Recommended Books for High School
* = a Middle East Outreach Council (MEOC) book award winner

Fiction and Poetry

Ten Things I Hate About Me by Randa Abdel-Fattah
An Australian teenager of Lebanese descent struggles to reconcile her conflicting identities. **Combine this with the film "Muslims: An In-Depth Look at What It Means To Be a Muslim in the 21st Century."

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

The Language of Baklava by Diana Abu-Jaber
This coming of age story explores the cultural tensions faced by a young Jordanian-American girl and her family. Food plays a central role.

A Child in Palestine by Naji al-Ali
These satirical cartoons criticize the Israeli occupation, corruption of the regimes in the region, and the suffering of the Palestinian people.

The 99 by Naif Al-Mutawa
This comic book features a team of superheroes based on Islamic culture and religion.

Zahra’s Paradise by Amir and Khalil
Zahra’s Paradise is a graphic novel set in Iran after the elections of 2009. It brings together fiction and real people and events and has been compared with Persepolis.

The Bridge on the Drina by Ivo Andric
This internationally-acclaimed Bosnian novel describes (as a series of short stories set in different time periods) a small town in Bosnia during the years of Ottoman rule. A teacher can easily use one or two stories, rather than the whole novel.

Forgotten Fire by Adam Bagdasarian
Although the book is a work of fiction, it is based on the true experiences of the author’s great-uncle, who was an Armenian teenager during the genocide of 1915.
The Little Black Fish by Samad Behrangi
*This Iranian short story is made to be read aloud. It has many different levels of meaning - about breaking out of one’s narrow environment and learning about the wider world. Even more interesting is the fact that the author, a school teacher might have been murdered in 1968 at the age of 29 by the shah’s secret police because of the way he encouraged his elementary school students to think freely and look at the social problems of their country. This small book also is written half in Persian, so kids can see what the language looks like and how the cover of a Middle Eastern book is the back of an American one (since they write from right to left).*

The Shepherd’s Granddaughter by Anne Laurel Carter
*Palestinian teen Amani tends her extended family’s sheep until Israeli settlers encroach on their land. The family’s resistance – with the help of sympathetic Israelis – forms the underpinning of this coming-of-age story.*

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

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini
*This well-known novel not only explores the impact of the Taliban regime on Afghan society, but also treats the way that the Afghan expatriate community tries to adapt to life in America.*

Emails from Scheherazade by Mohja Kahf
*This is a book of poetry describing Arab immigrants to America and their experiences.*

The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf by Mohja Kahf
*This novel tells about a Muslim girl growing up and entering adulthood in Indiana, “exploring the fault lines between ‘Muslim’ and ‘American.’”*

*Wanting Mor by Rukhsana Khan
An Afghani girl with a cleft palette struggles to make a life in post-Taliban Afghanistan.*

*The Apprentice's Masterpiece: A Story of Medieval Spain by Melanie Little
A young adult novel set in 14th-century Spain tells the story of a family with a secret at a time when the Inquisition brings intolerance and torture. Written in elegant free verse, this is a dramatic story set in a troubling time.*

*Figs and Fate by Elsa Marston
This is a wonderful collection of short stories about teens growing up in the Arab world.*

Santa Claus in Baghdad and Other Stories about Teens in the Arab World by Elsa Marston
*This is a wonderful collection of short stories. (The title story, “Santa Claus in Baghdad,” can be compared with “The Gift of the Magi.” Be sure to see the film – below – made from the former story.)*
Ismailia Eclipse by Khaled Mattawa
This is a collection of poems by a Libyan-American writer.

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

Exit Wounds by Rutu Modan
In this graphic novel, a young Israeli man searches for his father, who may or may not have been killed in a suicide bombing attack.

The Feminine Art by Weam Namou
Set in the U.S. and Iraq in the early 1990s, the book deals with issues of love, arranged marriages, and the search for happiness.

The Flag of Childhood: Poems from the Middle East; * Nineteen Varieties of Gazelle; The Space between Our Footsteps (high school) by Naomi Shihab Nye
These three books of poetry are by Middle Eastern poets.

My Name is Red by Orhan Pamuk
A non-traditional mystery set in the 15th century Ottoman Empire. The author is a famous Turkish writer.

The Essential Rumi by Jalal al-Din Rumi
This is a collection of the poetry by Rumi, the great 13th century Persian poet.

My Name is Aram by William Saroyan
A coming-of-age story set in an Armenian immigrant community in the early twentieth century.

Damascus Nights by Rafik Schami
One of the city’s greatest storytellers is struck dumb, and his friends must tell him stories from myth, history and contemporary Syria to reawaken his tongue.

A Hand Full of Stars by Rafik Schami
A Syrian teenager, long before the current troubles, learns that: “If you tell the truth in Syria, you must pay with your life.”

Habibi by Craig Thompson
Set in a fictional Islamic fairytale landscape, this graphic novel tells a story that extends across ancient Middle Eastern geographies, religions, mythologies, and migrations—containing both Arab and Christian histories—to tell about Dodola, a runaway child bride, and Zam, the orphan she rescues in the slave market where they first meet.

* Alif the Unseen by G. Willow Wilson
This is a witty fantasy as well as a political thriller, which teaches about Islam, jinns, gender relations, Gulf politics, the importance of freedom with responsibility, and much more. It is a
book for high school students who loved Harry Potter but want to explore a gritty fantasy world of both magical and internet wizardry, grounded in the issues and complexities of the Middle East. Note: Some strong language and sexual content.

**Cairo** by G. Willow Wilson and M.K. Perker
This graphic novel is a modern fable set on the streets of the Egypt. A stolen hookah and a genie change the lives of five strangers forever.

*A Bottle in the Gaza Sea* by Valérie Zenatti
Inspired by a true story, A Bottle in the Gaza Sea is the story of Tal Levine, an Israeli teenager who longs to strike up a correspondence with "someone on the other side." She convinces her brother, who is serving in the Israel Defense Forces along the Gaza border, to throw a bottle containing a message into the Gaza Sea in the hopes that someone will pick it up and respond. In this way, she meets "Gazaman," a Palestinian.

**Personal Accounts**

**I Want to Get Married: One Wannabe Bride's Misadventures with Handsome Houdinis, Technicolor Grooms, Morality Police, and Other Mr. Not Quite Rights** by Ghada Abdel Aal
This is a young Egyptian woman’s humorous blog about her adventures in “dating.”

*A Game for Swallows: To Die, to Leave, to Return* by Zeina Abirached
This graphic “novel” is a compelling memoir of a young girl and her brother cared for by neighbors when they are separated from their parents during the civil war in Lebanon.

**Return to Childhood: The Memoir of a Modern Moroccan Woman** by Leila Abouzeid
This is the memoir of a woman growing up during the time of Morocco’s struggle for independence.

*The Girl Who Fell to Earth: A Memoir* by Sophia Al-Maria
This is a great coming of age memoir about a girl caught between two worlds: life in Washington (home of her American mother) and life in the Gulf (home of her Qatari Bedouin father). It is an engaging story, humorous in its contrasting of two very different ways of life and insight into the similarities of the human experience.

**Thura’s Diary** by Thura Al-Windawi
A girl describes her life in Iraq during the 2003 U.S. military action.

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

**If You Could Be My Friend** ed. by Litsa Boudalika
Two teenagers, Mervet Akram Sha‘ban and Galit Fink, one Palestinian and one Israeli teenager,
corresponded with each other for three years when “introduced” by a Belgian film director, producing a documentary in Israel.

* **Jerusalem: Chronicles from the Holy City** by Guy Delisle
  This graphic “novel” gives an account of daily life in contemporary Israel by an outsider who is unsentimental but drawn in, bemused but empathetic. Delisle, a Canadian, sees and wonders at the complications, absurdities, and joys of living in East Jerusalem, and explores other communities in Israel and the Occupied Territories.

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

* **The Illustrator's Notebook** by Mohieddin Ellabbad
  The book is an award-winning autobiography (with photographs and drawings) of an Egyptian illustrator focusing on his art and how art is connected with his personal experience and the broader context of Egypt’s history.

**Children of War: Voices of Iraqi Refugees** by Deborah Ellis
  This book provides an opportunity for students to read interviews with Iraqi refugee children and see how the war has affected their lives.

**Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak** by Debora Ellis
  This book is a collection of accounts of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by children ages 8-18.

**Waltz with Bashir: A Lebanon War Story** by Ari Folman and David Polonski
  This graphic novel is based on the award-winning movie, a reconstruction of a soldier’s experience during Israel’s war in Lebanon.

* **Beyond Bullets: A Photo Journal of Afghanistan** by Rafal Gerszak
  This book documents photo-journalist Rafal Gerszak’s experiences during the year that he spent embedded with American forces in Afghanistan. However, it is much more than a war story. There are textures and layers to the book as the author struggles to get beneath the surface and reach a deeper understanding of life in Afghanistan. Overall, the book is an insightful, highly personal reflection.

* **How to Understand Israel in 60 Days or Less** by Sarah Glidden
  This graphic "novel" is a true account of the Jewish author’s "birthright" tour of Israel and her attempt to understand the complex history of the nation.

**Encounters with the Middle East: True Stories of People and Culture That Help You Understand the Region** by Nesreen Khaskan and Jim Bowman
  The book contains different (and readable) stories about Westerners' encounters with the Middle East.

**The Photographer** by Didier Lefevre and Emmanuel Guibert
Part photojournalism and part graphic memoir, The Photographer tells the story of a 1986 Doctors Without Borders mission which traveled into northern Afghanistan by horse and donkey train at the height of the Soviet occupation.

Baghdad Journal: An Artist in Occupied Iraq by Steve Mumford
In this graphic “novel,” the artist documents the everyday scenes of Iraq in watercolors and drawings painting a human side of the war. Mumford draws and paints daily activities of American platoons and Baghdad residents.

* A Fort of Nine Towers: An Afghan Family Story by Qais Akbar Omar
This memoir describes growing up in the impossibly difficult conditions of Afghanistan in the 1980s and 90s. As the author’s family attempts to flee to safety during a nine-year period of time, the boy encounters different Afghan tribes and cultures and learns to appreciate the diversity of - as well as the challenges – of his country.

Palestine by Joe Sacco

Persepolis and Persepolis II by Marjane Satrapi
The two-volume memoir in graphic novel style describes the author’s childhood during the Iranian Revolution, her schooling abroad during the Iran-Iraq War, and eventual return to her homeland. Note: She describes a sexual encounter in book 2. **See the acclaimed animated film version (in the Multi-Media section below).

This book is a collection of interviews and photos with Palestinians in the AWest bank’s refugee camps.

When I Was a Soldier by Valerie Zenatti
This memoir describes a teenage Israeli girl’s required two years of service in the military.

* Bye Bye Babylon: Beirut 1975-1979 by Lamia Ziade
This is a graphic novel/memoir of the author’s experiences as a child (age 7-11) in war-torn Lebanon. It is fun and colorful but also has historical context added to the memoir. The book sheds light on the transformation of everyday life in Beirut during the 1970s conflict.

Non-Fiction/Reference

* Al-Kindi: The Father of Arab Philosophy by Tony Abboud
This book is part of a 6-volume series "Great Muslim Philosophers and Scientists of the Middle Ages."
Suleyman and the Ottoman Empire by John Addison
A brief overview of the subject along with a series of short, primary source documents.

Picturing Iran: Art, Society and Revolution Ed. by Shiva Balaghi and Lynn Gumpert
A book showing modern Iranian visual culture of the 1960s and 1970s (just before and during the revolution). Some of the posters shown in the book would be useful in helping students to understand the reasons behind the revolution.

Saddam Hussein: A Biography by Shiva Balaghi
The recent biography (December 2005) describes the life of the former Iraqi leader.

Although written at a middle school level, this beautifully illustrated book contains information – and illustrations of interest to high school students too. It is comprised of short articles on developments in the medieval Muslim world: from advances in medicine, math, and science to the transmission of ancient knowledge to the development of military bands.

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

* Al-Khwarizmi: The Inventor of Algebra by Corona Brezina
This book is part of a 6-volume series "Great Muslim Philosophers and Scientists of the Middle Ages."

This well-written account of the women’s rights movement in Iran does not only cover developments in 2005 but provides an overview of women’s life throughout the history of modern Iran.

The Essential Koran, translated and edited by Thomas Cleary
This is an introductory selection of readings from the Muslim holy book.

* Encyclopedia of Muslim-American History, ed. by Edward E. Curtis IV
This illustrated two-volume encyclopedia includes some 300 articles covering historical and contemporary issues, events, people, court cases, themes, and activism relating to Muslim-American history. The reference also includes 50 original documents, a master chronology and an extensive bibliography.
Democracy in the Middle East, edited by John C. Davenport. 
*From The World in Focus series, the book offers a variety of views on the prospects for democracy in the Middle East and the U.S. role in promoting democratic developments.*

Muhammad and the Arab Empire by John Duckworth
*A brief overview of the subject along with a series of short, primary source documents.*

* Iran: Opposing Viewpoints, ed. by Laura K. Egendorf
*The collection of articles offers many different perspectives on modern Iran. The book addresses such issues as whether Iran is a threat to global security, how the U.S. should respond to Iran, and the status of human rights. (The purpose is to show students different sides of the same issue.)*

* A History of the Muslim World to 1405: The Making of a Civilization by Vernon O. Egger
*This book is written in a clear style, presents sophisticated themes, avoids clichés common in introductory works, and is accessible to the high school audience.*

Islam by Jamal J. Elias
*This is an overview of the Muslim religion, essential in understanding modern developments in the Middle East.*

The Everything Middle East Book by Jacob M. Fellure
*This is an easy-to-read overview of Middle Eastern nations, histories, and conflicts.*

The Middle East and the Islamic World Reader, edited by Marvin E. Gettleman and Stuart Schaar
*This collection of documents spans Islam and Middle Eastern history. (Over half the book is on 20th century conflicts and issues.)*

The Waiting Room (online at Cartoon Movement) by Sarah Glidden
http://www.cartoonmovement.com/comic/10
*Written in a documentary style, Sarah Glidden’s 20-page cartoon account tells of Syria’s displaced Iraqis, the largest urban refugee population ever.*

* Women in the Middle East: Tradition and Change by Ramsay M. Harik and Elsa Marston
*This comprehensive look at Middle Eastern women and their struggle to incorporate both tradition and change in their daily lives is a major contribution to resources on this topic of wide interest. Of particular note, the revised edition includes two chapters that cover the experience of women in Afghanistan and women’s health issues region-wide.*

* Celebrate Ramadan and Eid Al-Fitr with Praying Fasting, and Charity (National Geographic, “Holidays Around the World” series) by Deborah Heiligman
*Although it is at a low reading level, this book is even interesting to adults due to its great pictures and clear explanations. (It is National Geographic book, so the photography is amazing!)*
Mecca by Shahrukh Husain
*From the Holy Cities series, this is a basic introduction to the city of Mecca.*

* The Arab World Thought of It: Inventions, Innovations, and Amazing Facts by Saima Hussain
This is a compelling book with “sufficient text to explain the beautiful photography.” Students in intermediate grades, middle school, and even high school will love learning about developments in the medieval Islamic world that affect our lives today. They will be intrigued by stories – and photos – showing how soap was invented, how the scalpel was developed for use in surgery, how wind was first harnessed for power, and many others. Teachers will love the accompanying map, timeline, and index, which make the book useful and informative as well as fun.

Understanding Islam and the Muslims by Islamic Affairs Department of the Embassy of Saudi Arabia
*An introduction to Islam in a brief booklet with bright photographs.*

The Book of Jewish Belief by Louis Jacobs
*This well-organized, thorough book provides short descriptions of all aspects of Jewish beliefs.*

The Book of Jewish Practice by Louis Jacobs
*This book provides short, clear descriptions of Jewish customs, holidays, and practices.*

* The Iranian Revolution by Brendan January
*This well-written book, part of the Pivotal Moments That Changed the World series, focuses on the Iranian revolution of 1979.*

* Avicenna (Ibn Sinna): Muslim Physician and Philosopher of the 11th Century by Aishe Khan
*This book is part of a 6-volume series "Great Muslim Philosophers and Scientists of the Middle Ages."

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

* Iraq by Dale Lightfoot

Islam: Faith, Culture, and History by Paul Lunde
The book is an overview of Islamic religion, history, and culture.

* Mosque by Daud Macaulay
*The book describes the construction of a 16th century Ottoman mosque.*
Inside Story: A 16th Century Mosque by Fiona MacDonald and Mark Bergin
Detailed illustrations and clear explanations make this a terrific resource book with information about the building, religious background, and history surrounding the construction of a mosque.

* Teen Life in the Middle East, edited by Ali Akbar Mahdi
This compilation offers insights into the interests, family and social lives, religious practices, and culture of teens in twelve profiled countries.

* The Compassionate Warrior: Abd el-Kader of Algeria by Elsa Marston
This is a well-written account, easy to read account of a 19th century Algerian freedom fighter, Abd el-Kader, who won respect in the West for his humanitarian values and compassionate policies during the struggle against French colonialism.

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

The Arab Americans by Alixa Naff
This book describes the experiences and contributions of Arab-Americans.

The Ottomans: Empire of Faith by Dr. David Nicolle
A comprehensive history of the Ottoman Empire with maps and illustrations.

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

The African and Middle Eastern World, 600-1500 by Randall L.Pouwels
A history of medieval Africa and the Middle East with beautiful photographs and maps.

* Albucasis (Abu Al-Qasim Al-Zahrawi): Renowned Muslim Surgeon of the 10th Century
by Fred Ramen
This book is part of a 6-volume series "Great Muslim Philosophers and Scientists of the Middle Ages.”

This wonderfully detailed reference book makes it easy to look up anything that one needs to know about Judaism. It may be a bit challenging for beginning-level students but very useful for advanced ones – or for teachers.

* Historical Atlas of Islam by Malise Ruthven and Azim Nanji
This beautifully illustrated history of Islam provides a broad overview of the economic, social, political, and cultural history of the Islamic world from the birth of the Prophet Muhammad to the present. Brief essays address pivotal moments and movements and eras, and color maps and photographs effectively complement the text throughout.

**Footnotes in Gaza** by Joe Sacco
This is a journalistic graphic “novel” of an Israeli massacre in the Palestinian town of Rafah during the Suez War and life in Gaza today.

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

**Approaching the Qur'an** by Michael Sells
A copy of the Muslim holy book, it also comes with commentaries as well as an Audio CD of Qur’an readings.

**Foods of Iran** by Barbara Sheen
This book has lovely photographs and explanations about Iranian food.

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

**Every Man in this Village Is a Liar** by Megan K. Stack
A reporter describes her experiences covering Middle Eastern wars from 2001.

**Early Islam** by Desmond Stewart
Part of the "Great Ages of Man" series, this book has vivid pictures and maps to illustrate the history of Islam during medieval times.

* **The Middle East Today** by Dona J. Stewart
This book gives political, geographical, and cultural perspectives of the Middle East today.

* **Islamic Design: A Genius for Geometry** by Daud Sutton
Focusing on Islamic geometric patterns, simple and complex, man-made and in nature, this book offers unique insight into Islamic culture.

**Pride of Baghdad** by Brian K. Vaughan and Niko Henrichon
This graphic “novel” is based on the true story of a group of lions that escaped from the Baghdad zoo during the American bombing in 2003. It asks questions about liberty: whether it can be given or must be earned, whether it is better to die free or live in captivity. a refugee camp, tells of two Afghani girls who share one pair of sandals.

* **Living through the Arab-Israeli War since 1948** by Alex Woolf
This is an excellent resource on the Arab Israeli conflict because of its honest attempt to present both sides. It is also very readable, making a complex subject accessible to a high school audience.

* A Brief History of Saudi Arabia by James Wynbrandt
In recent years, Saudi Arabic has experienced changes that have both altered the internal structure of the country and affected its foreign relations. This book manages to steer an even course through a subject that is often treated with skepticism or defensiveness.

Medieval Cuisine of the Islamic World by Lilia Zaouali
This book gives a culinary history of the Islamic world and provides recipes.

Videos

Persepolis (from the memoirs of Marjane Satrapi)
This animated true story includes both the author’s graphic novels in the Persepolis series. It tells of the author’s youth in Iran just before and during the revolution, her struggle to adapt to life in Vienna when her parents send her to study abroad during the Iran-Iraq War, and her return to Iran as a young adult. (For reasons which become clear at the end of the story, it is in FRENCH with English subtitles). 96 minutes.

Promises
“Promises” presents a powerful portrait of seven Palestinian and Israeli children who live in and around Jerusalem. As filmmaker B.Z. Goldberg, who was raised in Israel, notes, "They live no more than 20 minutes from each other, but they are each growing up in very separate worlds." “Promises” doesn’t attempt to explain them, but lets the kids speak for themselves. The results are funny, sad, and ultimately quite profound.

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