Recommended Books for Elementary School - Intermediate

* = a Middle East Outreach Council (MEOC) book award winner

**Literature: Fiction, Poetry**

**The Little Black Fish** by Samad Behrangí
This Iranian short story is made to be read aloud to older elementary school children through adults. 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).

**Nasreddin Hodja** by Mehmet Ali Birant
This is a collection of short (often humorous) anecdotes about an early 13th century Turkish figure. It’s as interesting for its beautiful Ottomanstyle illustrations as for the stories. (Note: Nasreddin Hodja is called Goha in the Arab world and Mullah Nasreddin in the Persian world. The stories are beloved classics in the entire region.)

**Amina and Muhammad’s Special Visitor** by Diane Turnage Burgoyne and Penny Williams Yaqub
This children’s book describes family life in Saudi Arabia. It also includes background information for teachers.

**The Shepherd’s Grand-Daughter** by Anne Laurel Carter
A Palestinian girl is trying to keep alive the shepherding tradition in her family. This work focuses on conflict between Palestinians and Israelis in a non-violent context.

**A Stone in My Hand** by Cathryn Clinton
A story of an 11-year-old Palestinian girl who has to deal with her father’s disappearance in Israel and her 12-year-old brother’s desire for revenge.

**Tales Told in Tents** by Sally Pomme Clayton and Sophie Herxheimer
This is a collection of short stories from Central Asia.

* **Extra Credit** by Andrew Clements
A U.S. sixth grade agrees to an extra credit assignment involving writing to a pen pal in another country and so she meets Sadeed Bayat and his sister Meriem in rural Afghanistan.
The Hungry Coat: A Tale from Turkey by Demi
A man is judged by his appearance.

* Celebrating Ramadan by Diane Hoyt Goldsmith, with photographs by Lawrence Migdale
This photo-essay follows a fourth-grade Muslim boy living in New Jersey as he celebrates the holy month of Ramadan.

Tales from Ancient Egypt by George Hart
This is a short, nicely illustrated book of ancient Egyptian folk tales.

* The House of Wisdom by Florence Parry Heide and Judith Heide Gilliland
A young boy in 9th century Baghdad (the golden age of Islamic civilization) is inspired by his scholar father to go on a search for knowledge and wisdom.

Sami and the Time of the Troubles by Florence Parry Heide and Judith Heide Gilliland
This haunting and beautifully illustrated story tells of a 10-year-old boy during the fighting in Beirut, Lebanon.

* Lugalbanda, The Boy Who Got Caught Up in a War by Kathy Henderson, illustrated by Jane Ray
This five thousand-year-old story from the land of ancient Sumer, now Iraq, focuses on the boy Lugalbanda who assists his father, the king, during a military campaign.

Folk Tales of Egypt by Denys Johnson-Davies and Tarek Mossad
This is a book of folk tales from Egypt.

Goha by Denys Johnson-Davies
This is a brief, illustrated book of Arab folk tales. (Note: Goha is called Nasreddin Hodja in the Turkish world. The stories are beloved classics in the entire region.)

Goha, the Wise Fool by Denys Johnson-Davies and Hag Hamdy Hany
This is a brief, illustrated book of Arab folk tales. (Note: Goha is called Nasreddin Hodja in the Turkish world. The stories are beloved classics in the entire region.)

* Never Say A Mean Word Again: A Tale from Medieval Spain by Jacqueline Jules, illustrated by Durga Yael Bernhard
Based on a true story, this book tells the story of a friendship between a Jewish boy and a Muslim boy in medieval Spain.

* A Little Piece of Ground by Elizabeth Laird
A 12-year-old Palestinian boy tries to find a place to play soccer.

* The Storytellers by Ted Lewin
The book, set in Morocco, introduces us to Abdul and his grandfather, a storyteller.
* **The Olive Tree** by Elsa Marston
*Two children in the Middle East have to learn to share the fruit of an olive tree that stands between them.*

* **The Best Eid Ever** by Asma Mobin-Uddin and Laura Jacobsen
*This is a lovely story about a girl trying to enjoy celebrating an important Muslim holiday despite the fact that her parents are away. She meets up with two refugee girls and discovers the joy of giving.*

*Sitti’s Secrets* by Naomi Shihab Nye
*A girl raised in the US goes to visit her grandmother in a Palestinian village.*

* **The Turtles of Oman** by Naomi Shihab Nye
*An Omani boy struggles to leave behind his loved ones and his life in Oman when his parents decide to move to the U.S. to attend graduate school. Anyone who has ever moved – or met anyone who has – will relate to this wonderfully-written story.*

* **The Camel in the Sun** by Griffin Ondaatje, illustrated by Linda Wolfsgruber
*The story is based on a hadith told about the Prophet Muhammad, who rebukes a man for mistreating his camel. The story deals with the issue of cruelty to animals.*

* **The Hundredth Name** by Shulamith Levey Oppenheim and Michael Hays
*This nicely illustrated story tells of friendship and Muslim faith set in a village in Egypt.*

**Abuelita’s Secret Matzahs** by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso
*A boy learns the truth about why his family does things differently from his friends when he discovers that he is of Jewish heritage. He learns the history of how his family escaped from Spain to the “new world” and keep their identity hidden. This book is about heritage and acceptance of who you are.*

* **Folktales from Turkey: From Agri to Zelve** by Serpil Ural
*This is a collection of Turkish folktales.*

**Watermelons, Walnuts and the Wisdom of Allah and Other Tales of the Hoca** by Barbara Walker
*This book is collection of Turkish tales about the legendary Nasreddin Hoca (called Goha in Arabic). The book has short, humorous stories with illustrations.*

* **Four Feet, Two Sandals** by Karen Lynn Williams, Khadra Mohammed, and Doug Chayka
*A beautiful story (also beautifully illustrated) about two Afghani girls living in a refugee camp, who each claim one sandal of a pair given out during a clothing distribution.*
Personal Account or Biography

* **Golda Meir: A Strong, Determined Leader** by David A Adler  
  *This biography describes the early life of Golda Meir, before she became an important Israeli leader.*

Muhammad by Vedat Dalokay  
*This beautifully illustrated book describes the beliefs of the Muslim religion.*

Sister Shako and Kolo the Goat: Memories of My Childhood in Turkey by Vedat Dalokay  
*The author writes of his childhood in eastern Turkey.*

Muhammad by Demi  
*This book introduces children to the Muslim religion.*

* **Traveling Man: The Journey of Ibn Battuta, 1325-1354** by James Rumford  
  *The true story of the travels of 14th century Arab explorer Ibn Battuta.*

* **The Travels of Benjamin of Tudela** by Uri Shulevitz  
  *This book is a true account of the twelfth-century journeys of a Jewish traveler throughout the then-known world, including Constantinople, Jerusalem, Baghdad, Persia, and Egypt.*

* **Alia's Mission: Saving the Books of Iraq** by Mark Alan Stamaty  
  *This graphic novel tells the true story of a woman's struggle to save the books in the Basra library during the 2003 war in Iraq. It's a simple story, but the graphic novel style would appeal to some upper elementary and middle school readers.*

Other Non-Fiction

Islamic Spain by Rosalie F. Baker and Charles F. Baker  
*This book has articles for kids on the history of medieval Spain.*

  *This is a wonderfully readable book about medieval achievements in the Muslim world. It is divided into short sections on topics such as paper, math, band music, etc.*

* **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.*
* **Lebanon A-Z: A Middle Eastern Mosaic** by Marijean Boueri, Jill Boutros, and Joanne Sayad
  
  This is an introduction to Lebanon's history and culture seen through the eyes of an eleven-year-old boy and his friends.

**Judaism** by Douglas Charing

This book provides an introduction to Jewish beliefs and traditions.

* **Kings and Carpenters: One Hundred Bible Land jobs You Might Have Praised or Panned** by Laurie Coulter and Mary Newbigging
  
  This is a great introduction to archeology and an overview of jobs that existed during biblical times.

**Judaism** by DK Eyewitness Books

Discover the history, faith, and culture that have shaped the modern Jewish world. With over 50 million copies sold in 88 countries and in 36 languages, Eyewitness Books are truly the ultimate visual information encyclopedias for the 21st Century. Carrying on the tradition of integrating words and pictures, these three new titles in the Eyewitness series are timely editions to any library.

**Neve Shalom Wahat Al-Salam: Oasis of Peace** by Laurie Dolphin

Despite its ponderous title, it is a good book with vivid photographs. It describes the lives of two ten-year-old boys living in a community in Israel in which Jews and Palestinians live together.

**Customs of the Arabian Gulf: Drawings and Paintings by School Children in Bahrain and Dubai** by Bahia Fakhro and Ann Walcro

The book contains artwork by Arab children and descriptions of their content.

**Iran: The People** by April Fast

This book describes and shows lifestyles in Iran.

**Iraq: The Culture** by April Fast

This book describes and shows the culture of Iraq.

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**Ramadan** by Suhaib Hamid Ghazi and Omar Rayyan

The book describes the Muslim holiday of Ramadan.

**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 vividly describes the customs and beliefs surrounding the Muslim month of fasting.
* Celebrating Ramadan by Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith
Bright color photographs help tell the story of a 4th grade Muslim boy living in New Jersey as he celebrates Ramadan.

Celebrating Norouz (Persian New Year) by Yassaman Jalali
Description of the most popular Iranian holiday, Persian New Year, celebrated March 21st, the first day of Spring.

The Most Magnificent Mosque by Ann Jungman and Shelley Fowles
A beautifully illustrated book about medieval Spain and its Muslim heritage.

Muslim Child: Understanding Islam through Stories and Poems by Rukhsana Khan
A collection of Muslim stories with sidebars explaining important terms and issues.

* Mosque by David Macaulay.
Macauley’s book provides step-by-step details and diagrams of the construction of a fictional sixteenth century Ottoman mosque. As the author walks the reader through the engineering and artistry of the structure, he reveals the mosque’s diverse functions in the community.

A 16th Century Mosque by Fiona MacDonald and Mark Bergin
This book describes medieval architecture, culture, and religion in the 16th century Ottoman Empire.

Passover by David F. Marx
This book gives religious and historical information about the Jewish Passover holiday.

Magid Fasts for Ramadan by Mary Matthews and E.B. Lewis
An 8-year-old Egyptian boy wants to fast like the grown-ups during the Muslim month of Ramadan.

Foods of Iran by Lawrence McKay Jr.
Beautiful photographs and clear prose show a lot about Iranian culture through a description of the food. There are recipes, cultural descriptions, and details about how the food is grown and sold.

Wonders of Persia by Nazli Irani Monahan
The book describes the history of Iran from ancient times to the present.

Egypt: The Culture by Arlene Muskovitch
This book describes and shows the culture of Egypt.

* Islam by Sue Penney
From the “Introducing Religions” series, this gives an overview of the Muslim faith.
Judaism by Sue Penney
Discover the rich cultural background behind this major world religion. Find out where Judaism originated, trace its history, and explore the meanings.

When the Nazis occupied Paris, no Jew was safe from arrest and deportation. Few Parisians were willing to risk their own lives to help. Yet during that perilous time, many Jews found refuge in an unlikely place--the sprawling complex of the Grand Mosque of Paris. Not just a place of worship but a community center, this hive of activity was an ideal temporary hiding place for escaped prisoners of war and Jews of all ages, especially children. Beautifully illustrated and thoroughly researched.

Foods of Iran by Barbara Sheen
Beautiful photographs and clear prose show a lot about Iranian culture through a description of the food. There are recipes, cultural descriptions, and details about how the food is grown and sold.

Israel: The Culture by Debbie Smith
This book describes and shows the culture of Israel.

Lands, Peoples, and Communities of the Middle East by Juanita Will Soghikian and Penny Williams Yaqub
This is an introductory work-study text.

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.

Seven Wonders of the Ancient Middle East by Michael Woods and Mary B. Woods
A nicely illustrated book about the ancient Middle East. It provides history of the societies of the time.

The Tomb of King Tutankhamen: Unearthing Ancient Worlds by Michael Woods and Mary B. Woods
Nicely illustrated with great photographs, this book gives a lot of history about King Tutankhamen as well as ancient Egypt in general.

* A Brief History of Saudi Arabia by James Wynbrandt
This book is a history of Saudi Arabia from early times to the present.