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

Fiction and Poetry

* Where the Streets Had a Name by Randa Abdel-Fattah
  This is a funny and engaging book about two Palestinian thirteen-year-olds, one Muslim and one Christian, who make a complicated journey to their ancestral homeland.

The Son of a Duck Is a Floater by Primrose Arnander, Ashkhain Skipwith, and Kathryn Lamb
  The book contains Arab sayings with English equivalents.

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).

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.)

* Samir and Yonatan by Daniella Carmi
  A Palestinian and an Israeli boy meet in a hospital.

The Shepherd’s Grand-Daughter by Anne Laurel Carter
  A Palestinian girl is trying to keep alive the shepherding tradition in her family.

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.
**Extra Credit** by Andrew Clements
Abby Carson is a sixth grade student in rural Illinois whose head is everywhere but her schoolwork. In order to be spared the embarrassment of being left behind a grade, she 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. As their friendship flourishes, problems arise on both sides.

**Ayat Jamilah: Beautiful Signs**
This book is a treasury of Islamic wisdom, containing pictures, folk tales, poems, and Quaran readings from the Muslim world.

**The Breadwinner** by Deborah Ellis
This book is about Parvana, an 11-year-old girl in Afghanistan under the Taliban who has to disguise herself as a boy to support her family. (See the sequel - Parvana's Journey - below.)

**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.

**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.)

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

**When the Animals Saved Earth: An Eco-Fable** by Alexis York Lumbard and Demi
This multi-cultural fable was inspired by a 10th century Iraqi Muslim fable, translated by a Jewish rabbi at the behest of a Christian king.
* **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.)

**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).

* **Habibi** by Naomi Shihab Nye  
A girl, Liyana, moves with her family to Palestine, a place that Liyana has never seen. Her friendship with Omer, a Jewish boy, helps her adjustment to a strange land, but the friendship is forbidden in a land torn by conflict.

**My Name is Aram** by William Saroyan  
This is 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.”

* **Shooting Kabul** by N.H. Senzai  
An 11-year-old Afghani boy struggles to adjust to life in the U.S. - and tries to continue the search for his missing younger sister - after fleeing his war-torn country.

**The Art of the Turkish Tale** by Barbara K. Walker and Helen Siegl  
This is a collection of Turkish literature.

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

* A Game for Swallows: To Die, To Leave, To Return by Zeina Abirached
This graphic novel tells the story of a family trying to survive in Lebanon during the civil war.

* 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
This is a brief overview of the reign of Suleyman the Magnificent along with a series of short, primary source documents.

* 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.

* 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."

Muhammad: Prophet of Islam by Jessica Cohn
This biography introduces readers to the prophet/founder of Islam.

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

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.

* It Ain’t So Awful, Falafel
This humorous book explores the author’s childhood as an Iranian-American growing up in the 1970s.

* The Illustrator’s Notebook by Mohieddin Ellabbad
An Egyptian illustrator shares his art and reflects on the connection between art, personal experiences, 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 Deborah Ellis
This is a collection of accounts of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by children ages 8-18.

* Beyond Bullets: A Photo Journal of Afghanistan by Rafał Gerszak and Dawn Hunter
This is a photo journal of the U.S. military action in Afghanistan.

* 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."

* 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.

* 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."

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. Beautifully illustrated.

The Travels of Benjamin of Tudela by Uri Shulevits
A fictionalized account of a Spanish Jew, who explored the Middle East and North Africa in the twelfth century (a century before Marco Polo). It’s nicely illustrated and in the form of short stories, a book you could read aloud to the class.

* Averroes (Ibn Rushd): Muslim Scholar, Philosopher, and Physician of the 12th Century by Liz Sonneborn
This book is part of a 6-volume series "Great Muslim Philosophers and Scientists of the Middle Ages."

* 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.
Other Non-Fiction

**Festivals of Egypt** by Jailan Abbas
*This book describes the different holidays celebrated in Egypt.*

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

**Afghanistan: The Land** by Erinn Banting
*This book contains photos and descriptions of Afghanistan.*

*This is a wonderfully readable book about medieval achievements in the Muslim world. It is divided into short selections 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 Marijane Boueri, Jill Boutros, and Joanne Sayad
*This book provides an introduction to Lebanon’s history and culture seen through the eyes of an 11-year-old boy and his friends.*

**Judaism** by Douglas Charing
*This book provides an introduction to Jewish beliefs and customs.*

**The Medieval Islamic World** by Jessica Cohn
*This colorful book introduces readers to Islamic history.*

* **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.*
Egypt and the Middle East by Daniel De Bruycker and Maximilien Dauber
Beautifully illustrated with cartoons and photographs and easy to reference (question and answer format), this book would be easy for students to use in learning about the basic history of the Middle East.

Muhammad and the Arab Empire by John Duckworth
This gives a brief overview of the rise of Islam along with a series of short, primary source documents.

Iran: The People by April Fast
The book describes and shows lifestyles in Iran.

Iraq: The Culture by April Fast
The book describes and shows different facets of Iraqi culture.

Iraq: The People by April Fast
The book describes and shows lifestyles in Iraq.

* The Ancient Egyptians (Discover) by Isabel and Imogen Greenberg
This vividly illustrated and engaging book describes life in ancient Egypt.

* 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!)

Holy Cities: Jerusalem and Holy Cities: Mecca
Maps, photos, and descriptions of each of these two religious centers.

* The Arab World Thought of It: Inventions, Innovations, and Amazing Facts by Saima Hussain
This high-interest, beautifully illustrated book helps students learn about and visualize the important contributions of the Arab world to science, math, culture, and everyday life.

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 Iranian Revolution by Brendan January
This book is part of the Pivotal Moments That Changed the World series, focusing on the Iranian revolution of 1979. Instead of succumbing to the "clash of civilizations" argument, it delves into the deeper causes of the Iranian revolution, and brings the story forward to describe how the forces that triggered the revolution continue to play out in the troubled relationship between the United States and Iran today. This book is a welcome entry to the corpus of research literature for younger people.
* **Iraq** by Dale Lightfoot

* **Mosque** by David Macaulay
If you liked his books/films about the building of a medieval cathedral or fortress, you’ll like this one about the construction of a 16th century Ottoman mosque.

**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.*

**The Arabs in the Golden Age** by Mokhtar Moktefi and Veronique Ageorges
*Nicely illustrated, easy-to-reference account of Arab history.*

**Egypt: The Culture** by Arlene Moscowitch
*This book describes and shows Egyptian culture.*

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

* **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.*

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

*When the Nazis occupied Paris, no Jew was safe from arrest and deportation. Yet during that perilous time, many Jews found refuge in an unlikely place—the sprawling complex of the Grand Mosque of Paris. This beautifully illustrated and well-researched book looks like a picture book, but it tells the complex stories of that time.*

*This is a beautifully illustrated, informative atlas.*

**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.*
Mesopotamia by Jane Shuter
A beautifully illustrated, well organized short book about Mesopotamia from the “Excavating the Past” series.

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

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.

Turkish Customs and Traditions by Turgay Tuna
This book describes the traditions of Turkey.

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 and contains great photographs, this book gives a lot of history about King Tutankhamen as well as ancient Egypt in general.

The Arab-Israeli Conflict by Richard Worth
An Open for Debate book which shows the main issues for both Palestinians and Israelis.