encourages historical literacy and shows multiple sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Discussion Questions: How does seeing both timelines together change your view? What do you notice?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Israel/History>

<https://www.paljourneys.org/en/timeline>

Page 72

Summary: Real quotes from Israeli, Palestinian, and Druze youth expressing hopes and fears.

Contextual Notes: Humanizes the conflict by offering real perspectives.

Shows that teens on all sides want peace.

Discussion Questions: Which quote stuck with you most? Why is it important to hear directly from young people?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.voicesofyouth.org>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-10-09/teenagers-in-gaza-israel-share-hopes-and-fears/102953232>

Page 73

Summary: A large splash page with the quote: 'You can't hate someone once you've heard their story.'

Contextual Notes: Captures the heart of the graphic novel. Promotes empathy and the power of narrative.

Discussion Questions: Do you agree with this quote? Can storytelling change how we view others?

External Resources/Links:

<https://storycorps.org>

<https://www.globalonenessproject.org/library>

Page 74

Summary: Acknowledgments page thanking contributors from across communities.

Contextual Notes: Demonstrates the diverse and inclusive nature of the book's development.

Discussion Questions: Why is acknowledgment important in collaborative projects like this one?

External Resources/Links:

None.

Page 75

Summary: Glossary of terms like kibbutz, Druze, Hamas, Iron Dome.

Contextual Notes: Supports understanding of regional terms and organizations to provide clarity.

Discussion Questions: Which terms were new to you? How does having definitions help you better understand the story?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.adl.org/resources/glossary-terms>

<https://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees>

Page 76

Summary: List of books, organizations, and websites for further learning.

Contextual Notes: Equips educators and students with tools for deeper exploration.

Discussion Questions: What more would you like to learn about after reading this?

External Resources/Links:

<https://www.seeds-of-peace.org>

<https://handinhandk12.org>

<https://www.unicef.org>