100 Books for Young Readers in Arabic

2024 Edition

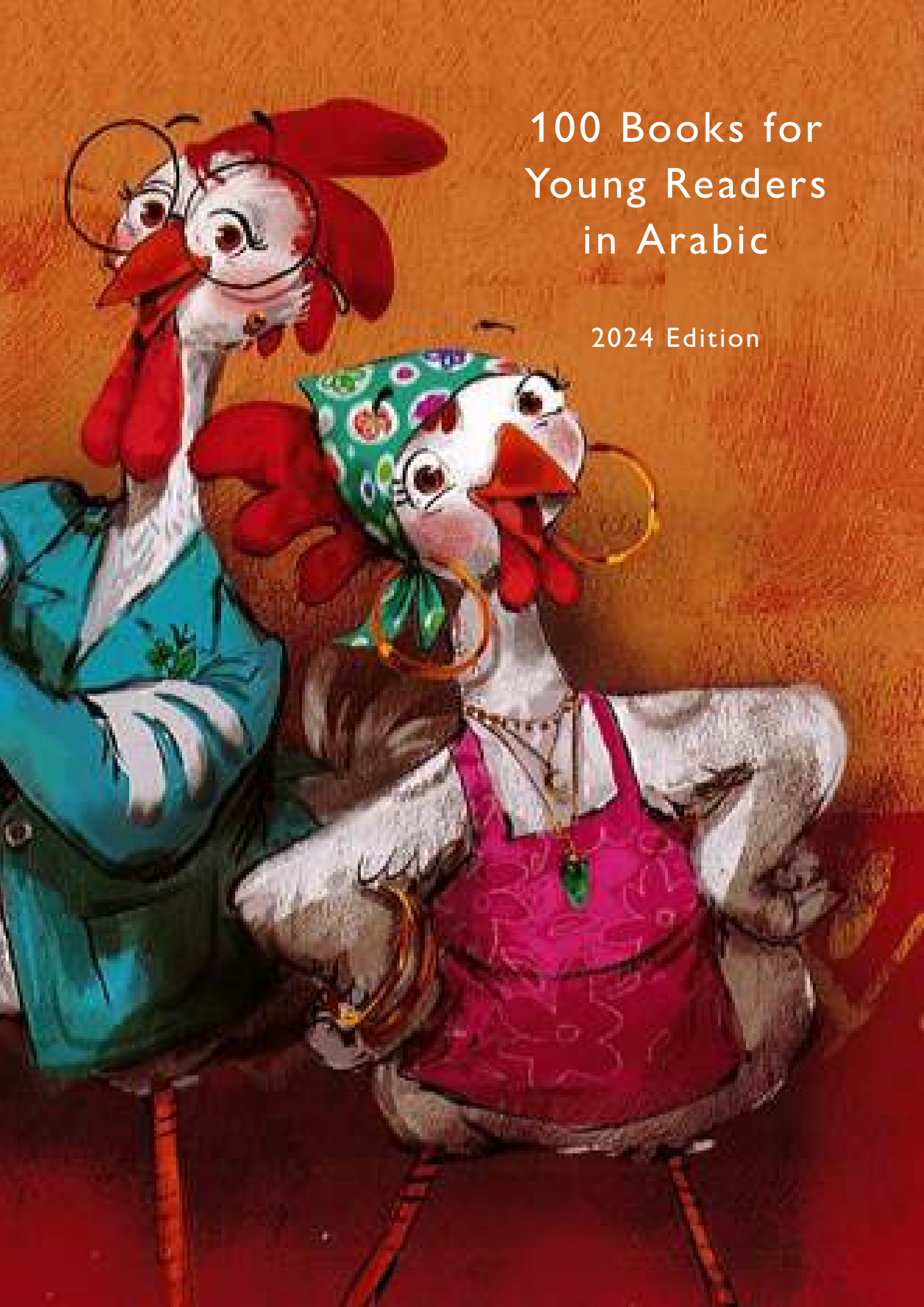

Illustration by Aly Elziny taken from [Hana and Chifa] by Hadil Ghoneim, ed. Dar al-Shorouk, 2021

100 Books for Young Readers in Arabic

This is a selection of 100 books in Arabic for young people published in various countries of the Arab world since 2018. A similar selection made in 2017 is accessible online.

These selections provide an overview of a literature that has experienced real growth over the past thirty years, offering quality works, many of which have won international prizes. Divided by genre and organised in alphabetical order of title, these choices also include some translations into Arabic of books initially published in other languages, with the aim of creating bridges between languages and cultures.

These selections were made by the Arab World reading committee of the French Takam Tikou magazine, which brings together professionals from different backgrounds (BnF, IMA, libraries of the City of Paris).

Note on vocalised text

Several of the books described here have 'vocalised text'. This refers to the various diacritics that are attached to Arabic letters in certain styles of writing. These indicate features such as vowels, consonant doubling and absence of any vowels.

Vocalised text is essential for children learning to read Arabic, as it serves as an indication of how to pronounce words correctly. The use of vocalisation diminishes as children get older and completely master Arabic reading skills. Highlighting that a text is entirely or partially vocalised adds information on the level of difficulty involved.

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PICTURE BOOKS

[Abou Karkoubeh, Mr Bazaar] أبو كركوبة

Nabiha Mheidly, ill. Walid Taher
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Hadaek, 2019
36pp, colour ill., 26 × 21 cm
ISBN 978-614-439-148-8, €19
Age 8+, fully vocalised text

Abou Karkoubeh, 'Mr Bazaar', can't help hoarding all kinds of things – screwdrivers, bottles, saucepans, papers, keys … His house is bursting at the seams! To help him, the children of the neighbourhood clear out his house in his absence. But he immediately starts hoarding thousands of things again.

The sadness and loneliness of Abou Karkoubeh are palpable in this touching depiction of a character on the margins of society. The illustrations show the gaudy bric-a-brac through a tangle of lines and colours, with contrasting fully drawn and sketchy shapes.

Etisalat Prize 2019 for best Arabic children's picture book.

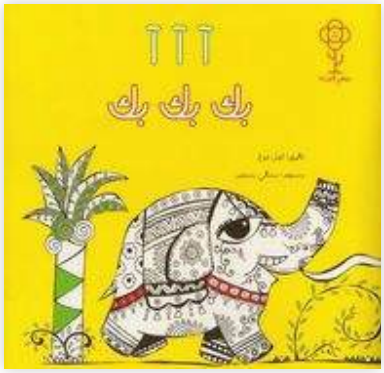
[Adel's colourful birds] عصافير عادل الملونة

Fatima Sharafeddine, ill. Sarah Sanchez
Sharjah (United Arab Emirates): Kalimat, 2017
22pp, colour ill., 28 × 23 cm
ISBN 978-9948-02500-9
Age 6+

Little Adel loves creating paper birds more than anything in the world. Nothing distracts him from his folding, neither the ringing of the telephone, nor the cries of the children playing outside, nor the grandmother's radio, nothing! But when the red lamp placed near his door lights up, Adel interrupts his activity to go to eat. And the reader then realises that Adel is deaf, that he communicates by signs with those around him and that he knows how to lipread …

The delicate, fine illustrations correspond well to the atmosphere of this work which has found an original and sensitive way to talk about deafness. Adel is a happy, fulfilled child, surrounded by colors, his deafness is presented naturally in the album, without dramatization, without excessive staging. A great success!

French version: *The birds of Adel*, trans. by François Zabbal, Gallimard Jeunesse, Paris, 2018.
ISBN 978-2-07-510277-3



[Ah ah ah bak bak bak] آ آ آ بك بك بك

Amal Farah, ill. Sally Samir
Cairo (Egypt): Shagara, 2018 (2nd edition)
59pp, colour ill., 22 × 22 cm
ISBN 978-977-6538-38-2, €12
Age 4+

This lovely book is at once a picture book, a colouring book and a book that names the sounds animals make. The illustrations are modern and very original, while drawing their graphic references from Egyptian heritage, as well as from the legacy of the great illustrators who were among the pioneers of children's literature in the Arab world.

Indeed, anchoring its books in modern Egyptian culture while providing children with quality work in both content and form is one of the declared objectives of this young publishing house, established in 2014. Its first publications seem to be meeting this challenge.

[Alphabet sounds] أصوات الأبجدية

Nadine R.L. Touma, ill. Lara Aswad
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar Onboz, 2019
24pp, colour ill., 30 × 30 cm
ISBN 978-995-346-554-8
Age 3+

This ingenious and poetic book highlights the unique and playful nature of the Arabic language. For each letter of the alphabet, there is at least one onomatopoeic sound from nature or everyday life, formed by the repetition of two short syllables: *basbas* (to address a cat), *tharthar* (chatter) and so on for 26 of the 28 letters of the alphabet; only the first (*alif*) and the last (*ya*) escape the rule.

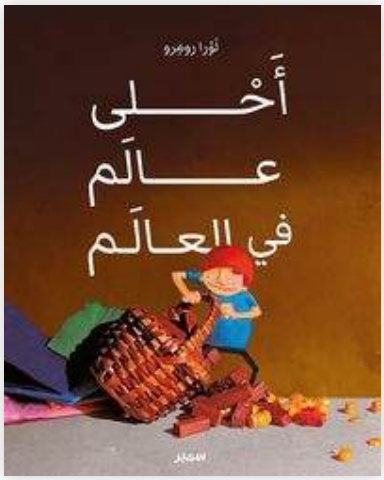
The illustrations are made up of letters and words created from simple geometric shapes: on the right-hand page, the isolated letter is in purple red; on the left-hand page, the onomatopoeia is in fuchsia pink.

This very large-format book is a beautiful object.

[At Daddy's surgery] في عيادة بابا

Taghreed Al-Najjar, ill. Aly Elziny
Amman (Jordan): Dar al-Salwa, 2022 (Jad wa Tala)
24pp, colour ill., 22 × 22 cm
ISBN 978-9957-04-236-3, €12
Age 3+, vocalised text

Jad and Tala are spending a day at their father's veterinary surgery. What with Mrs Farida's dog, which escapes from his cage and makes Zizi's cat leap with fright, which in turn frightens Mr Said's parrot, which flies around the surgery crying 'Marhaba! Marhaba!' [Hello! Hello!], things are certainly lively at the surgery. Not to mention Jassim, a camel who sticks his head through the door. A pacy text with visual jokes about the size and weight of the characters. Lively, brightly coloured illustrations capture the atmosphere of this crazy day.



[The best world in the world] أحلى عالم في العالم

Text and illustrations Laura Romero, trans. from Spanish by Haytham Lamah
Beirut (Lebanon): Samir Éditeur, 2019
40pp, colour ill., 25 × 20 cm
ISBN 978-614-443-095-8, €14
Age 4+

Lucas builds a world with bricks, towers and a road… then the fox arrives who likes this world and the idea of living there… but this world would need a forest for his den. So Lucas "builds" a forest. Then it's the turn of the bear, the goose, the shepherd, the dragon, the ogre and the mermaid to all ask Lucas to reshape his world to accommodate their individual needs. Finally, Lucas manages to create the most fabulous of worlds, populated by all the characters he's met!

This active picture book, punctuated by the repetition of each character's wishes, manages to create the freshness of a dream world for children to enjoy.

(This picture book also exists in French with the same publisher, *Le Meilleur monde du monde*, translated from the Spanish by Roxanne Verron and Manon Badetz,
ISBN 978-614-443-094-1)

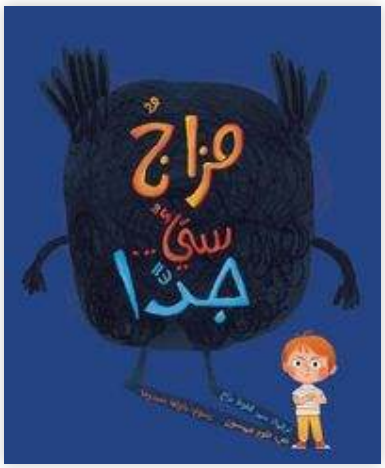
[Bestiary of the Ganges] الحياة على ضفاف النهر

Text and ill. Rambharos Jha, trans. Samar Mahfouz Barraj
Sharjah (UAE): Kalimat, 2021
29pp, colour ill., 37 × 26 cm
ISBN 978-994-834-475-9, €19
Age 6+, partially vocalised text

In this bestiary, the author presents, with great delicacy, his vision of the aquatic animals of the Ganges, which have fascinated him since childhood. Having learned the drawing and painting techniques of the ancient Mithila art, he developed his own painting processes, while using ancestral know-how, such as the use of natural pigments.

Rambharos Jha makes funny and unexpected comments on his paintings, offering a different perspective on the illustrations.

(Originally published in English *Waterlife*, by Tara Books, India, 2012. ISBN 978-93-80340-13-5
Bologna Ragazzi Award 2012 in the 'New Horizons' category)



[The big bad mood] مزاج سيء... جدًا

Tom Jamieson, ill. Olga Demidova, trans. Samar Mahfouz Barraj
Sharjah (UAE): Kalimat, 2018
26pp, colour ill., 23 × 28 cm
ISBN 978-9948-10-309-7, €16
Age 3+

Adam doesn't want to play with his little brother or lend him his toys; he screams and stamps his foot. His mother says 'Here comes the Big Bad Mood on a visit today!' Adam starts looking for this Big Bad Mood under the bed, in the garden, but he finds nothing. Suddenly, a strange creature appears who wants to do the most stupid things, and Adam realises it is his behaviour that is making his friends unhappy – and that's not what he wants. He doesn't want to play with the Big Bad Mood any more.

With a good dose of fun, this picture book plays down anger in order to help young children (and their parents) to learn to cope better with it. This is a book to put you in a good mood!

(Originally published in English by Bloomsbury Children's Books, London, 2017.
ISBN 978-140-8839-201)

[Black line] خط أسود

Yazan Masarweh, ill. Burcu Yilmaz
Amman (Jordan): Dar al-Salwa, 2022
287pp, colour ill., 17 × 22 cm
ISBN 978-9957-04-145-5, €14
Age 3+, vocalised text

"Is it a black line? No, it's a rope that we can pull from each side to see who's the strongest."

"Is it a black line? No, it's the ribbon of a gracefully light ballet dancer."

A black line runs down the middle of each page and every time a new page is folded over we see something different on the next. As these pages move towards a crescendo, we are in the middle of the sky with lots of strange creatures. "Everybody thought it was a black line but we imagined lots of other beautiful things." The picture book concludes with a proposal: "And you, what do you see?".

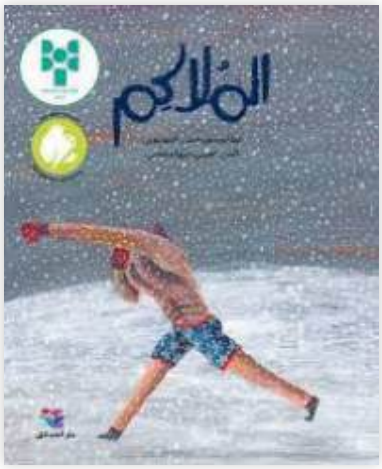
It is accompanied by the beautifully graphic interplay of changing lines and is attractively original.

[Bou] بو

Samar Halawani
Sharjah (UAE): Kalimat, 2017
32pp, colour ill., 28 × 23 cm
ISBN 978-9948-02-529-0
Age 4+

Bou and Louna have a very successful day's fishing. They even catch an enormous fish full of things – each one stranger than the next. At nightfall, the friends make for home, dreaming of the next day's fishing.

What makes this picture book so fascinating is the alternative story being told by the illustrations. We get to know Louna, a mischievous little girl, but we also see that her sidekick, Bou, is what we might describe as a monster – if a very nice one! The author-illustrator plays with the colours and textures of the layered paper she uses to create a charming universe full of humour.



[The boxer] الملاكم

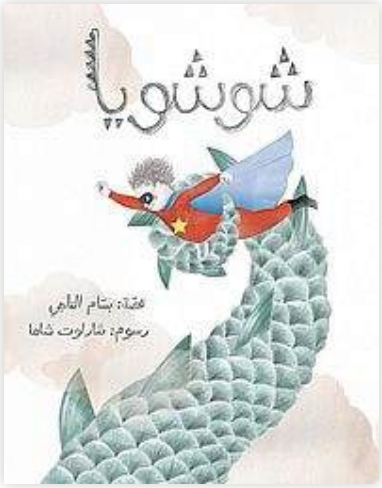
Text and ill. Hasan Mousavi, trans. Nabiha Mheidly
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Hadaek, 2021
32pp, colour ill., 27 × 22 cm
ISBN 978-614-439-192-1, €15
Age 6+

This magnificent picture book tells the story of a passionate boxer. His gloves, inherited from his father, are decorated with green hearts, lovingly embroidered by his mother. Having become a hugely popular boxer, the boy discovers solitude, and the green hearts on his gloves begin to fade. Then he remembers that his father used to box to give people pleasure, so he boxes the sea to calm it down so that fishermen can sail their boats; he boxes the mountains to make paths for travellers; and – what do you know! – one day, a little boy asks him, 'Will you please teach me how to box?'

The illustrations are real paintings with subtle colours.

Grand Priz BIB 2019

(Originally published as مشت زن (Fatemi) by Tuti Books, Iran, 2017. ISBN 978-964-3189-58)



[Chouchouya] شوشويا

Bassam al-Taji, ill. Charlotte Shama
Amman (Jordan): Salwa, 2017
32pp, colour ill., 28 × 22 cm
ISBN 978-9957-04-092-5, €11.90
Age 2+

This book is about an unusual friendship between a little boy and a dragon called Chouchouya. The boy goes for a walk in the sunshine, sows seeds in the fields, flies on Chouchouya's back to castles and forts. His red pyjamas are transformed, as the situation changes – from the skin of a little dragon to a tiger-trainer's suit; one moment he's in a clown costume, next thing the little boy looks like a hard-working farmer. At the end of the day, he eats his dinner, brushes his teeth and goes to bed to read a story and go to sleep next to Chouchouya – who turns out to be a soft toy.

The typography curves to follow the movements of the characters and blends with the illustration to create this joyful story.

[The colour violet] اللون البنفسجي

Samar Mahfouz Barraj, ill. Dima Abou al-Hage
Beirut (Lebanon): Academia International, 2018
31pp, colour ill., 24 × 17 cm
ISBN 978-9953-37-351-5, €12
Age 10+

Nour and her family have had to leave their country to flee war, and now they have settled in a foreign country. Nour quickly makes friends with a classmate called Clara, but when Clara meets Nour's mum one day, her behaviour changes.

Writing with finesse and subtlety, the author addresses the question of differences in culture and religion. The illustrations simply accompany the text, without revealing anything of the story. Nour's point of view and her perplexity in the face of her friend's many questions are perfectly rendered by the illustrations, and it is only at the very end that the reader has the key to the story.

[Diary of a snail] يوميات حلزون

Asmaa Emara, ill. Tina Heidari
Beirut (Lebanon): Asala, 2020
23pp, colour ill., 20 × 28 cm
ISBN 978-9953-95-366-3
Age 6+

This little snail is a typical pre-teen: he watches TV most of the night, and the next day he has a hard time getting up. Fortunately, his mother remembers to wake him before she leaves the house. Unfortunately, he takes his time getting ready. Fortunately, since he's still wearing yesterday's clothes, it doesn't take him too long to get dressed. Unfortunately, he just misses the school bus. Fortunately, he knows the way to school. This sequence of 'fortunately/unfortunately' leads to a completely unexpected outcome.

Lots of humour in the text and illustrations, and not the slightest trace of any moralising. This lovely picture book is a delightful read, one to put into the hands of all parents.

[Don't play with the rooster!] لا تلعب مع الديك!

Hassan Abdallah, ill. Lena Merhej
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Saqi, 2018
24pp, colour ill., 23 × 20 cm
ISBN 978-614-03-2026-0, €12
Age 3+, fully vocalised text

When Rooster cries out his 'cock-a-doodle-do', he is surprised to hear a little boy imitate him. This obviously does not please our feathered friend! The ensuing duel promises to be close between the two protagonists. When one flaps his wings, the other moves his arms; when one raises his beak to heaven with a disdainful gesture, the other raises his nose. But when the boy tries, like Rooster, to perch on a rope stretched between two plants, he finds himself on the ground! Then the roles are reversed and it is Rooster who tries to imitate the child…

The division of the pages alternates vignettes, close-ups and wider shots, which enhance the rapid pace of the action. The text is full of humour and can also be seen in the warmly coloured illustrations. A great success!

[A drop plus a drop… make the sea] نقطة ورا نقطة... بيعملوا بحر

Nadine R.L. Touma, ill. Leen Charafeddine
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar Onboz, 2018
n.p, colour ill., 11 × 17 cm
ISBN 978-9953-465-53-1
Age 6+

'Once upon a time, a long, long time ago, there was a tiny, tiny drop of light. This drop of light became the sun, the sun created the moon, the moon created the star… A highly poetic vision of the creation of the universe, in Lebanese dialect Arabic, presented like a poem, with frequent line breaks and a layout that reinforces the rhythm and accentuates the poetic, even dreamlike side. Leen Charafeddine uses highly graphic illustrations in blue, yellow, green and white, which provide an interesting counterpoint to the poetry of the text. A great success!

[The duck that got stuck in the ice] البطة التي علقت...

Zoubida Mouhssin, ill. Pascale Moutte-Baur, trans. Samar Mahfouz Barraj
Casablanca (Morocco): Yanbow al-Kitab, 2021
24pp, colour ill., 29 × 21 cm
ISBN 978-9920-771-17-7, €9
Age 4+, vocalised text

A little duck is travelling with other migratory ducks. They stop for a few moments to rest on a lake, and our little duck falls asleep. When she wakes up, she is trapped in the ice. A little black bird passes by and asks, 'How did you manage to get yourself stuck in the ice? Well, I'll try to help.' But it doesn't work. Several animals try to free the duck, but they can only do so when they combine forces.

A lovely picture book, whose vocalised text is punctuated by repeated phrases that work like a refrain. The illustrations, made up of large areas of bright colours, give us towering vertical perspectives from time to time.

(Originally published in Dutch as *Kwak in het wak* by Clavis, 2017. ISBN 978-904-4831-368)

[Famous by chance] مشهور بالصدفة

Samar Mahfouz Barraj, ill. Nerina Canzi
Sharjah (UAE): Kalimat, 2017
34pp, colour ill., 28 × 23 cm
ISBN 978-9948-466-78-9, €17.90
Age 8+

An absent-minded artist called Fahim wears trousers that are too short one day. People view him with suspicion at first, but then they start to copy him. Soon the whole city is wearing trousers that are too short! It's the same when Fahim wears clothes that are stained with bleach, full of holes, un-ironed – and when he wears two shoes of different colours. Without realising it, Fahim becomes a fashion designer. Boutiques, accessories – his name is everywhere!

The text, which makes fun of fashionistas, is short, rhymed and funny; but what is most striking here are the illustrations in beautiful, shimmering colours, which create a universe full of fantasy and charm.

[The feast] العيد

Nabiha Mheidly, ill. Raouf Karray
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Hadaek, 2017
26pp, colour ill., 31 × 31 cm
ISBN 978-614-439-080-1, €29
Age 9+

The narrator tells us about her first memories of the Muslim festival of Eid. She hears her mother say, 'Eid is coming', she gets a new dress and her mother bakes cakes. On the morning of the party, the ritual of visits begins: the neighbours bring pastries, the whole family goes to visit the grandparents. The little girl, who thinks that Eid is a person, is puzzled: where is this famous 'Eid'? Every year, Eid comes again. But the day that war breaks out nearby, people flee. Those who stay in the village will not be celebrating Eid this year.

The text and the delicate, poetic and luminous illustrations capture the warm atmosphere of the celebration, until the last pages of the book, where we see the sad loss of happiness.

[For your birthday] في عيد ميلادك

Fatima Sharafeddine, ill. Sawsan Nourallah
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Saqi, 2017
23pp, colour ill., 23 × 28 cm
ISBN 978-6-1442-5954-2
Age 5+

On your birthday, you can: "Party with the family or simply sleep all day", "invite friends to the house or stay alone and silent", "eat sweets and drink juice or eat aubergine and rice"… The important thing is not in these details, but in the very meaning of this moment when we become a year older, surrounded by the people we love. This is what Samy tells us, a little boy full of life and very mischievous, always smiling no matter the situation, and whose good humour is contagious.

The drawings do not simply illustrate the text, but extend and enrich it through humorous details.

[Fork and Olive] شوكة وزيتونة

Text and ill. Walid Taher
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Hadaek, 2021
32pp, colour ill., 30 × 16 cm
ISBN 978-614-439-238-6, €15
Age 4+, fully vocalised text

Pursued by a fork, Zaytouna ('olive' in Arabic) manages to jump off the plate just in time! Then a chase starts, which takes the olive and the fork through the streets of the city to the port, on board a huge ship, then onto a tiny boat, and then to an island on which there stands – miraculously! – a magnificent olive tree, and at its foot is a multitude of olives. The tables are turned: Zaytouna and her companions set out in pursuit of the fork, which finds refuge – in a shop selling kitchen utensils!

The author-illustrator brings humour, poetry – and politics – to this short, accessible picture book.

[Good night!] تصبحون على خير

Amira Bukadra, ill. Aly Elziny
Dubaï (UAE): Hudhud, 2021
31pp, colour ill., 25 × 25 cm
ISBN 978-9948-24-989-4
Age 4+, fully vocalised text

A little girl is telling us about her everyday life, sometimes at Mum's house, sometimes Dad's. With Mum, she goes to swimming lessons and reads stories. With Dad, she rides her bicycle and watches movies. Every evening, she rings the parent she is not with to say 'Good night'. Our heroine has a good life and copes very well with her parents' separation.

The lively illustrations anchor the story in the UAE, both through the settings and the characters' clothing, and render well the love that unites the parents and the little girl. An all-round success – one to be shared.

[Hana and Chifa] قصة الاختين هنا وشفا

Hadil Ghoneim, ill. Aly Elziny
Cairo (Egypt): Dar al-Shorouk, 2021
31pp, colour ill., 21 × 28 cm
ISBN 978-977-09-3749-5, EGP 80
Age 5+

The sisters Hana and Chifa are hens – and cooks. They manage a very popular restaurant. Each has her own view about food: Hana likes everything spicy, oily and sweet; Chifa favours healthy food that is neither oily nor sweet nor spicy. Suffice to say that the two sisters don't always agree. One day, after an argument, each of them decides to open her own restaurant. But neither the super-healthy cuisine of Chifa nor the super-rich food offered by Hana finds favour with the crowds. What if they go back to cooking together and combining their knowledge?

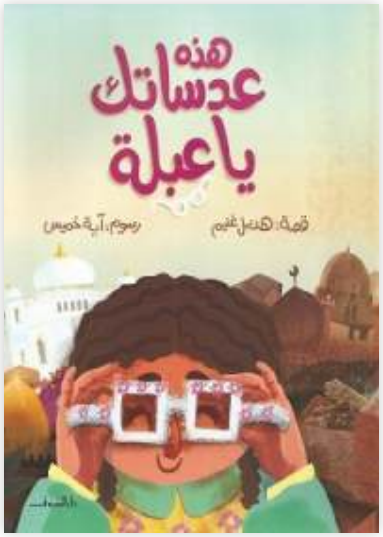
Aly Elziny's lively and mischievous illustrations are absolutely delicious. A little gem of a book, well worth tasting!

[A happy surprise in the family] مفاجأة سارَّة في العائلة

Nabiha Mheidly, ill. Sasha Haddad
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Hadaek, 2020
31pp, colour ill., 21 × 27 cm
ISBN 978-614-439-183-9, €15
Age 4+

Nabil's mum tells him she has a surprise and shows an album containing ultrasound scans, a photo of her in front of the cradle prepared for Nabil sixth months into the pregnancy, then photos of him at birth and at different stages of his growth. Then, the mother opens a second album containing an ultrasound image showing a tiny embryo. Nabil realises that his mother is expecting another child and runs to tell his father the news…

The originality of this book is to be applauded, as it uses ultrasound images to explain to the child the period leading up to birth and to prepare him or her for the arrival of a brother or sister.

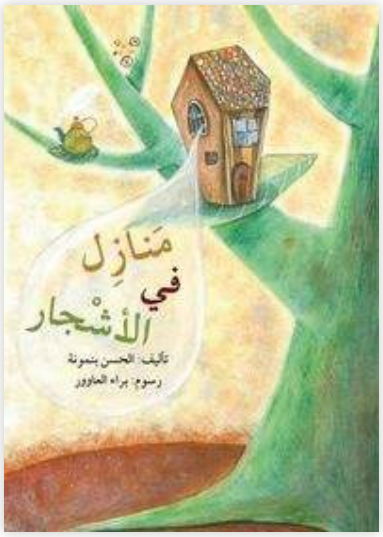


[Here's your glasses, Abla] هذه عدساتك يا عبلة

Hadil Ghoneim, ill. Ayat Khamis
Cairo (Egypt): Dar al-Shorouk, 2020
32pp, colour ill., 24 × 20 cm
ISBN 978-977-093-661-0, 75 EGP
Age 6+

Seven-year-old Abla lives at the top of a building with a view of the old part of the city. The day she wears her first glasses, she sees beyond the terrace rubbish and collapsed walls, where she had imagined palaces and golden domes. How disappointing! To console herself, she'll need to take a walk with her family around the old town.

A sensitive story, partially vocalised, with charming illustrations.



[Houses in the trees] منازل في الأشجار

Al-Hassan Benmouna, ill. Baraa al-Awour
Beirut (Lebanon): Asala, 2018
16pp, colour ill., 28 × 20 cm
ISBN 978-9953-95-116-4, €12
Age 5+, fully vocalised text

A boy plants a willow tree in a little garden. What if it grew and grew, if its roots pushed up out of the ground and lifted up a house? What if, little by little, all the buildings were raised up from the ground? We would have a city suspended in the air! And we could sleep in a house that would rock gently. But we would need special ladders to climb up.

The text takes the reader into this suspended city and the humorous illustrations live up to the imaginary universe they depict.

[I am Qurunfula] أنا قرنفلة

Text and ill. Daniela López Casenave, trans. Samar Mahfouz Barraj
Sharjah (UAE): Kalimat, 2022
36pp, colour ill., 28 × 25 cm
ISBN 978-994-846-805-9, €19
Ages 4+, partially vocalised text

Qurunfula is a zebra. Her white dress is striped elegantly with black. One spring day, as she is returning home, she sees some very beautiful flowers, which have a powerful scent. As she approaches, she starts sneezing so hard that she loses all the stripes off her pretty dress! What a catastrophe – no one will recognise her anymore! Qurunfula tries everything to solve her problem, from rolling in the mud to sticking paper on her dress in place of the lost stripes. Alas, nothing works. But to her friends, even without her dark stripes, Qurunfula is still Qurunfula.

The illustrations use pencil, pastels and collages in very successful compositions, and the relief effect of the collages is well rendered by the high-quality printing. A beautiful book, full of humour and sweetness.

[I am the chadda, I am the strongest] أنا الشدة، أنا الأقوى

Layla Zahed, ill. Angela Nurpetlian
Beirut (Lebanon): Turning Point, 2017
23pp, colour ill., 24 × 24 cm
ISBN 978-9953-0-3738-7, €10
Age 4+, fully vocalised text

The chadda (ّ) is a sign that is placed over a consonant in Arabic script to indicate that it must be doubled. In this beautiful rhythmic picture book, the chadda explains, through examples, that it is placed above the letters to make them stronger, like 'super-letters'. This gives all the letters of the alphabet ideas – they all want to wear a chadda.

The bright and lively illustrations, full of humour, succeed in making images of text. The words sometimes take the form of the animals they designate, and the scene where the letters all insist they want to wear the chadda will evoke smiles. A successful and original picture book.

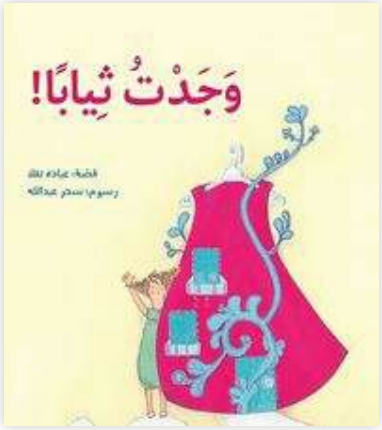
(Another title by the same authors from the same publisher is [I am the point, I am the most important] أنا النقطة، أنا الأهم ISBN 978-9953-0-3737-0)

[I dream of being a cement mixer!] أحلم أن أكون خلاط إسمنت!

Hussein al-Mutawaa, ill. Walid Taher
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Hadaek, 2018
39pp, colour ill., 22 × 22 cm
ISBN 978-614-439-145-7, €17
Age 7+

Little Haddam ('destroyer' in Arabic) is a demolition machine with a wrecking ball. He has a dream: he wants to be a cement mixer. But how can you build anything when you are a demolition machine? We can tell him that demolition is necessary so that we can then start to build, but that doesn't work. And as the wrecking ball moves according to his emotions, Haddam demolishes in spite of himself.

The humorous illustrations give a kind of humanity to the machines. The book's production is particularly nicely done: the grey cardboard used on the cover and the background of the illustrations looks like raw cement. A beautiful achievement!



[I have found some clothes!] وَجدتُ ثيابًا!

Ibada Taqla, ill. Sahar Abdallah
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Saqi, 2018
24pp, colour ill., 25 × 28 cm
ISBN 978-614-03-2023-9, €10
Age 6+, fully vocalised text

Leyla compliments Mariam on her pretty dress and asks her friend where she bought it. Mariam explains that her mother did something new: she put a table at the entrance to their building and invited all the neighbours to put the clothes they no longer wanted to keep on it, and to take whatever clothes interested them. Mariam's 'new' dress used to belong to a neighbour who had given it away. Leyla thinks this is a brilliant idea. She tells her mother about it, and they also set up a table at the entrance to their building. And the neighbourhood children recognise each other's clothes.

The text is entirely vocalised and in an easily accessible spelling. The very nice illustrations, which combine several techniques, capture the textures of the dresses and the warm atmosphere that prevails in this neighbourhood.

[I want my light on!] لا أريد أن أطفئ الضوء

Text and ill. Tony Ross, trans. Adonis Salem
Beirut (Lebanon): Hachette Antoine, 2017
24pp, colour ill., 27 × 24 cm
ISBN 978-6-1443-8960-7
Age 3+

We are delighted to find Tony Ross's tyrannical little princess in this picture book, which completes the series in Arabic started by Hachette Antoine.

It's bedtime and the little princess doesn't want to turn off the light. Everyone – the king, the admiral, the servant, the doctor – tries to convince her not to be afraid of the dark. In fact, it is not the dark the princess is afraid of, but the ghosts that hide there. Nonsense, they tell her, there's no such thing as ghosts. Really? Maybe they do – and maybe they themselves are terrified at the idea of coming face to face with a terrible little girl.

(Originally published in English by Andersen, London, 2007. ISBN 978-184-2706-640)

[I want to win!] أريد أن أفوز

Text and ill. Tony Ross, trans. Adonis Salem
Beirut (Lebanon): Hachette Antoine, 2017
24pp, colour ill., 27 × 24 cm
ISBN 978-6-1443-8962-1
Age 3+, partially vocalised text

The little princess always wins, of course – at least at home in the palace, because everyone lets her. But at school, it's a different story. There is a prize for every subject, and the little princess wants to win them all. But despite her best efforts, she doesn't win a single one! Unless … Learning to lose is not easy, as all children find out. And our little princess discovers that the important thing is not to win at all costs but to participate.

Lots of humour in text and illustrations, simple and direct writing. It is always a real joy to find Tony Ross's little princess books translated into Arabic.

(Originally published in English by Andersen Press, London, 2012. ISBN 978-184-9394-741)

[I'm going to eat this ant!] سآكل هذه النّملة!

Text and ill. Chris Naylor-Ballesteros, trans. Samar Mahfouz Barraj
Sharjah (UAE): Kalimat, 2018
24pp, colour ill., 27 × 28 cm
ISBN 978-9948-10-064-5, €14
Age 3+, partially vocalised text

The anteater is tired of eating ants mindlessly. He wants to improve the quality of his life, and has set his sights on an ant – but how best to eat it? In a sandwich? In a soup? Accompanied by a mint sauce? Dried and salted? Grilled? Or sweet, for dessert? While our anteater is dreaming of the feast he is going to have, the ants have organised themselves, and on the final spread, we discover that they have tied the anteater's tongue around the trunk of a tree and are using it as a swing. Our hero concludes, lisping, 'I think I'll choothe thomething elthe for dinner!'

A very nice picture book, full of humour – one to enjoy!

(Originally published in English by Bloomsbury Children's Books, London, 2017.
ISBN 978-140-8869-901)

[The island of Barakât the Sailor] جزيرة البحار بركات

Text and ill. Walid Taher
Casablanca (Morocco): Yanbow al-Kitab, 2018
40pp, colour ill., 22 × 22 cm
ISBN 978-9-954486-91-7, €13
Age 4+

Every day, Barakât the Sailor brings back fish, pearls and corals from his voyages. As he goes sailing, he discovers a host of amazing islands: the island of oranges, the island of pottery, the blue island – and a small desert island. He decides to settle there, as he has always dreamed of living alone on an island, and he brings the speciality of each of the other islands to his empty desert island. At first, Barakât is happy, but soon he starts to feel lonely, so he writes to his friends, inviting them to join him.

Repeated words give rhythm to the text. The illustrations are very successful: cut-out paper for the backgrounds, pencil for the character of Barakât and the details, creating a relief effect that is very well rendered by the high-quality printing.

[It's 5pm] إنها الخامسة عصراً!

Hayfa Nooman al-Kazimi, ill. Atefe Maleki Joo
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Hadaek, 2019
32pp, colour ill., 22 × 28 cm
ISBN 978-614-439-158-7, €16
Age 6+

When grandmother decides to cultivate her garden and grow her own fruits and vegetables, the family is dubious. But this grandmother is not one to give in easily. Planting, digging, watering, weeding – nothing daunts her. Every day, at exactly 5pm, she does her gardening and talks to her plants – with the help of her grandson, who is enlisted to document every stage of the process. The day comes when the grandmother serves up a whole lunch using only produce from her garden. Her family has to admit that her fruits and vegetables are much better than the ones from the shop.

A beautiful picture book celebrating a colourful character, with a subtle ecological message.

[The journey] الرحلة

Text and ill. Francesca Sanna, trans. Nathalie al-Khoury
Beirut (Lebanon): Hachette Antoine, 2018
40pp, colour ill., 21 × 28 cm
ISBN 978-614-469-094-9
Age 6+

To escape the war, a mother and her two children embark on a long and dangerous journey after their father disappears. Throughout the journey, the hope of finding refuge in a peaceful country and the protective presence of their mother help the children to overcome their fear and exhaustion. The beautiful illustrations by Italian author / illustrator Francesca Sanna, inspire children's imaginations, using the style of cinema or animation, and convey the emotions of the family, and highlight the dramatic aspects of their situation.

(Originally published in English *The Journey*, Flying Eye Books, London, 2017.
ISBN 978-191-1171-348
French version *Partir au-delà des frontières,* Gallimard Jeunesse, Paris,2017.
ISBN 978-2-07-059991-2)

[Koozi] كوزي

Anastasia Qarawani, ill. Maja Kastelic
Amman (Jordan): Dar al-Salwa, 2019
28 pp, colour ill., 27.5 × 21.5 cm
ISBN 978-9957-040-97-0, €12.90
Age 3+

Koozi, a golden-eyed cat and faithful friend of a little boy, has disappeared. The inconsolable young lad looks everywhere for his cat and waits for him all day and all night… until his mother tells him that Koozi won't be returning because he's gone to live in heaven. She explains that the stars are nothing but the eyes of Koozi and all other heavenly creatures.

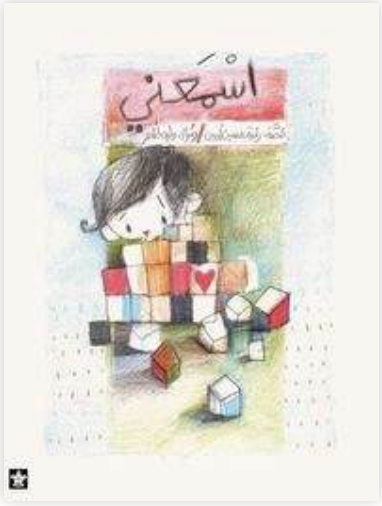
The smoky line of the illustrations plunges us into a dark and poetic atmosphere, whilst the neat layout creates a balance between the images and stretches over double pages, together with the text. A beautiful picture book, which helps to address the issue of death with children.

[Let me pass, please] احم... احم... مررني من فضلك

Nabiha Mheidly, ill. Walid Taher
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Hadaek, 2017
29 pp, colour ill., 25 × 22 cm
ISBN 978-614-439-074-0, €22
Age 8+

Very early every morning Karkar, a little monkey, goes to a beach near the forest to see his friend Zakzak. Together they pick bananas and coconuts before returning home at the end of the day. Kakar meets lots of friends along the way and has a kind word for each one before asking them to let him pass: "Ehem… Ehem… Please let me pass." One day, his friend Zakzak gives him a present so that he can make the route faster – a horn!

Walid Taher's coloured pencil illustrations add to the charm of this story. This picture book was awarded the 2016 Etisalat prize.

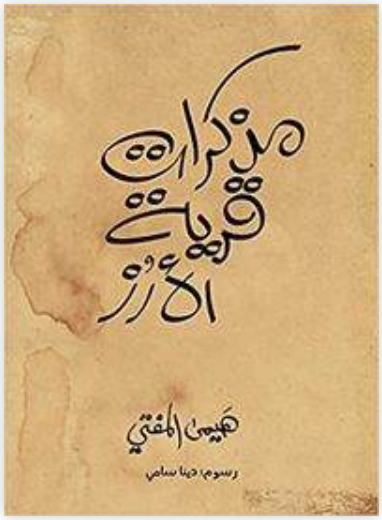


[Listen to me!] اسمعني

Rania Hussein Amin, ill. Walid Taher
Cairo (Egypt): Dar al-Balsam, 2018
32pp, colour ill., 27 × 22 cm
ISBN 978-977-6171-47-3
Age 5+, text very partially vocalised

Karim would like his dad to help him build a cube house as part of his maths homework. But Dad is always busy: on the phone, watching a football match, talking to Mum, and what Karim dreams of saying to Dad is stuck in his throat and begins to choke him. Until one day, out it comes: 'Dad, will you tell me a story?' And so father and son spend ages talking and playing together.

The charming and very expressive illustrations bring a gentle freshness to this book.



[Memories of the rice village] مذكرات قرية الأرز

Haima al-Mufti, ill. Dina Sami
Sharjah (United Arab Emirates): Kalimat, 2017
108 pp, colour ill., 14 × 19 cm
ISBN 978-9948-18408-9, €11
Age 9+

In this village dedicated to rice cultivation, where harvests have been insufficient for years, everybody's convinced that they must leave for the city… but Wahid has done some research and is equally convinced that rice farming can be replaced by growing fruit trees! No one believes him until the trees he's planted bear fruit and ensure both his prosperity and that of the village. The years go by and now the harvests are decreasing. Whilst some are again thinking of leaving the village, Farid has another idea…

This "old notebook" is illustrated with black drawings, watercolours and photographs. It has an innovative and skilfully designed layout where every detail has been taken into account.

A great success!

[My birthmark] نيشان

Hasmig Chahinian, ill. Alik Arzoumanian, trans. from Armenian by Nabiha Mheidly
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Hadaek, 2018
32pp, colour ill., 26 × 23 cm
ISBN 978-6144-3-9143-3, €15
Age 3+

Little Nichan doesn't like the birthmark on his right leg at all and tries every possibly way to hide it: long trousers in winter, a bandage (which doesn't stay in place) or paint (which melts under the sun in summer). To explain why he has this mark, Nichan invents different stories: it is a present from the fairies or the scar of a burn caused by the sun during a trip to space. But one day, during a football match, Nichan injures himself in the same place as the famous birthmark which is now covered by a large bandage. What if the magic mark disappeared? Would Nichan be himself without it?

A picture book with beautifully warm illustrations which was selected for the 2022 IBBY Honour List in the translation category.

(Original title *Նշանս,* Paris, France: Kotot Publications, 2012. ISBN 978-2-9542615-0-8)

[My first library. Collection “My first book”] مكتبتي الأولى. سلسلة "كتابي الأول"

Eric Carle, trans. Mona al-Daroubi
Cairo (Egypt): Dar al-Balsam, 2017 (2nd éd.)
18pp, colour ill., 18 × 13 cm
Age 2+, fully vocalised text
Contains:
[My first book: Colours] كتابي الاول: الالوان ISBN 978-977-6171-17-6
[My first book: Shapes] كتابي الأول: الأشكال ISBN 978-977-6171-18-3
[My first book: Words] كتابي الأول: الكلمات ISBN 978-977-6
[My first book: Numbers] كتابي الأول: الأعداد ISBN 978-977-6171-16-9

This is an Arabic translation of the four books in Eric Carle’s “My very first book” collection, grouped together in a box. The four books are all in hardback. Each page is cut in half, with the top and bottom being independent of each other. This is so that children can manipulate the pages as it suits them and create different characters. There are plenty of basic things to learn whilst having fun, accompanied by Eric Carle’s collages. These books can also be used by non-Arabic speakers who might enjoy discovering the Arabic alphabet and language. A great initiative!

(Original title: *My very first library: My very first book of colours, My very first book of shapes, My very first book of numbers, My very first book of words,* Penguin Young Readers Group, London, 2006. ISBN 978-039-9246-661)

[My pants are too short] بنطالي قصير عليّ

Maria Dadouch, ill. Celeste Aires
Amman (Jordan): Dar al-Salwa, 2020
24pp, colour ill., 21 × 27 cm
ISBN 978-9957-04-176-2, €29
Age 3+, fully vocalised text

In this beautifully unusual picture book, a little boy alternates between “Fortunately…” and “Unfortunately…” when telling us about his adventures: ‘fortunately I have grown up’, ‘unfortunately my trousers have become way too short’, etc. But the big novelty lies in the way this picture book is made. It has tabs to be pulled, lifted and turned in order to discover the double-page spreads which explain the happy and the unfortunate parts of the story. The illustrations, using geometric shapes, are very original and reinforce the interactive side of the visual narrative. The story features wacky characters (an amnesiac grandfather, an unlucky boy), who bring a dynamic note to this funny and playful book. To be discovered!

[My story with reading] قصتي مع القراءة

Basma al-Wazzan, ill. Iman Abdelhamid
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Hadaek, 2021
30 pp, colour ill., 21 × 21 cm
ISBN 978-614-439-205-8, €17
Age 3+

"My name is Hassan and I love to read. Here is the story about my relationship with reading… "

The no-frills text of this picture book accompanies us in the discovery of reading by little Hassan, who will end up writing a book himself! The illustrations occupy most of the page and almost tell a parallel story, which enriches the text. They are delicate, the faces are happy, the atmosphere is soft…

A picture book that is a joy to read, leaf through and discover. We recommend it especially for book devourers who will probably recognize themselves in little Hassan!

[The Nights of Shahrazizi. A story within a story within a story…] ليالي شهرزيزي. حكاية داخل حكاية داخل حكاية

Hadil Ghoneim, ill. Sahar Abdallah
Cairo (Egypt): Dar al-Balsam, 2019
53pp, colour ill., 21 × 27 cm
ISBN 978-977-617-152-7 105 EGP
Age 9+

Forced to stay in his room because of broken arms and legs, Amrouyar is sad, depressed and nervous. He argues with everyone! The ingenious Shahrazizi makes a plan to bring Amrouyar out of his melancholy: she offers to tell him a story and, like the Arabian Nights, she only finishes it after having started another, which she will continue to tell the next day…

The book is a great initiative! The author combines ten stories from famous tales with elements from the lives of children today. The illustrations are inspired by illuminated medieval manuscripts. Everything combines to make this book, with its partially vocalized text, an exceptional object.

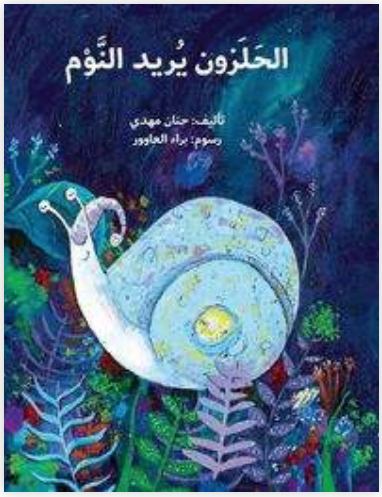
[Nothing!] لا شيء!

Yasmeen Ismail, trans. Samar Mahfouz Barraj
Sharjah (United Arab Emirates): Kalimat, 2018
28pp, colour ill., 27 × 27 cm
ISBN 978-9948-10-301-1, €16
Age 4+

For the little bear Luna, every daily task, no matter how insignificant (putting on her shoes, her coat, riding her scooter) is the beginning of a magnificent adventure.

But her mum doesn't go out often and easily gets annoyed, especially when she asks Luna what she is doing and she always replies "Nothing!" As for her grandfather, he's ready to fly away among the birds when he puts Luna on his shoulders: "Wait for me, Luna! Here I come! I can imagine too, and NOTHING can stop me… It's even better to play when there's two of you!" Colourful and mischievous, these illustrations whisk us far, far away!

(Original title *Nothing!* Bloomsbury, London, 2016. ISBN 978-140-8873-366)



[The snail wants to sleep] الحلزون يريد النوم

Hanan Mahdi, ill. Baraa al-Awour
Beirut (Lebanon): Asala, 2020
23pp, colour ill., 20 × 28 cm
ISBN 978-9953-95-365-6
Age 4+

A little snail lives near a pond. After a long day searching for food, he is very tired, but the thunderous croaking of the frogs prevents him from sleeping. When he kindly asks them to be quiet, they invite him to the party. A little later, it is the shrill song of the cricket that disturbs him. Later again, it is the hooting of the owl that shatters his eardrums. In the end, our snail settles in the savannah, where it is welcomed by the giraffe, the gazelle and other local animals. The nights are quiet here, because the residents have agreed not to make noise at night. The snail sleeps the sleep of the righteous. The illustrations are full of touching little details.

[A story told in threads] حكاية ترويها الخيوط

Nabiha Mheidly, ill. Hassan Zahreddine
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Hadaek, 2018
24pp, colour ill., 29 × 21 cm
ISBN 978-614-439-155-6, €19
Age 8+

What stories do the threads tell each other when they get together? The silk thread tells how it was born from a caterpillar and then wrapped in a cocoon so that it could transform into a butterfly; the spider thread tells how it becomes a web and a trap for insects; the cotton thread explains how it goes from seed to flower, then thread, then to a bag; the thread of light describes how in the morning, accompanied by other threads of light, it pushes back the darkness. And the last thread, the thread of thoughts, tells how it becomes a story, passed down from generation to generation…

The subtle, poetic illustrations accompany this lovely vocalised text, for advanced readers because of the rich vocabulary used.

[The suitcase] الشنطة

Text and ill. Fadi Adleh
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Hadaek, 2018 (Hikayat moussawwarat lil-yafi'in)
24pp, colour ill., 23 × 15 cm
ISBN 978-614-439-129-7, €8,90
Age 10+

A man and his suitcase settle in a foreign city after a long journey. At first, the suitcase is used as a writing table or to carry cans, then it is stored under the bed. Time passed, until one day a child discovers it and explores its contents, angering his father. But when evening came, the father discreetly opened the suitcase to take a long look at the old photos, the letters, the one-way train ticket… And one day, it was the son's turn, to fill the suitcase and leave home as an adult.

The precise line of the illustrations, the choice of colours (brown, grey, dark green, black), the framing, all combine to convey the sadness of exile and the nostalgia of moving alone to a foreign country. A powerful book.

[Tati Tati under my wings] تاتي تاتي تحت جناحاتي

Nabiha Mheidly, ill. Walid Taher
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Hadaek, 2017
33pp, colour ill., 26 × 23 cm
ISBN 978-614-439-108-2
Age 3+

Six cute little chicks explore the garden with their mother, experiencing new emotions and sensations. The first chick is frightened, the second is angry, the third is cold, the fourth is tired, the fifth is sad and the sixth, and last, finding himself alone, is worried. But Mother Hen is there to look after them and all the chicks happily return to the warmth and comfort of their mother. They sing their favourite nursery rhyme, known by all children in the Arab world : <Al-sisân chou helween…> (The chicks, so sweet…).

With just a few brushstrokes Walid Taher's gouache illustrations capture the intensity of the chicks' emotions and the tenderness of their mother, expressively and with humour. A very beautiful book.

[Téta and Babcia, a journey through grandmothers' recipes]
تيتا وبابتشا، رحلات في وصفات الجدات

Miranda Beshara, ill. Heba Khalifa
Giza (Egypt): Dar al-Balsam, 2019
79pp, colour ill., 19,5 × 22 cm
ISBN 978-977-617-151-0
Age 9+

Today Farah lives in France but she was born in Egypt to an Egyptian-Polish mother and an Egyptian-Syrian father. She has two grandmothers, one Polish, one Syrian and an Egyptian great grandmother. Farah tells us the story of these exceptional women and, for each of them, introduces us to one of their specialities, a dish cooked 'in their own way' which she loves.

The illustrations vividly complement the text with fine watercolour drawings coupled with old family photographs of the personal effects of the grandmothers. Through these drawings and collages, Heba Khalifa has conjured an atmosphere which allows the old memories to be brought to life.

A touching and inspiring book with a distinctive narrative voice.

[A tiny worm] دودة صغيرة جدًّا

Amal Nasser, ill. Mel Armstrong
Amman (Jordan): Dar al-Salwa, 2023
22pp, colour ill., 18 × 21 cm
ISBN 978-9957-04-252-3, €17
Age 0–3 years

The jackal comes out of its burrow, the hen from the chicken coop, and the worm leaves its little hole. Suddenly, the jackal sees the hen! He chases her. The hen pursues the worm, who has hidden in the grass. A footstep….it's the hunter. The jackal and the hen flee….and our tiny worm carries on walking quietly in the grass. Sometimes it's good to be very small!

The very rhythmical text uses short phrases and the illustrations are dynamic and attractive. Some onomatopoeic words help to make the story very lively in this small, very lovely board book.

[Up to the summit] صعوداً نحو القمّة

Nabiha Mheidly, ill. Walid Taher
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Hadaek, 2017
32pp, colour ill., 27 × 22 cm
ISBN 978-614-439-101-3, €14
Age 8+

Some children who are living at the foot of a mountain and who are tired of playing the same old games decide to climb up to the top, where there are toys that are more fun – and some large mirrors. Other children decide to stay where they are and make do with the games they have. The first part of the book follows the journey of the courageous children and the second part tells us about the damage they cause by changing the angle of the mirrors at the summit, unaware that these mirrors have been angled to light the foot of the mountain.

Walid Taher's beautiful illustrations are enhanced with a little magical touch: on page 30, the reader suddenly sees him/herself in a large mirror! Smiles are guaranteed.

[The wave that saw the sea] الموجة التي رأت البحر

Nabiha Mheidly, ill. Hassan Zahreddine
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Hadaek, 2020
38pp, colour ill., 28 × 21 cm
ISBN 978-614-439-189-1
Age 7+

A little wave, born in the middle of the sea, would like to experience something other than this perpetual rocking, forever in the same direction. What if it stopped swaying to the same rhythm as the other waves? Then the wind picks up, a current forms, and our wave is carried higher and higher, until it rises in all its splendour and rushes, laughing its head off, towards the beach. It becomes spray and makes a little girl burst out laughing as it settles on her face. And the little girl, looking into the distance, will see another little wave forming in the distance, like an eternal loop…

The linocut illustrations are on a sand-coloured background that is enhanced with watercolours in shades of blue. These illustrations are beautiful, delicate and tender, and capture the poetry of this fine text.

[What a story, Nestor!] يا لَها مِن قِصَّةٍ يا نوبي !

Heyna Bé, ill. Céline Chevrel, trans. Samar Mahfouz Barraj
Beirut (Lebanon): Samir Éditeur, 2017
32pp, colour ill., 22 × 29 cm
ISBN 978-614-443-304-1, €13
Age 5+

Noubi the rabbit is preparing to visit his cousin Joubi. A great event for our main character who has never strayed far from home! Clearly, he doesn't have a suitcase. No problem: Nestor decides to borrow one. So begins a long journey, from one potential suitcase owner to another: our rabbit always ends up being sent to "someone else who knows someone who might have a suitcase". Meetings follow one after the other, but no one has a suitcase until he arrives at the home of a rabbit, a great traveller, who has plenty of suitcases. This turns out to be the famous cousin Joubi!

The text and illustrations enrich and complement each other in a mischievous way with lots of amusing details.

(French edition available from the same publisher:: *Quelle histoire Nestor!*, 2017.
ISBN 978-614-443-158-0)

[What are we playing now?] ماذا نلعب الآن؟

Taghreed al-Najjar, ill. Charlotte Shama
Amman (Jordan): Dar al-Salwa, 2021
31pp, colour ill., 22 × 28 cm
ISBN 978-9957-04-224-0, €23
Age 5+

With a piece of green silk that her mother, a seamstress, gave her, the little heroine and her friend Raya play at being a princess, a Bedouin, a butterfly, a maharaja, Sindbad on board his ship…

These games are punctuated by little phrases in the form of refrains which each time mark the invention of a new game. When the neighbour comes to have coffee with the mother and says: "This piece of green silk is only good to serve as a tablecloth!", the little girls exchange a look and burst out laughing: "Oh no! It can be used for lots of other things! If you knew…"

Pretty, playful illustrations in bright, cheerful colors, with fun details, accompany the vocalized, lively and well-written text.

[When the Dodos flew] عندما طارت الدودو

Text and ill. Fadi Adleh
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Hadaek, 2018 (Hikayat moussawwarat lil-yafi'in)
24pp, colour ill., 23 × 15 cm
ISBN 978-614-439-125-9, €8,90
Age 10+

Dodos have wings and dream of flying, even if their anatomy makes this impossible. Dadine, an inventor, creates a machine which, when attached to the back, allows one to rise into the air. Our inventor even creates a safety system that uses compressed gas to inflate a balloon and prevent a sudden fall. Then, the island where the dodos live is invaded by savages who destroy the fruit trees and kill their opponents. They have to get away, but how? By using the machines! But the sun beats down harder and harder, the compressed gas expands… the balloons inflate, carrying the dodos far away…

The deadpan humor of author-illustrator Fadi Adleh is demonstrated through the relationship between text and image for our greatest pleasure!

[The world table] مائدة العالم

Moemen Helmy, ill. Martina Gianlorenzi
Sharjah (United Arab Emirates): Kalimat, 2017
n.p, colour ill., 23 × 23 cm
ISBN 978-9948-02-480-4
Age 5+

When he grows up, the narrator is going to be a chef! His father has said that the world is full of problems, and that everyone has to do something to make it a better place. So our hero decides to invent a brilliant recipe that everyone will love, then he will gather the whole world around the table to enjoy his fabulous dish… and forget all about the problems!

This hardback book opens like an accordion: on one side, the boy's story, in a vocalized text, with a graphic play on making all the characters fit into the image, growing, following the shape of a person…; on the other, the illustration of the final banquet, without text, running across the entire surface of the unfolded pages. The whole thing is innovative, appealing and original.

[The writer] الكاتب

Nabiha Mheidly, ill. Walid Taher
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Hadaek, 2018
32pp, colour ill., 25 × 20 cm
ISBN 978-614439-119-8, €17
Age 7+, partially vocalised text

Nabiha Mheidly and Walid Taher have created an original, unexpected and totally successful picture book. From a child's perspective, the writer recounts the process of creating a story: choosing an idea, identifying the main character and so on. There is a mystery to the act of creation, the characters coming to life and acting independently of the author's will. We discover all this through the story of a cat whose adventures the writer recounts

The illustrations, predominantly in grey, blue and black with a few touches of red, feature a writer who bears a striking resemblance to Walid Taher. Humorous details are sprinkled throughout the images.

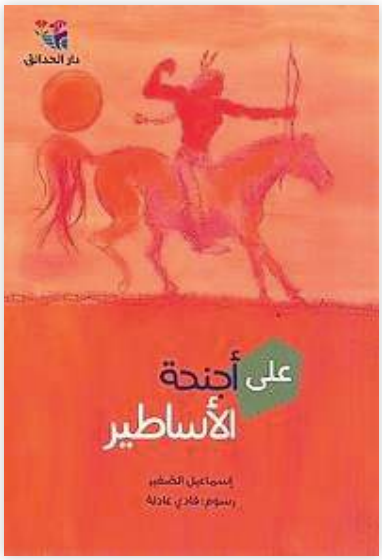
[Zouzou's potty] نونية زوزو

Taghreed al-Najjar, ill. Aly Elziny
Amman (Jordan): Dar al-Salwa, 2022 (Jad wa Tala)
24pp, colour ill., 22 × 22 cm
ISBN 978-9957-04-237-0, €12
Age 3+

The big moment has arrived: Zouzou, Jad and Tala's little brother, must learn to use the potty. No more nappies! Yes but… "No, no, no! Not behind the curtain, Zouzou!", cries Tala, while a puddle widens under the feet of the little boy, hidden behind the curtain… And not under the sofa, and not behind the large green plant! Finally, Zouzou will become potty trained by sittng on the toilet bowl, following the example of the "grown-ups", to the cheers of the family!

A very nice book, with cheerful and dynamic illustrations. The text, full of graphic effects (size, thickness) lends itself wonderfully to reading aloud.

FOLK TALES



[On the wings of legends] على أجنحة الأساطير

Ismail al-Saghir, ill. Fadi Adleh
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Hadaek,2017
128pp, colour ill., 16 × 23.5 cm
ISBN 978-614-439-081-8
Age 12+

From ancient Greece to Yemen, from present-day Algeria to the Turkish steppes and from Scandinavian flats to Peruvian cottages, we are offered an array of world myths. They are embellished with references to Arab literature and touches of humour, all set off by black and white cartoon strips featuring the central character, Risha. Each chapter is introduced by a double-page spread of illustrations in shimmering colours. This is an opportunity to compare all these stories and think about what it is that underpins our common humanity.

[Stories of the Dervishes] حكايات الدراويش

Muhannad Al-Aqous, ill. Amani al-Baba
Cairo (Egypt): Nour al-Maaref, 2019
64pp, colour ill.; 22 × 22 cm
ISBN 978-977-840-038-3
Age 9+

This book comprises thirty short stories centred on a dervish (*darwîch*) or wise man, in plots which lead each time to an unexpected outcome. This modest collection of philosophical tales above all invites us to reflection. Although aimed at young children, adults will appreciate it just as much. Reading it is a pleasure, thanks to the light text and the illustrations, always on the lefthand page, which bring to mind the paintings on glass so popular in the Middle-East, or Arab marionettes.

Beautifully inscribed, fluid and rich in vocabulary evocative of Arab stories, the text is entirely vocalised.

(Also available by the same author:
[*The storyteller said…*] قال الراوي ISBN 978-9778-40-042-7)

[The storyteller said…] قال الراوي

Muhannad Al-Aqous, ill. Ahmed Madboly
Cairo (Egypt): Nour al-Maaref, 2018
32pp, colour ill., 20 × 25 cm
ISBN 978-9778-40-042-7
Age 9+

This is a book packed with sixteen stories inspired by the oral tradition of Arab storytellers. They all start with the customary beginning: *yuhkâ…* (it is said that…) which introduces the short narratives (one page for each tale) full of the intrigue and suspense which make for a really good story. Beautifully inscribed, the text, which is completely vocalised, reprises familiar characters such as a judge, a shepherd, a sultan or a jackal. On the righthand side of each double page the text forms a flowing arch, while on the left the watercolour and ink illustrations are full of colour.

POETRY

[My mother's bread] خبز أمّي

Mahmoud Darwish, ill. Sahar Abdallah
Cairo (Egypt): Tanmia, 2018
26pp, colour ill., 28 × 22 cm
ISBN 987-9776-63-317-7, €14
Age 8+

This magnificent and moving poem in free verse, celebrating maternal love, by the famous Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish and illustrated by Sahar Abdallah, recalls the loving gestures of a mother that punctuate a child's days. These are simple but memorable things, such as a hug, drinking a coffee, eating a loaf of bread made by your mother. The theme is universal and the motif of the mother's bread is recurrent in Arab culture.

The accompanying filigree-like illustrations subtly interpret each line of the poem.

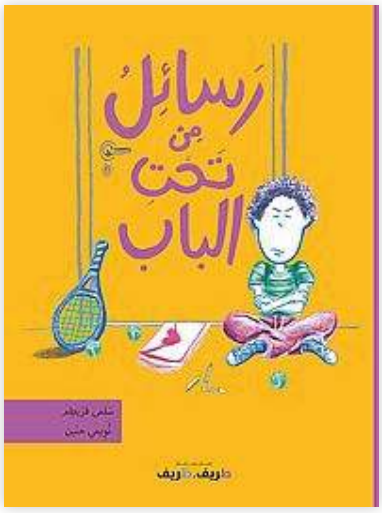
[Think of others] فكّر بغيرك

Mahmoud Darwish, ill. Sahar Abdallah
Cairo (Egypt): Tanmia, 2018
16pp, colour ill., 28 × 22 cm
ISBN 978-977-85351-4-3, €13
Age 6+

This poem is an excellent rendition of Mahmoud Darwish's original *Think of others*, using easy-to-read extracts to make it accessible. The reader is invited to care about others, to think of those who are homeless, those who are hungry, those who want peace, and then also to think about him – or herself – and to try to be a candle in the dark. A message of love and peace, sharing and freedom.

The double-page spread illustrations represent Palestinian society, in particular through the use of the colour green, reminiscent of the olive trees that symbolise the poet's homeland of Palestine.

EARLY READING



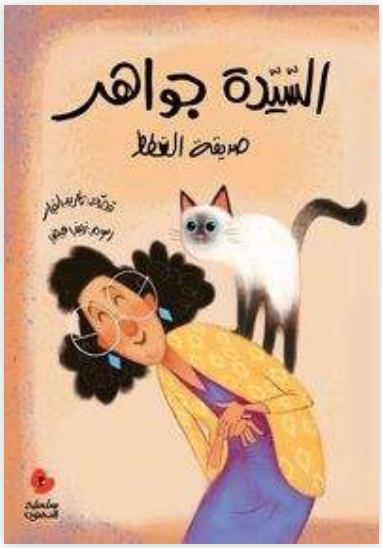
[Letters under the door] رسائل من تحت الباب

Salma Koraytem, ill. Noémie Honeim, trans. Marwan Abdo-Hanna
Beirut (Lebanon): Samir Éditeur, 2018 (Tarif Zarif)
27pp, colour ill., 14 × 18 cm
ISBN 978-6-1444-3308-9, €6
Age 7+

Ghayth is very proud of her mother, a film director. But the day she has to go to Paris for a film shoot, Ghayth's world falls apart. He takes the separation very badly. On his mother's return, he refuses to talk to her and makes contact only by letters. Eventually, mama finds a way to draw Ghayth out of his sulks and to reassure him.

This is a most appealing book, both for its accessible, fluent and funny text and for the illustrations, light in touch and full of details.

(French translation *Des lettres sous la porte* by the same publisher, ISBN 978-614-443-317-1)



[Madame Jawahir, the cats's friend] السيدة جواهر صديقة القطط

Taghreed al-Najjar, ill. Zaynab Faydi
Amman (Jordan): Dar Salwa, 2016 (Al-Dahnoun)
80pp, colour ill., 20 × 14 cm
ISBN 978-9957-04-085-7, €11
Age 6+

Madame Jawahir's son lives abroad with his family. Each week, Madame Jawahir chats to her family by zoom. This is the chance to see Manour, her grandson, but he is always too busy with his toys to spare the time to talk to his grandmama.

Each day, Madame Jawahir goes to the park in front of her house to feed the cats who live nearby. She loves especially one gentle, white cat, Noosa, and she allows it into her house. One fine day, Noosa disappeared, to return a few days later with five kittens! They are just what is needed to arouse the interest of Mansour, who begins to pay much more attention to the Zoom meetings with grandmama…

The vivid illustrations accompany a lively and playful story.

[Mum, my classmate] ماما بنت صفي

Lubna Taha, ill. Maya Fidawi
Amman (Jordan): Dar al-Salwa, 2018 (Al-Dahnoun)
67pp, colour ill., 20 × 14 cm
ISBN 978-9957-04-135-9, €9,90
Age 7+

Abir, Nora's mother, wants to learn English. What better way to learn than with her own daughter, and joining as a pupil in her class? The teacher is delighted, and Abir too. But it's something of a nightmare for Nora! And the laughter of her classmates doesn't help either. However, bit by bit, her mother wins over all the girls and becomes the school favourite! An emotional bond develops between mother and daughter as they experience the ups and downs of school life.

An original idea, a crisp, lively, entertaining style, brief chapters, and appealing illustrations which capture perfectly the characters and their feelings ….

This book won the 2018 Etisalat Prize for the category of 'Best Text'.

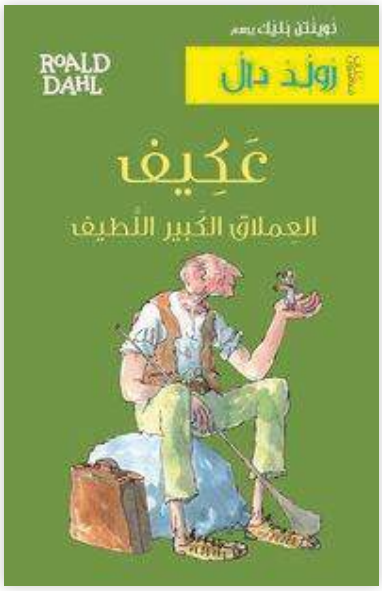
[The mysterious wrestler] لغز المصارع المجهول

Hélène Gloria, ill. Stéphanie Alastra, trans. Haytham Lamah
Beirut (Lebanon): Samir Éditeur, 2019 (Tarif Zarif)
31pp, colour ill., 14 × 18 cm
ISBN 978-614-443-164-1, €6
Fully vocalised
Age 7+

The entire city is in a state of high excitement: a wrestling match is going to pit the current title holder, Ali Gattor, against a mysterious masked wrestler, Wahid al-Qarn. Mazen and Massoud are desperate to see this historic encounter! But just who is this Wahid al-Qarn? The two friends spin various hypotheses, none convincing. They should perhaps listen to Souha, little sister of Mazen, who reckons that she knows the secret. What a surprise, when the two friends uncover a scam! The translation is highly readable, keeps the flow and speed of the original, and the lively and funny illustrations support the suspense until the climax of the story. A treat in store!

(French translation *Le catcheur mystérieux* by the same publisher, ISBN 978-614-443-537-3)

NOVELS



عكِيف العملاق الكبير اللَّطيف [The BFG]

Roald Dahl, ill. Quentin Blake, trans. Haytham Lamah
Beirut (Lebanon): Samir Editions, 2020 (Kouttab mou'asiroun)
36pp, ill., 22 × 17 cm
ISBN 978-6144-43-698-1, €10
Age 10+

The translation of this classic children's book brilliantly overcomes many challenges, particularly the translation of words and phrases made up by the BFG who learned how to speak by himself. This language, unique to the giant, as well as the vocabulary that belongs to his world, are translated into Arabic in new constructions inspired by existing words. A thematic index is included at the end to list these words, helping the reader understand the text and serving as a guide for the world of giants, in case you ever have the opportunity to visit it…

(Original edition in Engish *The BFG*, 1964.
Other titles by Roald Dahl published by Samir Editions
[*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*] تشارلي ومصنع الشوكولاته ISBN 978-9953-31-296-5
[*Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator*] تشارلي والمصعد الزجاجيّ العظيم
ISBN 978-9953-31-297-2
[*Matilda*] ماتيلدا ISBN 978-9953-31-457-0
All available in English from Puffin books and in French from Gallimard Jeunesse.)

الفتى 87 [Boy 87]

Ele Fountain, trans. Chadia Chikhani
Sharjah (United Arab Emirates): Kalimat, 2021
217pp, 13 × 20 cm
ISBN 978-9948-34-804-7, €18
Age 13+

Shif and Bini are inseparable friends. In a dictatorship, the name of which we are not told, soldiers are searching for them to take them to the 'military school' from which they can never leave. Their mothers have put a plan in place for them to leave the country… But the soldiers are too quick. The two teenagers are imprisoned in a camp. Then begins a long journey consisting of escape, crossing the desert, loneliness, brutality and violence, but also of solidarity and mutual aid … with one sole objective in view … reaching Europe.

A strong story that obliges the reader to take a view that is more aware, more humane, towards the migrants who arrive at the doors of Europe … and those who will never reach there.

(Original title Boy 87, Pushkin Children's Books, London, 2018. ISBN 978-178-2691-976)

[The boy at the back of the class]
الفتى الجالس في آخر الصف

Onjali Q. Raúf, ill. Pippa Curnick, trans. Chadi Bekhazi
Sharjah (United Arab Emirates: Kalimat, 2022
285 pp, 13 × 20 cm
ISBN 978-9948-468-20-2, €17
Age 9+

On his long and hard journey to England, Ahmed, a nine-year-old Syrian boy, is at first accompanied by his parents, but loses them on the way. At school in England, he has no friends, he doesn't speak, he doesn't play with his classmates. His behaviour intrigues Alexa, the narrator, and her three friends Josie, Michael and Tom. They get to know Ahmed little by little and make friends with him, in spite of the language and cultural difficulties. They decide, out of friendship, to look for their friend's parents, in the course of which they seek the help of the queen!

A touching novel, in a style which is not lacking in humour.

(Original title The Boy at the Back of the Class, Orion Children's Books, London, 2018. ISBN 978-151-0105-010)

[Cappuccino] كابوتشينو

Fatima Sharafeddine
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Saqi, 2017
207pp, 21 × 23 cm
ISBN 978-6-14425-977-1, €17
Age 13+

This novel has two points-of-view. On one hand, Lina, who has returned to Lebanon with her mother and sister after the death of her father in France. She talks about her rebellion against her paternal uncle who controls their lives and finances, her concerns about adapting to Lebanese reality, and her growing interest in Anas. On the other hand, Anas speaks about a life with a violent father who beats his wife and terrorises the entire family, a rebellion against a hypocritical society, and falling in love with Lina. The reader moves from one point of view to the other and follows the choices they make to face both problems and rules.

A lively, rhythmic style with a rich vocabulary, anchored in the lives of teenagers. A well-written, well-constructed novel which received the Etisalat prize for best book for teenagers in 2017.

[Cities apart] المدن غير الموصولة

Mahmoud Qutb, ill. Ahmad Hassani
Gizeh (Egypt): Dar al-Balsam, 2019
63pp, ill., 22 × 10,5 cm
ISBN 978-9776-17-141-1
Age 12+

Through these thirty-one philosophical tales, the reader is transported to thirty-one cities. Some are very like our own, others are filled with the landscape of story and legend. These narratives tackle a whole range of themes – truth, otherness, the power of money, and time. The illustrations are monochrome and mystical; human characters are seen as silhouettes; while calligraphic designs bring to mind mandalas evoking a spiritual atmosphere. The designs for each title page illustrate the story to perfection – for the city bathed in the darkness of night, the title page is darkened, while the arrangement of the text on its title page reflects the city built of mirrors.

[Factory of memories] مصنع الذكريات

Ahlam Besharat
Amman (Jordan): Dar al-Salwa, 2018
127pp, 21 × 15 cm
ISBN 978-995-704-136-6, €12,90
Age 10+

Jaber and his friends reunite at the top of a hill in Palestine, under a Carob tree, to play a game where they "bury and dig up" their memories. The game's objective is to prevent good memories from being swallowed up by oblivion and ensure that bad memories are not repressed and become nightmares. It was invented to help Jaber mourn his mother, to savour the memories of the good times he had with her.

A novel that takes us into the secrets of the human soul, towards the origin of memories and their essential role in the construction of the present and future.

[The girl who didn't like her name, Sakiz Sardunya] البنت التي لا تحب اسمها

Elif Shafak, trans. Nura Yamaç
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Adab, 2019
159pp, 14.5 × 21.5 cm
ISBN 978-995-389-654-0, €18
Age 10+

Sardonya, 'Thistle of Sardinia' (English translation uses Pelargonium) is what her parents have chosen to call her. With this name she cannot go unnoticed, and is constantly teased for it.. Sardonya suffers from this, and hides in her books. One day, in the school library, she discovers a globe, buried between dusty books. When she grabs it, an eighth continent appears suddenly, giving off a strong light. Two strange beings appear too. This continent is the land of imagination and its tales are drying up as humans read less and imagination becomes scarce …

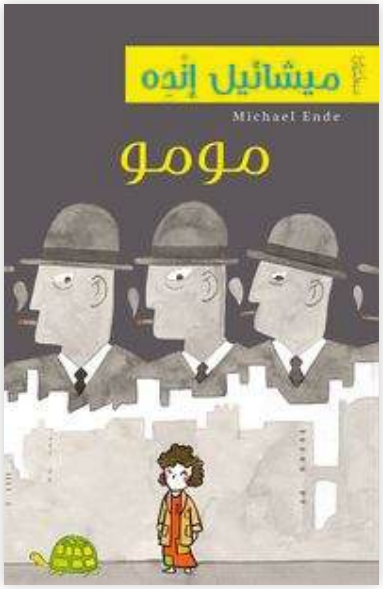
(English edition published 2014 ISBN: 978-605-09-2291-2)

[Mila's Pear] إجاصة ميلا

Fatima Sharafeddine
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Saqi, 2019
230pp, 21 × 13 cm
ISBN 978-614-032-130-4, €15
Age 12+

16 year old Mila is obsessed with her weight. Short, but rather plump, she has suffered a lot from her friends' remarks. As she becomes a young woman she never stops comparing herself with her friends who she thinks are slimmer than her. Her mother encourages her to eat more sensibly and take exercise. What begins with a diet and a bit of sport very quickly takes an obsessional turn, she's caught in a spiral … When her family circle work out what's going on, it's too late: Mila is anorexic. The struggle is long and difficult.

The rhythmic text, partly 'vocalised', keeps the reader spellbound. The author has found the right tone to talk about teenagers' complicated relationships with their bodies and those around them in a society obsessed with appearances.



[Momo, or the Strange Story of the Time-Thieves, and the Child who brought the Stolen Time back to the People]
مومو أو حكاية سارقي الوقت الغريبة والطّفلة الّتي أعادت الوقت المسروق للبشريّة

Michael Ende, trans. Ebtihal Chedid
Beirut (Lebanon): Samir Éditeur, 2017 (Kouttab mou'asiroun)
333 pp, 20 × 13 cm
ISBN 978-614-443-180-1, €11,00
Age 12+

Momo is an orphan and lives alone in the midst of ruins, isolated from the town. She is much liked because she has a talent for listening to others and devoting time to them. One day, some men in grey appeared in the town: they suggest to the inhabitants that they deposit some of their time in the Timesavings Bank in order to yield a profit. More and more people accept this proposal. Little by little, activities judged to be useless – hobbies, the arts, social life, sleep – are abandoned or reduced to a minimum. Creativity gradually disappears, the rhythm of daily life speeds up, no-one wants to lose time… Momo seems to be the only one able to find a way out…

This novel, which first appeared during the 1970s, has lost nothing of its freshness and topicaiity.

(Original title *Momo oder Die seltsame Geschichte von den Zeit-Dieben und von dem Kind, das den Menschen die gestohlene Zeit zurückbrachte,* Thienemanns, Stuttgart, Germany, 1973
French Version *Momo,* trans. by Corinna Gepner, Bayard (Estampille), Paris, 2009.
ISBN 978-2-7470-2469-3
English version *Momo*, trans. by J. Maxwell Brownjohn, Puffin, London, 1985
ISBN 978-0-140-31753-4)

[The place] المكان

Emily Nasrallah, ed. by May Makarem Hamadé, designed by Leen Charafeddine, produced by Nadine R.L. Touma and Sivine Ariss
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar Onboz, 2018
267pp, ill. and colour ill., photography and colour photography, 17 × 24 cm (+ dictionary (7 × 10 cm), map).
ISBN 978-9953-465-55-5
Age 14+

Emily Nasrallah (1931-2018), 'grande dame' of Lebanese literature, retraces her life and the lives of others with her beautiful and elegant writing, including in her writing dialogues and mouthwatering expressions in the Lebanese Arabic dialect. Through these stories about life, she presents part of the history of Lebanon and of the world. The story is fitted into a remarkable documentary setting. The novel is abundantly illustrated with photographs of the era, with a family tree, and infographics … Certain terms in the text are in a different colour that relates to a specific category in a little dictionary which is rich in photographs, cards, drawings… And in order to place these evocative places in the book, in Lebanon or in the world, a fold-out map is included. A superb work!

[Rayyan, my red notebook] ريّان، دفتري الأحمر

Tamara Qashha, ill. Sasha Haddad
Amman (Jordan): Dar al-Salwa, 2022
184pp, colour ill., 15 × 21 cm
ISBN 9789957042387, €22
Age 9+

Twelve year old Rayyan uses his private notebook for his written thoughts, and also for swift sketches or detailed drawings, collage images created from photographs, postage stamps, pages torn from other notebooks, jottings reflecting calm, anger or sadness. He lives with his father, a pilot who is often away travelling, and his grandmother; his mother died in a car accident. He has one dream: to be chosen to take part in a science competition and to present a project close to his heart: a device to prevent road accidents.

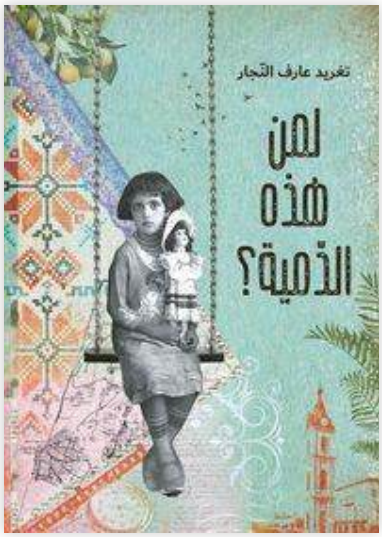
By using the format of a private diary, the writing brings an authenticity to the text which will strike a chord with all its readers, whether boys or girls. This is an original book in form and content. There is humour but it is also moving and very inspiring.

[Sindrani, diver of the deeps] سندراني، غواصة الأعماق

Omama Al Lawati, ill. Cesar Samaniego
Amman (Jordan): Dar al-Salwa, 2022 (Al-Dahnoun)
100pp, colour ill., 14 × 20 cm
ISBN 978-9957-04-231-8, €14
Age 9+

Meet Sindrani, a young girl who has a passion for navigation and long sea voyages. She begs her uncle Sinbad (yes, that one!) to allow her to set sail with him – but she is still too young. Instead Sinbad gives her the model of a sailing boat which turns out to be magic! And so she dives headlong into a fantastic voyage, an epic worthy of the great sailors and heroes.

Reading this novel is a real pleasure, the story is well constructed and the reader quickly falls in love with this curious and resourceful young girl. In particular the illustrations are to be admired, reflecting as they do the culture of Oman (the author's own country), while at the same time capturing the universal magic of the great Arabian stories



[Whose doll is this?] لمن هذه الدّمية؟

Taghreed al-Najjar
Amman (Jordan): Dar al-Salwa, 2019
203 pp, 21 × 15 cm
ISBN 978-995-704-205-9, €10,90
Age 12+

Layla is Palestinian and a professor at the University of Chicago. Through her courses and conferences, she promotes Palestinian cultural heritage. Layla would like to also pass on this cultural heritage to her granddaughter Arwa, who was born in the United States and has had difficulty with connecting to it…

One day, Layla tells her granddaughter about the doll she has never forgotten, lost in 1948 during a forced displacement. Determined to find it, Arwa begins a relentless search on the Internet and succeeds in putting the doll into her grandmother's hands on her birthday!

At the end of the book there are family pictures showing the doll, anchoring this story in reality.

This novel received the Etisalat prize in 2019 for best book for teenagers.

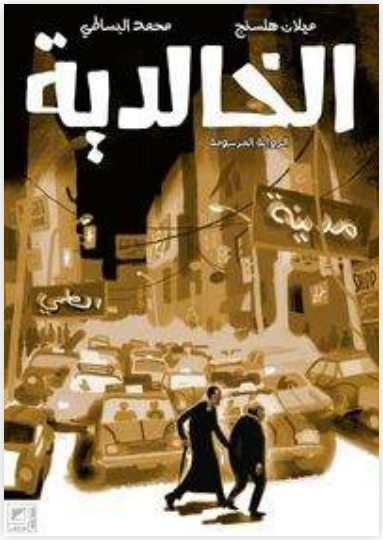
COMICS, GRAPHIC NOVELS

[Adulthood is a myth: A Sarah's Scribbles collection] النضج خرافة. مجموعة من خربشات سارة

Sarah Anderson, trans. Ahmed Salah al-Mahdi
Sharjah (UAE): Kalimat, 2019
109pp, colour ill., 20 × 16.5 cm
ISBN 978-9948-2-4497-4, €18
Age 12+

A webcomic that fans of reading in print have had to wait a long time for. Through her avatar, Sarah Anderson reproduces the emotions, reactions and decisions to be made when you are out of your comfort zone. Her avatar is a young girl with messy hair, not one bit 'feminine' – very different from the model presented to teenagers by today's media. She talks about love, failure, introversion, books, the impact of social media, how the body develops, femininity and stereotypes that no one has to accept – without wallowing in victimisation or self-pity.

(Originally published in English by Andrews McMeel Publishing, Kansas City, USA, 2016. ISBN 9781449474195)



[Al-Khaldiya] الخالدية

Milan Hulsing, trans. Mohamed Elbesatie
Paris (France) and Cairo (Egypt): NOOL, 2018
120pp, colour ill.,. 24 × 17 cm
ISBN 978-2-902064-03-8, €14
Age 14+

Salem is an Egyptian civil servant, and he understands perfectly how the system works. He comes up with a diabolical plan to embezzle public money: he invents, from scratch, an entire imaginary city, Al-Khaldiya, in order to obtain the salaries of fake police officers, who are supposed to be responsible for ensuring order in the face of multiple threats (terrorism, communism, Islamism, and trade unionism). But little by little, this imaginary city comes to occupy more and more space in Salem's head, and he gradually loses touch with reality.

A thinly veiled denunciation of Mubarak's regime and the corruption that plagued it, this graphic novel in Egyptian Arabic is an adaptation of a novel with the same title by the Egyptian writer Mohammed El Bisatie, published in 2004.

(Originally published in Dutch as *Stad van klei*, Oog en Blik, Amsterdam, Holland, 2011. ISBN 9789054929994)

[Antara] عنترة

Moemen Helmy, ill. Ashraf Ghori
Sharjah (UAE): Kalimat (Comics), 2018
54pp, colour ill., 28 × 23 cm
ISBN 978-994-839-129-6, €19
Age 8+

This comic book is about Antara Ibn Shaddad, Arab hero of the sixth century, an illustrious knight and poet, and author of a *mu'allaqa* ('hanging poem'). Born a slave to an Abyssinian mother and a noble Arab father, Antara has long suffered from his father's refusal to recognise him, as well as from the contempt of the nobles of his tribe, because of his origins and the colour of his skin. Endowed with an unusual physique, tall and robust, Antara becomes the most powerful warrior of his tribe, the Bani 'Abs, but he remains a slave – until, one day, the tribe is attacked. Antara refuses to fight as a slave and wins his freedom.

Antara's adventures and love affairs are beautifully illustrated by the cartoonist Ashraf Ghori, with energetic pencil strokes.

[Anya's ghost] شبح آنيا

Vera Brosgol, trans. Samar El Qatab
Sharjah (UAE): Kalimat (Comics), 2018
225pp, 21.5 × 15 cm
ISBN 978-9948-10-143-7, €10
Age 14+

Anya is a Russian teenage immigrant living with her family in the United States. She has the same experiences as all teenagers – life in high school, anxieties about her changing body, arguments with her friends, love troubles. One day, Anya falls into a pit and finds herself face to face with the ghost of a little girl, and this episode changes her outlook on life. With its accurate depiction of the stresses and strains of a difficult time of life, this story is sure to engage young readers, who will easily identify with the protagonist.

The translation renders the dialogue very realistically, even in literary Arabic.

(Originally published in English by First Second, New York, USA, 2011. ISBN 9781596437135)

[Baddawi] بدَاوي

Leila Abdelrazaq, trans. Linda Labboun
Sharjah (UAE): Kalimat (Comics), 2018
123pp, 22 × 22 cm
ISBN 978-994-841-989-1
Age 12+

This comic book takes its title from the name of a Palestinian refugee camp northeast of Tripoli in Lebanon. It tells the story of the childhood of Ahmad, the author's father, from 1959 to 1980. It is an account of a Palestinian childhood full of multiple exiles and the difficulties faced by refugees on a daily basis. Memories of tastes, smells, games, friends, school, and childish pranks are mixed with the tragic history of the country – massacres of Palestinians, civil war, and injustices. This insider account makes the political and historical realities tangible.

The translator offers a very pleasant and fluid text. A must-read comic book!

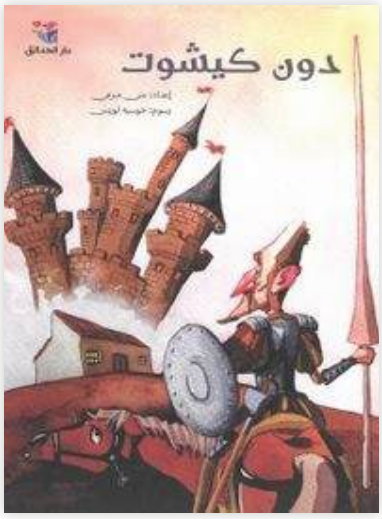
(Originally published in English by Just World Books, Washington DC, USA, 2015. ISBN 9781935982401)

[Coltrane] كولترين

Paolo Parisi, trans. Mohammed Abdelaziz
Paris (France) and Cairo (Egypt): NOOL, 2018
120pp, 24 × 17 cm
ISBN 978-2-902064-01-4, €12
Age 14+

This comic book, translated from Italian into Egyptian Arabic, is aimed at fans of the great American saxophonist, who made his mark on jazz in the second half of the 20th century, along with Miles Davis, Art Blakey, Archie Shepp, Albert Ayler, Bill Evans and so many others with whom he played. The author has chosen not to tell the story of Coltrane's life chronologically, but instead to evoke his journey in 'flashes', criss-crossing times, places, and political events that had an impact on his generation and its personalities.

(Originally published in English by Jonathan Cape, London, UK, 2012. ISBN 978-0224094108
Italian edition published by Black Velvet, Bologna, Italy, 2009. ISBN 978-88-87827-86-6)



[Don Quixote] دون كيشوت

Mona Merhi [based on Miguel de Cervantes], ill. José Luis [Ocaña]
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Hadaek, 2018
31pp, colour ill., 27 × 19.50 cm
ISBN 978-614-439-113-6, €11.90
Age 8+

It's not an easy thing to bring to market a new version of Cervantes' timeless work, which has been a source of inspiration for so many artists. There are seven chapters here, including the famous one about Don Quixote tilting at windmills. The caricature-like watercolour illustrations are warm and full of humour.

A fine introduction in comic-book form to this great classic, which may entice readers to read Cervantes' novel in full.

[Guantanamo Kid: The true story of Mohammed Al-Gorani]
طفل جوانتانامو. قصة محمد القرعاني - واحد من أصغر معتقلي معسكر جوانتانامو

Jérôme Tubiana, ill. Alexandre Franc, trans. Rebab Khammassi
Paris (France) and Cairo (Egypt): NOOL, 2021
159pp, 17 × 24 cm
ISBN 978-2-902064-10-6, €18
Age 13+

In 2011, Jérôme Tubiana, a journalist and researcher, met Mohammed Al-Gorani, a Saudi of Chadian origin, who had the dubious privilege of being the youngest detainee in the famous Guantanamo Bay, before eventually being exonerated. His interviews with Al-Gorani are the basis for this precisely documented comic book. From his arrest in Pakistan in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, when he was just a student, to his release six years later, the terrible life Al-Gorani lived through is recounted in detail.

The refined – one might almost say well-behaved – black-and-white drawings eschew overstatement or voyeurism.

(Originally published in French as *Guantanámo kid: l'histoire vraie de Mohammed El-Gorani*, by Dargaud, 2018. ISBN 978-2-205-07768-1
English edition published by SelfMade Hero, London, UK, 2019. ISBN 978-1910593660)

[Jamila] جميلة

Miranda Beshara, ill. Khaled Jarada
Ramallah (Palestine): Palestine Writing Workshop, 2022
51pp, colour ill., 14 × 21 cm
ISBN 978-9950-8525-5-6
Age 13+

It is not easy for an Egyptian teenager to cope with frizzy hair, braces, rapidly developing breasts, the remarks of family members and those of boys in the street – especially if one's name is Jamila ('beautiful'). Fortunately, her friends are there to support her and help her keep the 'bad-mood cockroaches' at bay. Jamila learns to react with humour to her family's narrow-minded remarks. And when Rami, her cousin's best friend, gives her a black-and-white portrait of her that he has drawn, the sky clears.

This pocket-sized comic book faithfully captures teenage sensitivities. In the children's literature of the Arab world, it is unusual to find books that so accurately evoke this period of emotional fragility.

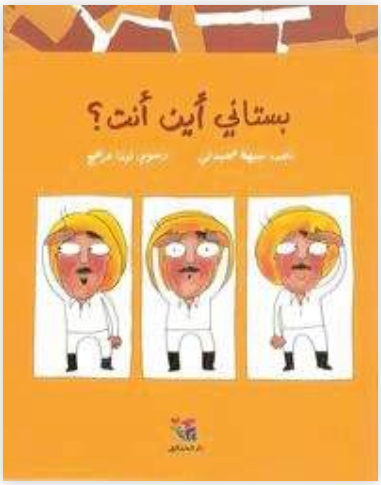
[Mandela and the general] مانديلا والجنرال

John Carlin, ill. Oriol Malet, trans. Patrick Kamel
Sharjah (UAE): Kalimat (Comics), 2020
113pp, colour ill., 26 × 20 cm
ISBN 978-994-836-105-3, €20
Age 10+

This lovely comic book is based on an interview conducted by the author, who is a British writer, journalist and screenwriter, with Constand Viljoen, a general in the South African army, who, in 1993, took over the leadership of the far-right militias on the eve of the country's first democratic elections. In these dramatic circumstances, Mandela made an unprecedented and unimaginable gesture: he met the general and succeeded in convincing him to lay down his arms. This proved to be a decisive moment in South Africa's history, which prevented bloodshed.

The text is not vocalised, but the speech bubbes are not overloaded with text and the dialogue is easy to read. A comic book for young and old.

(Originally published in English by Plough Publishing House, Robertsbridge, UK, 2018. ISBN 9780874868203)



[My orchard, where are you?] بستاني أين أنت؟

Nabiha Mheidly, ill. Lena Merhej
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Hadaek, 2017
31pp, colour ill., 25 × 20 cm
ISBN 978-614-439-090-0, €11
Age 6+

A gardener is convinced that his orchard is the only one in the valley. But when he proudly climbs the nearby mountain and takes a look around, he discovers that his orchard is neither the only one, nor the biggest, nor the most fertile, nor the most beautiful. What makes his orchard unique is the energy he has put into it, the time he has spent working in it, and the love he has for it.

Lena Merhej uses a mixture of cut-outs and drawings to render, with much humour, the emotions of this gardener whose certainties have been shaken. The text plays with repetitions to create a catchy reading rhythm. The whole forms an original, sympathetic work – and is one of the few comic strips in Arabic aimed at children.

[The shadow hero] بطل الظل

Gene Luen Yang and Sonny Liew, trans. Ahmed Salah al-Mahdi and Moataz Hassanein
Sharjah (UAE): Kalimat (Comics), 2018
170ppp, colour ill., 17 × 24 cm
ISBN 978-994-810-305-9, €12
Age 9+

After the collapse of China's thousand-year-old empire, the Spirits gather to elect a new dynasty. But since they have no ideal candidate, one of them follows a 19-year-old, Hank, who puts on his green cape to fight against the underworld of Chinatown. In spite of himself, Hank embarks – with the help of his mother – on zany adventures, which frequently involve fights based on Kung Fu moves.

The translation is elegant and there is attention to detail in the production (signs in Arabic, helpful references marked with asterisks etc.).

(Originally published in English by First Second, New York, USA, 2014. ISBN 9781596436978)

[A thousand and one lives in A&E]
ألف ليلة وليلة في قسم الطوارئ

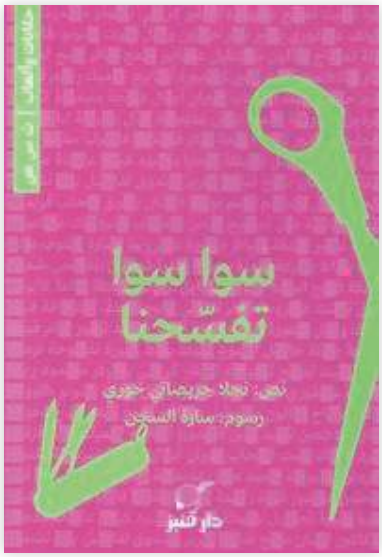
Baptiste Beaulieu, ill. Dominique Mermoux, trans. Ahmed Salah al-Mahdi
Sharjah (AEU): Kalimat (Comics), 2019
222 pp, colour ill., 24 × 17 cm
ISBN 978-9948-2-4785-2, €20
Age 15+

Baptiste is an intern working in a hospital accident and emergency department. He saves a woman who has attempted suicide many times by telling her stories about what is going on in the emergency department. Just as Scheherazade was able to prevent her husband from killing her by telling him a story every night without ever finishing it, Baptiste, through his moving presence and his amusing stories, manages to give this lady obsessed with death a reason to live while she is waiting for her son to visit.

The illustrations give us a certain distance from the harsh reality of medical emergencies. Being an emergency intern, doctor or nurse is not just a professional vocation, but a social and humanitarian commitment.

(Originally published in French as *Les mille et une vies des urgences*, Rue de Sèvres, Paris, France, 2017. ISBN 978-2-36981-135-0)

INFORMATION BOOKS

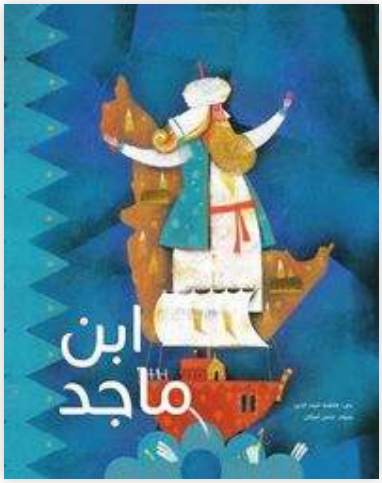


Collection [Stories and games] حكايات وألعاب

Najla Jreissati, ill. Sara Sukhun
Beirut (Lebanon): Dar Onboz, 2019
33pp, colour ill., 42 × 30 cm
€25 each volume
Age 7+

These five large format, brightly coloured volumes invite the reader to explore the Arabic language playfully in an interactive way. Each book includes a story and games based around a letter whose sound is similar in Arabic, for example: the letter (س) sin which is pronounced [s] and the letter (ص) sad which is pronounced [ṣ]. The concept is ambitious; rather than using dialect, the stories are written in Lebanese Arabic, which is often chosen as the gateway for learning Arabic. By speaking to Lebanese children in their mother tongue, and using both the written and spoken language in these books, this is a great way to explore the infinite possibilities of this magnificent language, which is often perceived to be difficult to learn how to write.

([*Together, together, let's walk*] سوا سوا تفسحنا ISBN 978-9953-465-50-0
[*My grandfather the wolf*] جدي الديب ISBN 978-9953-465-51-7
[*Where is Lattouf? Is she pulling out the wool?*] وين لطّوف؟ عم تنتف صوف؟
ISBN 978-9953-465-49-4
[*Qasem has lice*] قمّل قاسم ISBN 978-9953-465-52-4
[*Zaza got angry with Zouzou*] ظاظا زعلت من زوزو ISBN 978-9953-465-48-7)



[Ibn Majid] ابن ماجد

Fatima Sharafeddine, ill. Hasan Amekan
Sharjah (UAE): Kalimat, 2020
40pp, colour ill., 24 × 28 cm
ISBN 978-9948-24-562-9, €17
Age 10+

Born in 1432 in the region of Julphar (today the UAE), Ibn Majid, followed in his father and grandfather's footsteps to become a ship's captain. Benefitting from a literary and scientific education, he became a learned scholar, and is considered to be the inventor of marine sciences. This science, which includes the study of various disciplines (astronomy, geography, understanding of the winds and season, of latitude and longitude…) allowed him to develop highly complex rules for navigation in the Indian Ocean. His work was later used by Europeans in their search for a sea route to Asia.

Ibn Majid was also a poet and some of his work is included in the book He died in 1500.

[Ibn Rushd (Averroès)] ابن رشد

Fatima Sharafeddine, ill. Hasan Amekan
Sharjah (UAE): Kalimat, 2017
46pp, colour ill., 24 × 28 cm
ISBN 978-9948-18-137-8, €17
Age 12+

Ibn Rushd, also known by the Latinised name Averroès, lived in the 12th century in Andalucia. In the West, he is best known as a philosopher for his commentary on the works of Aristotle, but like all eminent intellectuals of his time, his work covered many disciplines. He was also a lawyer, doctor, astronomer and mathematician. This book, with a partially vocalised text, reflects the richness and variety of his studies and is a high quality introduction for young readers to the life and work of this great man.

[The incredible egg carton 1 and 2]
كرتونة البيض العجيبة ١ و٢

Taghreed al-Najjar, ill. Layla Loubani
Amman (Jordan): Dar al-Salwa, 2019
24pp, colour ill., 21 × 28 cm
ISBN 978-9957-04-155-7 | ISBN 978-9957-04-153-3
€8.90 each volume
Age 6+

Lots of ideas for interesting artistic activities to make using … egg boxes!

Models of animals, ornaments, flowers, cartoon characters, even necklaces and insects are included. Children will be able to design and make other items using their imagination and creativity.

As well as the pleasure of making objects, these books will allow children to enjoy the products of their work in play or to decorate their rooms, with puppets or mobiles of fish for example. Delightful books.

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