

# Women Writers of the Modern Middle East

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## **Overview:**

Textually, this unit is focused on women writers of the modern Middle East. The region is home to many wonderful writers; however, it is challenging to find women writers whose works have been translated effectively. I have included Esther Raab, who was born in Ottoman Palestine and is considered the first female native-born Israeli poet. She has a book of poems in translation, called *Thistles*, and other poems and stories have been translated in isolation. A fascinating parallel to the Israeli poet, Fadwa Tuqan is a Palestinian poet who writes movingly of the same homeland as Esther Raab. These two writers, studied together, will help students to understand the complicated history and politics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The activities I have chosen to create are quite diverse and will help students better understand the diversity of landscapes and cultures that make up the region known as the Middle East. Students will then be able to make connections between these faraway places and the places they think of as home. These connections will be facilitated by examining photographic images of the Middle East in association with poems by Middle Eastern women, then finding images of the places they call home—most likely, but not necessarily, the urban landscape of Philadelphia—and writing poetry in response to those images. In general, this unit is to be implemented in humanities (English or Social Studies) classrooms at the secondary level. A more detailed description of specifics on where in the Core Curriculum to situate this unit can be found in the Rationale section below.

We will also be analyzing a short story, “Rose Jam” by Esther Raab, in terms of the way it describes not just the author’s homeland but also its problematic and troubling presentation of Arab men. This story provides a base for a dialogue about stereotypes, gender roles, and what happens when cultures collide and overlap. The resulting discussion can take several different forms and move in several different directions, depending on how it is framed by the facilitator.

Overall, several skills and concepts are targeted in the classroom activities included in this unit, all with the aim of increasing literacy, promoting discussion, expanding cultural horizons, and stimulating creativity. I hope that after completing these activities, students will have a greater appreciation for the different landscapes of the world, how they are reflected in language, and the implications of gender in language. As an added bonus, because engaging classroom activities and good instruction are the best test preparation, students will also be better prepared for the PSSA or Keystone Examinations as a result of completing these activities.

### **Rationale:**

These days, it’s very common to hear (from all types of sources) the lament that students don’t know enough about the world around them, and that statement actually has a ring of truth to it. Over the past ten years, given the advent of No Child Left Behind and widespread high-stakes testing, it’s become even more common that students actually *don’t* know much about the world around them. An example: in an informal survey of my ninth grade students (conducted by their World History teacher) several stated that they actually had not had a true Social Studies class the previous year due to their schools’ perceived need to prepare them for the PSSA testing that takes place every spring in Pennsylvania. Under these circumstances, it is incumbent upon educators to, when they can, develop engaging units of study that bring students up to speed on what the world is like beyond their immediate surroundings and everyday experiences.

The Middle East is an especially worthwhile and important focus area for our students because apart from learning about ancient civilizations such as the Egyptians and the Mesopotamians in elementary school, today’s students have very little (or no) awareness of how Middle Eastern societies have grown and developed over the past few thousand years. Early civilizations and larger dynastic movements are given a great deal of coverage in history books, but due to the large scope of material that history teachers must cover over the course of a school year, more often than not, teachers of World History never actually get to cover modern societies or issues.

Furthermore, understanding the history of the Modern Middle East is a necessary prerequisite to understanding what has come to be known as the “Arab Spring,” a seeming chain reaction of protests and revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa ushering in a new era of (hopefully) democracy and reform. If people do not know the

recent history of the region—specifically, patterns of conquest, imperialism, settlement, and turnover—it becomes too easy to form some very negative preconceptions about Middle Easterners, making the assumption that the exploitative leadership of governments such as Hosni Mubarak and Muammar al-Gaddafi were due to some lack on the behalf of the people of those countries. To wit, it is vital to know that the peoples of the region lacked self-determination for a couple hundred years, beginning with the decline of the Ottoman Empire and continuing through the dominance of the British Empire and World War I. It is vital to understand the diversity of the Middle East and appreciate the fact that not every group of people has its own nation, resulting in some pretty serious and longstanding conflicts which may never be resolved. In preparing to teach this unit, it is important that the teacher become familiar with the basic historical timeline of the region in order to provide an explanation as to why (for example) Esther Raab’s parents decided to leave Eastern Europe in the first place and why they decided to settle in Israel, and why exactly the Arab man in “Rose Jam” is portrayed in such a menacing and threatening manner.

This then begs the question: why study women specifically? In order to answer this question, let’s examine the major texts studied in the English 1 Core Curriculum, as specified by the School District of Philadelphia. Students who find themselves in classrooms where teachers adhere solely to the Core Curriculum’s Planning and Scheduling Timeline will study major texts written by men: William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* and Homer’s *Odyssey*. Additionally, one can find in the Core Curriculum a unit on the life, works, and mysterious death of Edgar Allan Poe. No doubt, these are very important texts, and they are well received and greatly enjoyed by my students each year. In an attempt to give more gender and cultural balance to my students’ experience of literature (and in order to bring into my classroom some synthesis with our World History teachers) I have developed my own curricular units based on books such as *The House on Mango Street*, by Sandra Cisneros; *The Kite Runner*, by Khaled Hosseini; and *A Long Way Gone*, by Ishmael Beah. However, given this list, it is clear that studies of text by women could stand to happen more in my classroom. Thus, it is important to develop a curricular unit on women writers, not just for the benefit of my own students but also for the benefit of other teachers in Philadelphia, who no doubt find themselves in the same predicament when it comes to gender imbalance in the English 1 curriculum.

This unit is intended for 9<sup>th</sup> graders, to be implemented in English 1 class, however, as you will see below, there are many other options of where and how to teach these lessons. There are several points in the Planning and Scheduling Timeline in which to situate the unit as a whole. It could be taught as part of Women’s History Month in March, within a larger unit on women writers around the world. It could also be implemented during the poetry unit, which usually happens over the winter months. Additionally, because the texts on which the unit focuses are so much “about” setting, a teacher could choose to implement the unit during the weeks devoted to studying plot and setting, traditionally

situated earlier in the fall. Teachers can also choose, if they like, to teach the unit as a series of loosely connected units spaced throughout the year. However, this unit is not necessarily limited to English classrooms because a significant amount of history background is needed in order to adequately understand the larger historical and political forces at work in most of the poems and texts. Therefore, the lessons could also find a home in the World History content area as part of a larger and more comprehensive curricular unit on the Middle East, as a geographical entity. A final suggestion is to include these lessons as part of a unit on themes and patterns of modern history or the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In order to effectively implement this unit, there are some specific understandings the teacher must develop before teaching. I suggest that the teacher familiarize himself or herself with the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and general gender politics of the region, specifically women's roles in traditional Israeli and Arab society. I have included a bit of background information that can be developed into a lecture in the first of the Classroom Activities.

### **Objectives:**

The overall objective of this unit is to increase students' understanding of the connection between texts, identity, and homeland. In general, students will develop this understanding by examining parallels in other cultures and then applying the analogy to themselves. Underneath this general and broad umbrella are several subordinate objectives, described in greater detail below.

Students should be able to understand what geographical and historical forces shape them. In order to do this, we will look at the example of Israelis and Palestinians, two very different groups of people who call the same geographical area "home." We will examine how Israeli and Palestinian poets write about the geographical landscape of their shared homeland, comparing poems to suitable images of the region. Students will evaluate the parallels between image and text. To apply this understanding to their own experiences, students will then create poetry based on images of the places they call home. In effect, they will be searching out images that resonate with them—images that they feel accurately depict "home" to them—and writing a poem that reflects in words what those images convey visually.

Students will develop a greater understanding of point of view and perspective. In the context of this unit, we will be studying Palestinian and Israeli poetry and, in periphery, discussing the issues surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in order to provide context. Through examining the differing viewpoints, they will hopefully notice that some viewpoints are more favored by the media while others are not. Hopefully, we will participate in a lively discussion around that issue and students will learn the valuable lesson that there are multiple sides to each story. Students who have preconceived notions

or beliefs about Middle Eastern people and politics will be challenged to see things from opposing points of view and recognize the validity of all points of view.

Students will be able to identify and describe the effect of setting on a work of literature, demonstrating understanding of the relationship between the words an author uses and the place they are trying to describe. This is an understanding that will run throughout the unit. We will do this by analyzing poetry and its relationship to images, as described elsewhere in this section, but also through analyzing the short story “Rose Jam,” which is replete with imagery relating to all the senses. They will be able to connect details on setting with visual details from photographs of landscapes. They will ultimately be able to write creatively about setting, using images of their “own” landscapes as inspiration.

Through developing historical understanding, students will also appreciate the passionate connection writers feel to the places they call home. They will, in turn, develop their own connections to the places they themselves call home. The truth of the matter, however, is that many of our students (of lower socioeconomic status, living in underserved communities) are taught to feel ashamed of “where they come from.” Throughout their lives, they are taught to “rise above” their circumstances and “break the cycle of poverty.” However, they are rarely if ever taught or encouraged to feel positive connections to the places that are home to them. Rather, by being told that they need to escape their homes, they are implicitly conditioned to feel negatively about these places. It is my hope that this unit will enable my students to form positive connections and associations to their neighborhoods.

Students will need some background information about the modern Middle East so that they can adequately grasp and understand the thematic content of the texts they will be reading and analyzing. In order to do this, I have included some background material in the Strategies section below, which will assist teachers in covering the historical underpinnings of the texts. My goal is not to provide a comprehensive history of the modern Middle East within this section, but rather to provide a bit of context. If students would like to learn more about these issues, beyond what is covered in the brief background in-class lessons, they can look to their instructor as a resource for more information.

### **Strategies:**

Every classroom activity, as far as I am concerned, should work to improve students’ reading comprehension because reading comprehension is one of the keys to success in academics and in life. In order to improve reading comprehension skills among students in my classroom, I like to include a variety of texts. This ensures that everyone will find something in my classroom that they enjoy. Overall, I try to find texts that are engaging, suspenseful, and interesting—so that when they get to drier or more esoteric assignments, they will feel confident about their abilities to master the content. One strategy that I have

found useful in increasing reading comprehension and endurance is to break a text up into smaller chunks and take frequent breaks to discuss each section. During the breaks between each section, the teacher can pause for a “think-aloud,” which is when they make a verbal comment about the text in order to model thinking processes, improve comprehension, and keep the students involved in what they are reading. Several “sentence starters” can be used during a think-aloud, such as “This reminds me of...” followed by a connection to a topic or text covered previously, or “So what the author is saying is...” followed by a paraphrase. Gradually, the teacher can move from modeling think-alouds to having students make their own comments on the text; this can be done implicitly or explicitly and provides an excellent opportunity for formative assessment and scaffolded differentiation. Regarding this unit, during the Background activity, students will have an opportunity to practice this as they read informational reference texts.

As students read poetry by Middle Eastern authors over the course of this unit, they will have many opportunities to evaluate figurative language and as they do this, they will be able to understand the connection between figurative language and meaning. In my classroom, we often discuss poetry and when we do, I impress upon my students that analyzing the figurative language in the poem—the imagery, metaphors, similes, and other poetic devices—will enable them to understand the deeper thematic meaning of the poem. They can apply this technique later in their academic career as they encounter poems whose meanings are initially difficult to decipher. By leading students through a step-by-step process of identifying and describing the figurative language in the poems we read, they will be able to form unique and compelling interpretations that truly reflect their individual understanding of the text.

It is a commonly held belief in education that students learn differently, and that the role of the teacher is to create lessons which appeal to different learning modalities. One thing I have observed within the classroom is that students are overwhelmingly visual in that they learn best if they can relate visually to the material in some way. Using video and images has often been effective and enables my students to reach their learning objectives. For the purposes of this unit, embracing the visual learning modality involves incorporating images of the Middle East into lessons. Therefore, much of the content of this unit has to do with augmenting text with images. Students will be looking at images of Israel/Palestine and examining the way writing reflects the images. They will also find images of their “homeland” that resonate with them and develop their creativity by writing poetry based on those images.

Another commonly held belief about today’s students is that they have extremely short attention spans and lots of energy. In order to harness this energy and keep students engaged, my colleagues and I use learning stations to deliver background content rather than expect students to sit through a lecture or PowerPoint presentation. With stations, students move around the room, in small groups, to complete short activities in certain

amounts of time (for example, in a one-hour period students might visit four eight-minute stations.) While the teacher is welcome to develop a lecture based on the station activities I've provided in the first of the Classroom Activities section, I recommend getting the class up and moving with stations.

I use Mastery Objectives in my daily teaching practice and so I have included them in this unit. Mastery Objectives are statements that articulate what the students will know and be able to do in a given class period. Mastery Objectives can also specify the means of assessment by which a teacher will gauge whether the objective has been achieved by the students. Opinion differs on how specific (read: wordy) a Mastery Objective should be and whether the teacher should explicitly present the Mastery Objective at the beginning of a class period. Opinion also differs on how Mastery Objectives should be worded. I find it meaningful to tell students what they are going to learn that day, but often the means of assessment is self-evident and doesn't need to be articulated. For each lesson, you will see a two-sentence Mastery Objective: the first sentence describes what students will learn, and the second describes the means of assessment. They are worded, as you will see, in a "You will" (directed at the students) sentence followed by an "I will" (referring to the teacher) sentence. The Do Now engages the students, then the lesson follows, ending with an assessment to determine whether the students have mastered the objective.

A note about my school: here at High School of the Future, we pride ourselves on doing project based learning and being what is known as a 1-to-1 laptop environment. We implement project-based learning by including in our curriculum discrete units of study in which students are asked to solve a particular problem or explore a particular question while producing a tangible project that shows understanding. The major tool of instruction here is the laptop; our students are each given a laptop at the beginning of the year which they are allowed to take home. The laptop is an integral tool in our process; we distribute and collect assignments online through our web based portal system. We use an online gradebook for transparency's sake. Students are constantly creating digital content to display evidence of their learning experiences. The classroom activities contained in this unit can certainly be adapted for use in "non-laptop" schools, as long as the teacher has access to a projector on which to display images, for example.

### **Classroom Activities:**

#### *Activity One: Background (Lecture or Stations Activity)*

Mastery Objective: You will summarize the patterns of cause and effect that bring us to the current conflict in Israel-Palestine. I will know you have learned by the one-paragraph written response that you will produce after completing the Israel-Palestine Stations Activity.

The Do Now activity is based on the following scenario, which should be projected on the board: “Imagine the following scenario. A teacher, Mrs. P, has taught in the same classroom for 20 years and arrives back to school in September to begin setting up her room. There happens to be a new principal (Principal G) at the school this year, and he demands that a first year teacher, Mr. I, take Mrs. P’s classroom. Mrs. P says, ‘But this is my classroom! I’ve been in here for over 20 years!’ and Mr. I says ‘Well, Mrs. P, Principal G is in charge now, get out!’ ...what should happen? Write a sentence or two, and be sure to explain your reasoning.”

After the Do Now is completed, it is time for the Stations Activity to begin. First, the teacher should introduce (or review) the process of station activities with students by explaining that students will spend approximately 8 minutes at each station completing a short activity. Although beginning with Station 1 and ending with Station 4 makes the most sense, it will not be confusing to go in a different order. Each station ends with a question that students must be able to answer on notebook paper. Alternatively, the teacher could create a worksheet of the questions.

#### Station 1: Balfour Declaration

This station should be prepared with a small stack of printouts of the “Balfour Declaration” article from Microsoft Student. After reading the article, students should answer the following question on their papers: Give two reasons why the government of Great Britain was motivated to support a Jewish state in Palestine.

#### Station 2: Zionism and Anti-Semitism

This station should be prepared with the Microsoft Student article “Anti-Semitism,” which students will read. After reading, students should answer the following question on their papers: What is Anti-Semitism, what is Zionism, and how did one lead to the other? They should also be encouraged to compare the concept of Zionism to their prior knowledge, from African American History, of 20<sup>th</sup>-century movements to encourage African Americans to relocate to Africa, if time permits.

#### Station 3: Major Conflicts

At this station, students will read two sections from the Microsoft Student article, “Arab-Israeli Conflict”: Section IV (“The Arab-Israeli War of 1948-1949”) and Section V (“The Six Day War and the 1973 War”). They will use a Venn diagram to compare/contrast any two of these conflicts, listing 2-3 similarities and 2-3 differences.

#### Station 4: Peace Efforts

Printouts of Section VI of “Arab-Israeli Conflict” (the same article used above), called “The Intifada and the Peace Process,” should be arranged at this station. Students should skim the article, noting the various dates of the different strides and setbacks in the peace process. After reading, they should be able to briefly describe the progress or setbacks

that occurred in 1996, 1998, and 2005. They will reflect further on the peace process in their writing prompt below.

In order to assess attainment of the learning objective, the teacher should end the activity with the following writing prompt: “Based on what you learned today, evaluate the effectiveness of the peace process in Israel/Palestine, given its historical origins. If it were in your power, how would you solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Be specific about what needs to happen and how those events would resolve the conflict. Your response should consist of one to two well-organized paragraphs.” These responses should be collected as students leave the classroom.

### *Activity Two: Understanding Points of View*

**Mastery Objective:** You will show understanding of multiple points of view through the process of discussion followed by reflective independent writing. I will know you have learned by virtue of the quality and thoughtfulness of the details you provide on the graphic organizer.

The lesson begins with a Do Now, where students should be asked to write about a time when they had a disagreement with someone because they saw the same situation or event in two different ways. They should be encouraged to elaborate on the situation: Why did they see things differently from their opponent? How was the disagreement resolved? Did they learn anything?

Next, transition into the content-based discussion by reviewing the topics covered in yesterday’s stations activity. The teacher should be sure to emphasize the fact that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict exists because so many different groups of people state claims on the same piece of land, when all the while, other nations have an interest in what happens to the land and want to have a say in the process.

The bulk of the class time will be spent on a group activity. The teacher should break students up into groups of 3-4 and give each group a piece of blank, unlined paper. The students should divide the paper into quarters by folding it, and draw a circle in the center of the paper. In the center circle, a designated group member should write “The Land in 1945,” discussing why it would be problematic to call it “Israel” or “Palestine.” Each of the four quarters should be labeled with a different group that has an interest, either direct or indirect, in “The Land.” There are certainly more than four groups involved; if necessary, the teacher should provide the students with a list, which can include (but is not limited to) the following: American Zionists, American businesspeople, European Jews displaced by the Holocaust, Zionist settlers, Arab farmers, Balfour supporters in England, Nazi sympathizers, Leaders of Muslim nations, etc. For struggling students, the teacher can simply provide a list of the four most compelling groups for the graphic organizer.

After choosing which groups to include on their diagram, students should discuss in detail the similarities and differences between each group, both in general and specifically relating to each group's position towards, and interest in, "The Land." They should note the different beliefs and points of view that are inherent in each group's standpoint. Following the discussion, they should write down their thoughts in the corresponding quarters on the paper. Their statements should be written from that group's point of view. For example, the Zionist settlers might say, "We chose to take back the land that God gave us in the Bible. We are working hard to beautify the desert, living where nobody else wants to live. We believe we have a religious claim to the land, which we call Israel." The teacher should be sure to circulate around the room during group work in order to assist the groups where they get stuck.

Groups should be given about 20 minutes to complete their graphic organizers. At the end of this time, a representative of each group should speak about the four groups they chose and the views each group has on "The Land." The teacher can moderate the share-out by pointing out connections between the students' graphic organizers, as well as asking probing follow-up questions when necessary. The teacher will collect the graphic organizers at the conclusion of the discussion and evaluate them for mastery of the content discussed.

### *Activity Three: Connecting Landscape Photography to Poetry*

**Mastery Objective:** You will make connections between photographic images and the text of a poem. I will know you have mastered the concept by the reflective writing prompt you complete that explains, in detail, how a given image corresponds to a given poem.

The lesson begins with a Do Now: You might have heard the adage "A picture says a thousand words." Think about a photograph or image that is important to you. How does that image say a thousand words?

The first step of the lesson is to lead students through a reading and discussion of a poem in conjunction with a photograph. At this point, the teacher should focus on modeling the technique of drawing connections between photographic images and a poetic text. The poem is "Pines of the Carmel" by Esther Raab, which was originally written in 1953; it has been translated in the book *Thistles: Selected Poems of Esther Raab*. The URL for the accompanying photograph, an image of pine trees in Israel, can be found in Appendix A.

Reading the poem and comparing it to the photographic image, one can see that the speaker in the poem is contemplating the beauty of the pine trees and the way they have been shaped by their environment. The teacher should guide the students through a reading of the poem that draws attention to the imagery in the poem, asking the students

to delineate and elaborate upon the connections between the photograph and the imagery. For example, the teacher might want to explain how the speaker's descriptions of the trees in her poem are reflected in the photograph of the trees. After these connections are established, the teacher can then lead the students through a discussion of how analyzing the imagery in a poem illuminates the true meaning of the poem, which lies beyond and beneath the words used by the poet. At this point, the teacher should be doing most of the talking as he/she models the technique of comparing an image to a poem.

Now that students have seen the process of comparing text and image and are beginning to gain more confidence, it's time to examine a second example of poetry by a Middle Eastern woman. The process of reading and discussing is similar, but for the second poem and image, the teacher should actively elicit student contributions and responses. The second poem is "The Deluge and the Tree" by Palestinian poet Fadwa Tuqan, and though it, too, is a poem about trees, it has a much more complex political meaning and will provoke a great deal of discussion from the students as they try to make sense of it while also connecting it to an image. The image I chose to go along with this poem is a cross-section photograph of the roots of a tree. This image goes along with the poem because the poem explains the pervasiveness of roots beneath a tree that has been broken, explaining that the roots will triumphantly bring forth another tree in the future.

After reading this poem aloud, or asking a student volunteer to do so, the teacher should ask students to put, in their own words, the story the poem is telling: of a fallen tree whose roots persist. Next, the class should discuss the central tree/roots metaphor of the poem, specifically using the photographic image as a visual aid that will enhance understanding. When appropriate, the teacher can ask students to compare the Raab and Tuqan poems, using the students' prior knowledge of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict to draw attention to the differences in tone between the two poems. How, for instance, does each poem present the relationship between the speaker and her homeland? How is the love felt by Tuqan's speaker complicated by struggle?

At this point in the activity, the students should have mastered the skill and be able to work independently to connect poetry and photography. The writing prompt, then, is a third poem along with a photograph. Students have the choice between two poems: one by Esther Raab, an untitled poem which begins with the line "My heart, homeland, is with your dews" and one by Fadwa Tuqan: "Enough for Me." The same photograph corresponds to both poems, and a link to the image can be found in Appendix A. As a culminating activity, the students should be instructed to read the poem carefully as they contemplate the image, a photograph of a forest in the northern region of Israel/Palestine, then write a paragraph that connects at least three specific details in the poem to three specific details from the image. The teacher should assess the paragraphs to evaluate the supporting details provided, paying special attention to the level of engagement the student has taken with the poem.

#### *Activity Four: Poetry and Images of Home*

Mastery Objective: You will write poetry after having been inspired by images of home, however you define it; you will find these images independently using an image search engine. I will expect to see a poem that contains at least three examples of imagery that correspond to the image you found.

To engage students at the beginning of the period, the Do Now should ask students what kinds of visual images come to mind when they think of the word “home” or “homeland,” instructing them to make a list. The teacher should provide students with a few minutes to make the list, and then give individuals time to share their list with the students around them.

This activity builds on the previous one, in which students compared preselected poems by Israeli and Palestinian women to preselected images relating to those poems. In Activity Four, the starting point is a set of images of Philadelphia: the place we call home. For School of the Future, which has a citywide student body, I thought it would be appropriate to use iconic images of Philadelphia, along with some scenes from the neighborhoods of West Philadelphia, Mantua, and Fairmount Park, all of which are close to our school. In implementing this particular activity at another school, the teacher should use the images listed in Appendix B, or select their own images that might be more appropriate to the setting of the neighborhood in which the school resides. A variety of images is necessary so that students have a range of inspirational possibilities from which to base their poem.

Students should choose the image that inspires them the most, and then begin the writing process by thinking about how they can translate the image into words. Every student has a writing process that works best for them: some might want to write the poem from start to finish, while others might prefer to begin with a list of words and phrases and then build the poem from there. With regard to form, I typically instruct my own students to write a poem that is long enough to express the thought they want to express. The poem produced for this activity, then, can take any form with respect to length, rhyme scheme (or lack thereof), and rhythmic pattern. If students need remediation regarding any aspect of poetry writing or vocabulary, the teacher can tailor the writing activity to suit particular student needs.

In terms of time allotment, every student in the classroom will finish their poem at a different time during the class period, and some will need additional time at home to work. The teacher’s job is to manage the students in a way that maintains their momentum and to create an environment conducive to sharing in the classroom. As students finish, they should be encouraged to share their work with others in the classroom that have already finished, particularly those whose poems were inspired by the same image. Students will notice similarities and differences among their poems and

gain greater appreciation of the writing process as a result. As students finish their poems and turn them in, the teacher can evaluate the quality of writing in the poem, and specifically, the precision of the imagery as it relates to the image by which the poem was initially inspired.

A possibility for extending the learning experience of this activity is to direct students to use their own cameras to capture images of their own neighborhoods, and then write a poem that corresponds to the photograph they created. This extension activity can be developed into an art project of sorts: photographs can be published along with the poems written by the students and displayed to the entire learning community. Showing the poems and photographs to others will build positive feelings about the neighborhood and bolster community pride.

#### *Activity Five: "Rose Jam"*

**Mastery Objective:** You will examine imagery, point of view, setting, and theme in the short story "Rose Jam" in order to evaluate the relationship between Palestinian Arabs and African outsiders in Middle Eastern society. I will ascertain your understanding by your constructive participation in a class discussion.

The activity should begin with a review of literary terms: the Do Now should ask students to define imagery, point of view, theme, and setting. A more challenging Do Now activity could involve students reading the first paragraph of the story "Rose Jam" by Esther Raab and then subsequently identifying examples of imagery and making hypotheses about the setting, theme, and point of view of the story to come.

Before getting into the story, it's helpful to highlight that the story was written in 1933, between World War I and World War II, and approximately fifteen years before the establishment of the State of Israel. The story is set in Cairo, however, as the introduction to the story notes, "the situation of the young betrothed woman, Clementine, is typical of the life of Arab women in Palestine at that time" (Ben-Ezer 8). The point of view of the story, in relation to the author, is also quite interesting and should be discussed. Specifically, how important is it that the author was a Jewish woman of European descent, living in Palestine, while the protagonist is an Arab woman and an African slave figures prominently in the narrative? And in general, what does it mean to write from the point of view of someone different from you?

The story is quite short, so it can easily be read during a class period, either silently or out loud. The protagonist is a young, upper-class Arab woman named Clementine. On the day on which the story takes place, she is pleased that today is the "sweet day (Raab 37)," the day her household will be harvesting roses and making rose jam (hence the title). It is unclear when exactly the story takes place, but we can guess that it is somewhere in the past, possibly the nineteenth century. The story is replete with evocative and sensuous

imagery describing the setting and the delicious process of making the rose jam. Against this beautiful and serene backdrop, Mohammed appears. He is an African slave, probably from the Sudan, and he is described as having “legs like slender iron bars” and dark skin, the color of bronze (Raab 38). Clementine and Mohammed are sharing the task of bringing up from the basement jars for the jam. As Mohammed passes by Clementine, he pauses and quickly grabs her breasts. He stops when a shadow blocks the doorway and quickly moves away; it is unclear whether he would have taken things further. Clementine is shaken by the incident, but she says and does nothing in reaction or retaliation. Rather, she thinks about her impending marriage with a measure of fear and apprehension. The ending of the story is rather anticlimactic, with Clementine waking up from a nap and putting flowers in her hair while playing with her sister’s child.

After reading the story, discussing imagery and setting is a good place to start. The teacher should ask what images stood out for them and what impressions were conveyed by those images. What images are applied to the setting? Where else have students seen or experienced similar images? Regarding how people are described, why is it significant that Mohammed is described as having “iron fingers” and behaving like “a mad black insect” (Raab 38)? Analyzing imagery allows students to focus on very small and concrete details and apply their imagination to constructing meaning. Being able to start with these concrete details will instill confidence in the students’ ability to read and interpret literature.

Next, the discussion can progress through to point of view. The teacher can remind the class of the point-of-view activity they have already completed, particularly, how through completing the activity they discovered that different groups of people see the same situation differently depending on their preconceptions and beliefs. For the purposes of this story, the teacher should note that the story is told from Clementine’s point of view and bias, even though the story is structured with a third person limited point of view. Clementine is clearly the protagonist and Mohammed the antagonist, in traditional literary terms. Students should also begin to explore the political implications of a Jewish writer writing from the point of view of an Arab woman, as mentioned in the introductory paragraph above. The teacher might also want to encourage students to reimagine the story from Mohammed’s point of view. What motivates Mohammed to grab at Clementine, and what is he hoping to accomplish when he does so? What would he have done next, had he not been interrupted by the shadow at the door?

The discussion should culminate at the highest level, with time spent focusing on larger meanings: theme and the wider political and intercultural implications of the story. Given their newly created knowledge about the history of the modern Middle East, students should be able to frame the incident between Mohammed and Clementine in a political context, as a symbolic interaction in addition to a literal one. The class might be interested in the negative portrayal of an African man and a slave, and they might be surprised to find out about the existence of Black African slaves in Egypt. Finally, the

students should discuss “Rose Jam” as a story about the situation of women, in light of the fact that Clementine does not speak up about Mohammed’s molestation of her and goes on immediately to think about her fears of marriage and, more broadly, of adulthood and of men. High school students facing the onset of adult responsibilities will undoubtedly feel a personal connection with this aspect of the story.

In terms of evaluating mastery of the content through discussion, every student should be expected to make intelligent and well thought out contributions to the discussion. The teacher can call on individuals or allow the discussion to progress naturally: it all depends on the collective personality of the class and their willingness to take intellectual risks among their peers. If students are hesitant to discuss openly, the teacher can obviously adapt the lesson so that it includes a written analysis of the story.

## **Annotated Bibliography and Resources:**

"Balfour Declaration." Microsoft® Student 2007 [DVD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2006.

This article forms part of the Stations activity completed at the start of the unit. It contains a brief description of the Balfour Declaration, its historical context, and its effects.

Ben-Ezer, Ehud. *Sleepwalkers and Other Stories: the Arab in Hebrew Fiction*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1999.

This book is the source for some background information on Esther Raab as well as her short story "Rose Jam." The introductory material is a helpful resource for teachers lacking background information.

Blighted Row Homes. Digital image. *Philadelphia Neighborhoods: Behind the Bylines*. Temple University Journalism Department, 16 Nov. 2010. Web. 10 Aug. 2011. <<http://murltemple.blogspot.com/2010/11/logan-neglect-mars-neighborhood.html>>.

This photograph is to be used in Activity Four. The site which hosts the photograph contains several powerful images of neighborhood decay around different areas of Philadelphia, and the site—a blog—contains a great deal of well-written pieces on the issues faced by these neighborhoods.

Center City Philadelphia. Digital image. *Desktop Wallpapers*. Web. 20 Aug. 2011. <[http://wallpapers-diq.org/wallpapers/63/City\\_Center%2C\\_Philadelphia%2C\\_Pennsylvania.jpg](http://wallpapers-diq.org/wallpapers/63/City_Center%2C_Philadelphia%2C_Pennsylvania.jpg)>.

Image of Center City Philadelphia's skyline for use in Activity Four.

Cohen, Michael Joseph. "Zionism." Microsoft® Student 2007 [DVD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2006.

This article is to be used in the Stations activity. It is an overview of Zionism, describing how the movement began, what Zionism's goals are, and how it figures into the Modern Middle East as well as world politics.

Cohen, Shaul. "Arab-Israeli Conflict." Microsoft® Student 2007 [DVD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2006.

This article is a very important component of the Stations activity in that it contains a great deal of information about the Arab-Israeli conflict. This material will also play a role in the Point of View activity and can be referenced at that time as well.

Escobar, Aaron. *Tree Roots Cross Section*. Digital image. *File: Tree Roots Cross Section*. Wikipedia, 24 July 2007. Web. 28 Aug. 2011.

<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tree\\_roots\\_cross\\_section.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tree_roots_cross_section.jpg)>.

This article is used to depict the central metaphor of “The Deluge and the Tree” by Fadwa Tuqan. It is protected under Creative Commons licensing so it may be printed out as long as one gives credit where it is due.

"Fadwa Tuqan." Fadwa Tuqan, Palestinian Poet. The HyperTexts. Web. 13 May 2011.

<<http://www.thehypertexts.com/Fadwa%20Tuqan%20Palestinian%20Poet%20Poetry%20Picture%20Bio.htm>>.

This is the online source for biographical information about Fadwa Tuqan, as well as some of her poems. “The Deluge and the Tree” can be found on this page.

Joffe, Lawrence. "Obituary: Fadwa Tuqan." *The Guardian*. Guardian UK, 14 Dec. 2003. Web. 2 Mar. 2011.

<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2003/dec/15/guardianobituaries.israel>>.

This obituary on Fadwa Tuqan contains helpful biographical information, which I used in the creation of this unit, particularly in the activity that compared and contrasted her poetry and life to that of Esther Raab.

Keren, Efi. Israeli Forest with Pine Trees. Digital image. *Travel Images*. Travel-images.com. Web. 27 Aug. 2011. <<http://www.travel-images.com/photo-israel125.html>>.

This image, of an Israeli forest in the northern part of the country, is one of the few online images of pines known to be from Israel.

Raab, Esther, and Harold Schimmel. *Thistles: Selected Poems of Esther Raab*. Jerusalem: Ibis, 2002.

This book is a translation of Esther Raab’s work. The introduction provides a helpful overview of her life and the historical context in which she lived and worked.

Ragged Hand. *Sudden Squall*. Digital image. *Ragged Hand Photoblog*. Ragged Hand, 31 Dec. 2008. Web. 20 Apr. 2011. <[http://www.raggedhand.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/12/img\\_0363.jpg](http://www.raggedhand.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/12/img_0363.jpg)>.

This is another urban image, of Philadelphia’s iconic City Hall spire in a storm, which can be used in Activity Four.

Scharff, Paul. *West Philly Row Homes*. Digital image. *PBase.com*. Paul Scharff Photography. Web. <<http://www.pbase.com/paulscharffphotography/image/132598585>>.

This is an image of some historic row houses in West Philadelphia. It will be a familiar sight to learners at School of the Future, many of whom live in the neighborhood similar to the one pictured. It will be used in Activity Four, or another image may be substituted to better suit a different group of students.

WebGaza.net. "Fadwa Tuqan - Who Is Fadwa Tuqan?" Fadwa Tuqan - Who Is Fadwa Tuqan? WebGaza. Web. 19 Oct. 2011.

<[http://www.webgaza.net/palestine/people\\_profiles/Tuqan\\_Fadwa.htm](http://www.webgaza.net/palestine/people_profiles/Tuqan_Fadwa.htm)>.

This website, published by a group working to raise awareness of the plight of Palestinians, is a source of biographical and historical information about Fadwa Tuqan.

### **Appendix A: Links to Images for Activity Three**

Photograph of Pine Trees in Israel, for "Pines of the Carmel":

[http://www.agri.gov.il/download/pictures/P1010279\\_1.JPG](http://www.agri.gov.il/download/pictures/P1010279_1.JPG)

Photograph to go with The Deluge and the Tree: "Tree Roots Cross Section"

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tree\\_roots\\_cross\\_section.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tree_roots_cross_section.jpg)

Photograph for both poems:

<http://www.travel-images.com/photo-israel125.html>

### **Appendix B: Links to Images for Activity Four**

For Activity Four, feel free to use these images or find others which may be more fitting for the neighborhood or city where your particular school is situated.

Center City Philadelphia:

[http://wallpapers-diary.org/wallpapers/63/City\\_Center%2C\\_Philadelphia%2C\\_Pennsylvania.jpg](http://wallpapers-diary.org/wallpapers/63/City_Center%2C_Philadelphia%2C_Pennsylvania.jpg)

City Hall: (image title: "Sudden Squall")

<http://www.raggedhand.com/2008/12/>

West Philly Row Homes:

<http://www.pbase.com/paulscharffphotography/image/132598585>

Abandoned houses in Logan:

<http://murltemple.blogspot.com/2010/11/logan-neglect-mars-neighborhood.html>

## **Appendix C: Common Core Standards**

The state of Pennsylvania recently adopted the Common Core State Standards for use in English/Language Arts and Mathematics, along with several other academic content areas. This set of standards replaces the previous set of standards, which were known as the Pennsylvania State Standards in Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education's website, exclusive use of Common Core will be fully implemented within the next couple of years. At any rate, the following Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts will be addressed in this curriculum unit:

### Standards for Reading Literature, Grade 9-10:

RL.1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RL.2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text

RL.6. Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

### Standards for Writing, Grade 9-10:

W.4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W.6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

### Standards for Speaking and Listening, Grade 9-10:

SL.1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.