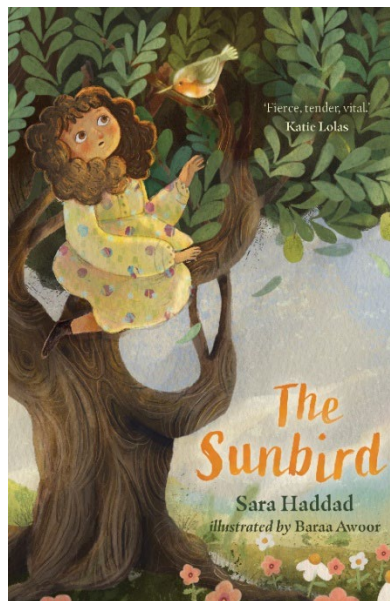


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THE SUNBIRD: YOUNG READERS' EDITION

Sara Haddad



Teachers' Notes

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SYNOPSIS

It's 1948 and Nabila Yasmeen lives a happy life in her village in Palestine. She plays in the hills with her friend Khalil and climbs high in the olive trees to pick the sweetest fruit. But when bombs start falling, Nabila and her family are forced to leave. They travel with countless others to a new city and then a new country to escape the violence, still holding onto the key to their house in the hope of returning.

THEMES

- Migration
- Colonial dispossession & displacement
- Truth telling
- Memory
- Protest
- Community & belonging
- Identity & culture
- Exile & expulsion
- Time-scale: Century turns, past-present-future
- Intergenerational legacies, learning from elders
- Spirit of a place
- Public space & collective power
- Human spirit & dignity
- Resilience/return/resistance

WRITING STYLE

Weaving Nabila's past and present, in third person past tense, Sara tells her tale in such a way that we may imagine possible hopeful futures. Considering colonial legacies replete with dispossession, migration, heartbreaking memories and a longing for homeland, we gain insight into the many changes and depths of human life over close to a century. Haddad's story widens our understanding of time, connection to land and belonging to it.

NOTES ON CULTURAL SAFETY

Some themes and recounts of lived experiences of violence in the story may overwhelm some students. They may find it hard to articulate their feelings about this immediately, which means they may come out later in a safer space at home with family that evening or later in the week. During class discussions, encourage and model how to share ideas and feelings while maintaining sensitivity to those of certain cultural heritages; how to privilege the voices of the less heard; and how the rest of us can learn to sit in discomfort and listen. Allocate enough time at the end of class discussions and activities to ensure all students have resolved their feelings and questions around certain issues and feel safe among their peers and with their teacher.

Things to remember:

- Students from certain backgrounds/cultures are not victims of history, but resilient, industrious and resistant for a good reason.

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- Excessive empathy for people displaced from colonialism, war and genocide can often impede learning and inquiry. This occurs when the feelings of non-Indigenous/non-dispossessed/non-settler students, and/or the teacher, become centred during the lesson, and this derails focus from the discussion and growing awareness about power relations and thwarts students' understanding of such.
- Do not ask students from backgrounds directly affected by colonialism to share their stories or read out violent sections in the text. But be ready to listen if they want to share of their own volition.
- Guard against privileged students assuming ascendancy in class sharing; this can re-traumatise students from migrant/refugee backgrounds.
- Encourage students in how to think, not what to think. Keep the focus on systems of power. Caution against entrenching students from certain backgrounds/cultures as victims of history and imperialism. Re-orient students and class discussions to the present, emphasising that colonialism is an ongoing process still affecting many in our world today.
- Useful resources: <https://australianstogether.org.au/teachers/curriculum-resources?Keywords=Perspectives+on+colonisation>; <https://www.edutopia.org/article/trauma-informed-approach-teaching-colonization-americas/>

KLA SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES & STUDY NOTES**KLA – English & General**

- Write a poem: Scaffold writing tasks and class discussions off the following points. (Teacher can set parameters respective to class, level, literary structure etc.)
 - Reflect on a place and/or time that is special to you, your family, your community.
 - List or mind map feelings, images, thoughts, values & attitudes.
 - Share with class. Students or teacher reads them out to celebrate their creativity and discuss what belonging means to everyone.
 - Express the significance of your chosen place and why it feels like home (or doesn't feel like home)?
 - Describe your chosen place and your relationship with it, as well as your family's and your community's relationship with it.
 - Explain why it is important to have, share and develop meaningful connections to place. (Think about Country, culture, homeland – draw connections to First Nations relationship with Country.)
 - Justify why it's important for all people to respect and protect this place.
- Consider all the visuals/drawings in the text:

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- p. 5: *This ancient village in Palestine*. Accompanying the text: 'Moonlight licked the tops of the houses that huddled together on the side of the rocky slope' and 'narrow streets were empty and still' (p. 4) what else does this illustration tell us about typical Palestinian villages?
- p. 25: *Nabila and Khalil play marbles together*. From the text we learn that Khalil's character is non-judgemental. What gives us this impression? And what else does this image tell us about Khalil and Nabila's friendship? (E.g. He readily plays with her stones instead of marbles and is happy to teach Nabila how to play. He's connected to natural elements, as is she, shown by his comfort in playing with the pebbles, and he is wearing a taqiyah, indicating his Muslim faith.) We know Nabila's family is Christian from the Feast of the Cross's passing (p. 5) and her appreciating the adhan but following another religion (p. 61). What do both these (image and text) tell us about inter-faith friendships in Palestinian and Lebanese (Sham region) culture?
- p. 32: *Butterfly*. What is the significance of the butterfly in the story?
- p. 36: The teacher writes Nabila's name in Arabic on a piece of paper, and Arabic is Nabila's first language. Activity: Students can use an online translation tool to discover how to write their names in Arabic and then write their names in their heritage language. Display them and discuss how it feels to see one's name in another script/another (non-romanised) language
- p. 45: *Nabila and her father among the olive trees*. Why do you think the illustrator has drawn this image as a silhouette? What effect does this have on viewers?
- p. 50: *Weeds growing out of rockery*. What might the image of edible and forageable weeds growing out of the rocks indicate about Palestinian land and culture? Activity: Search online for forageable/edible weeds native to Palestine then look up the same for your country. What discoveries have been made about what we can eat from the land? Also research who knows about these forageable/edible plants, how this knowledge was passed down through families. Why is this knowledge sometimes lost?
- p. 54: *Key in hand*. This is a ubiquitous image for Nakba survivors of Palestine. What does this illustration show? How is the key presented (old, vintage, etc.), and what does this tell us about the time? How does this add meaning? (Discuss how the hand is holding the key: like an offering, directed at oneself.)
- p. 67: *Nabila inside the whale with transparent sides*. Regarding the legend of Jonah inside the whale, the text tells us Nabila feels that she is inside the whale, looking out at a world of which she is not a

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part. How is Nabila portrayed in the illustration? What can we tell about how she is feeling? How has the illustrator created metaphor with imagery? (Discuss/imagine what it might be like to be watching and moving through the world from inside the 'belly of a beast' – inside a contained world, within a world). Might this be a common feeling for children who have to migrate and start a new life in another land, among new people and a different culture? Why?

- p. 69: *Nabila riding the sunbird through the clouds*. Noticing the elevation from sea/underwater in the last image to up above the clouds in the sky with this image, what might this sudden contrast represent or show us about what's happening in Nabila's life? What feelings are created in this image? Which way is Nabila looking and why? What does the expression on her face tell us?

KLA – Visual Arts

- Drawing: Students can draw their own sunbird, or source templates of a sunbird to print out and colour/decorate. Once done, cut them out, mount on coloured cardboard and write a message on back: to Nabila; to the people or land and animals of Palestine; to any of the characters in the book; to someone in the student's own family who's experienced geographic displacement and migration because of colonialism and war.
- Sculpture/Installation: In the story, Nabila relays that the trees are her family – they feed her, shelter her, keep her company. She climbed them, she picked their best fruit from their tops, and that the 'people in the village called her the sunbird' (p. 54). Building on the previous task, choose a tree around the school (or a small tree in the classroom) to be designated the 'Message Tree'. Decorate the tree with the students' sunbird drawing/artworks/messages, attaching them with string so they flutter in the breeze. Consider how messages can reach others over time, as well as the power of symbolic acts. What feelings and actions in the present might these messages and symbolic acts help cultivate in the future?
- Collage/Assemblage: On A4/A3 card, assemble images of the symbols in the story of 'what makes a home' for Nabila (key, stone, olive branches, poppy, sunbird, butterfly, etc.)
- Nabila's Garden:
 - All students can bring a plant cutting from home.
 - Together as a class, share the act of creating a garden together, telling each other about the plants everyone has brought. Share who in students' families are avid gardeners. From whom do we get green-thumb knowledge? Through planting something physical, symbolic of putting roots down, and where roots are, we find connection and community, around land/earth (p. 2).

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- Walking as mapping (pp. 10–11): Explore the footsteps of our ancestors, their affinity with the land, and maps that exist inside of us, not just on paper.
 - Take students for a walk around the school, including five to eight stops. At each stop, get students to close their eyes and listen for a minute, then their observations on a piece of paper.
 - Back in class, on art paper/card, students can plot their walked map using their notes, thinking about how to include sound, smell, memory and relationship references visually. A map for someone to know more than just how to walk the way. Discuss how such maps can tell us about place – the spirit of a place, its people, its animals, its plants, its terrain, etc.
- Kinships and Care (pp. 18–19): Start plotting a relationship map of kinships we share with our more-than-human world and turn these into artworks or another type of creative and relational map of ‘kinships’ or ‘Spirit of a place’.

KLA – Drama

- Create a soundscape of *The Sunbird*'s timeline:
 - Break the class into five or six groups.
 - Get each group to use their voices, percussive elements from found class objects and their bodies/extremities to create a soundscape for the sounds associated with their allocated chapter (including the Prologue if you wish). Each group goes through the text and selects the key identifying sounds for that time period in Nabila's life.
 - Create a circular timeline from 1947 to 2025 as a whole class, where each group's chapter perform on loop for two to three rounds. (These performances can be recorded to play and re-listen later.)
 - Discussion/reflection questions: How does the soundscape make you feel? What effect does sound have, which words and verbal storytelling may not? And vice versa? Can sound be seen as a form of storytelling? Why?
- Role play in pairs:
 - Imagine Nabila can meet up with Khalil later in life. Where would it be? What would happen? What would they talk about?
 - Do the same for Nabila with the teacher or Aziz the barber or substitute in another character.
- Role play in groups:
 - Imagine Nabila's family getting ready and making arrangements to migrate to the new country via boat. What might they discuss? Organise? What are their hopes? Fears? Are there any obstacles in the way? What are some of the big feelings that may come with

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packing up everything you have and know and moving to a completely new and different place on the other side of the world?

KLA – Language & Culture

- Write your name in Arabic, and write your name in the language of your heritage:
 - Using online translation tools, have each student look translate their name into Arabic, then in a language of their own heritage. Try writing it several times. How many attempts does it take to get it right? With non-romanised and more pictographic languages, what are the challenges with writing? What is easier? Does your name translate literally or mean something else completely? Do other languages give us insight into how people from other cultures may think/feel/communicate? Why?
 - Note: Many students who come from CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds) may have two names: one Anglicised name, and the name used at home with family. This activity aims at fostering cultural sensitivity and curiosity about cultures other than our own.

STUDY NOTES

- Why do you think the author begins the story with a prologue (p. 1)? What is a prologue? Why is the prologue set in the present?
- Why does Nabila start the story with 'Once upon a time' then repeat it and stop to question it before starting with the same line again (p. 3)? What is the effect of repeating this opening line?
- Consider how the author sets the scene in the opening (pp. 4–5)? What kind of language is used? What do we learn about Palestine from these pages?
- Describe Nabila's relationship with the earth? What is her first memory in the book (pp. 6–7)? How does this memory differ from other recalls of memory in the book? What and who are Nabila's strongest memories? Which ones stood out? Which one's did you have to search for in the text? What makes powerful memories stand out? Why?
- As day breaks (p. 8), the author lists many colours where the horizon meets. What feeling does this give? How does the author connect the outside world with the inside world (e.g. through descriptions of light, colour, warmth)?
- Consider how Nabila's knows her way to school by heart and can even walk there backwards or with her eyes closed (pp. 10–11). What does this tell us about her and her connection to the landscape, the earth? What does school represent for her?
- Read pp. 11–12. How is Nabila described and which literary device is used to describe her? How many times throughout the text is this motif repeated? (I.e. p. 54 in text, p. 67 in illustration.)

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- 'But today was different [...] Nabila knew that look well' (p. 14): What might be some of the features on someone whose face has 'that look'? How does Nabila explain why she thinks this? When something isn't quite right, what else might give it away?
- The teacher mentions words like 'United Nations', 'Resolution 181', 'partition', 'welfare', 'special committees', 'immigration' and 'friendly relations among nations' (p. 15) and Nabila is confused, as are the school students. What comes to your mind when reading/hearing these words? How do you feel about them? What do they make you think about?
- After the teacher tells the class about what's happening again in simpler terms (p. 16), Nabila is still confused. Why do you think this is? How does the author show us Nabila's sense-making process? How do you think Nabila is feeling in this moment?
- After Nabila runs back to her parents in the olive grove and tells them her news (p. 17), she receives a second dismissal. What are the differences and similarities between children/young people compared with adults when hearing bad news? Why do you think this is? What does it tell us about adults and about parents' approaches to communication with their children? What do these interactions tell us about the severity of what is happening in Palestine?
- How does the author introduce spring to the reader (p. 18–19), and why is it important for us to know about other natural elements such as flora and fauna? List as many words that name our more-than-human (natural) world elements as you can find from these two pages. What does this teach us about the spring season and our more-than-human kin? (See <https://lifestyle.sustainability-directory.com/term/more-than-human-world/> for more information on the ecological and regenerative concept of 'more-than-human'.) What could be the benefit of people and society shifting from a 'human-centred' to a 'life-centred' view? How does *The Sunbird* show this through Nabila, as well as Palestinian culture, values and attitudes?
- Encourage students to think about their own relationships with the more-than-human (e.g. a reserve, a river, a pet, an animal they pass on their way home from school, etc.). Think about how they encounter them: what do they do and what noises do they make? Do the students talk to them? Why? Does this feel natural or not? Why? Writing task: Think about how often you and your family go for walks through parks, trails and reserves. How do you walk through these areas? Do you make any stops? What do you notice? What do you wish you had more time to notice? Do you notice any animals or insects noticing you? Do you ever mimic the sounds other creatures make? Why? Share your most memorable story of an encounter with a non-human creature or a more-than-human ecosystem. (Note: This task can be tied into the previous KLA – Visual Art activity.)

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- Read over pp. 18–19. What does the spring season bring to Nabila's homeland? Create an artwork depicting the colours and liveliness of this season in Nabila's village.
- Explain why Nabila has never known such happiness (p. 22). What does her friendship with Khalil (who is from another village) bring her that connections with others (e.g. children in her village) do not? Why do certain people make us like we belong?
- Name three things both Nabila and Khalil share in common (pp. 22–24).
- Do you have a favourite tree? What type is it? Is your private sanctuary? Do you share it with anyone? How often do you visit it and why?
- Describe Khalil's character and tell us something about his attitudes and values (pp. 22–25).
- The opening of *The Sunbird* teaches that nature is family, friend, comfort, play and safety, but on p. 26 Nabila and Kalil also learn that storks migrating is natural and is also a portent (sign or warning of approaching events). Introduce students to foreshadowing as a technique if suitable. What could this be hinting at? What may lie ahead?
- On p. 29, we hear that Nabila 'checked to see if her rocks were where she had left them' and found that 'everything was exactly as it should be'. How does the author use rocks to indicate something deeper about Nabila's character? What do rocks symbolise? What do they represent to Nabila? What does Nabila's checking to see and the satisfaction she feels when they're still there tell us about her worries? What brings her comfort and security?
- Which literary technique does the author use in regard to the zir (p. 29)? What does Nabila tell the zir, and from where or whom do you think she's learnt about the watermelon seeds?
- Why do you think the author uses depictions of Nabila's interactions with and mimicry of animals, insects, trees and landscape (e.g. goats, chickens, donkey, soft wind whistling and rustling leaves) throughout the story (pp. 30–31)?
- Chapter 4 ends with Nabila's encounter with a butterfly (pp. 31–32). What do butterflies represent? How can the transformation of butterflies symbolise major changes ahead?
- On p. 33, we learn that 'Patience was something Nabila had lots of'. Are young children known for their patience? What does this tell us about Nabila and possibly the Palestinian culture?
- On p. 33, Nabila says, '*I'm going to learn to do that one day.*' Why has the author put information about the future in italics?
- When Nabila visits Aziz's barber shop (p. 34), we read, 'He never shooed her away'. Who else shoos her away in the story? Which literary device is used to describe Aziz's belly, which 'would wobble like a jellyfish' (p. 34)?

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- The author introduces readers to colonialism on p. 34: 'before the English came, before the world changed'. Why has author chosen to indicate the world and not just Palestine changing? And why is the first introduction to colonialism mentioned in the same paragraph as Aziz's jar of leeches? How does learning about colonialism make you feel? How does reading about the jar of leeches make you feel?
- On pp. 34–37, how many times do Aziz and the teacher switch from laughter to imagined and sensed terror (from the news, from leeches)? What does this show us about the culture, the people and how they deal with stressful situations?
- Describe the teacher and Nabila's relationship in five words. When he teaches and helps her to write her name, what else is he teaching her (p. 36)? (E.g. patience, determination, practice, independence, trust, faith, support, etc.)
- What does the teacher say to Nabila that makes him stop and appear terrified (p. 37)? When in time is he referring to? Discuss how the future becomes a timescale of uncertainty and fear. Nabila is always looking to the future when she can start going to school, but now this is becoming an uncertainty.
- Why does Nabila suddenly imagine 'someone coming after her with a gun' (p.38)? From where would a thought like this come? What is the author showing readers here?
- What do you know about vultures? And scorpions? (p.39) What kind of birds/arachnids are they? When do they come out and where are they found? Do you think the author may be including them symbolically? Why?
- Why do you think the author has likened the warplanes to an (enormous grey) bird (p. 39)?
- 'Nabila was confused [...] so she ran too' (p. 40): How does the author show us through Nabila how humans, especially children, respond during terror or traumatic events? Why do you think the author has opted for simple language and short sentences to describe something catastrophic? During this harrowing time, what are the two things Nabila is holding in each of her hands? What might each represent? (E.g. Her connection to earth, her origins, her home, and her future of learning and going to school, now lost).
- Describe the tempo/speed of how things change during Chapter 6? What effect does this have on Nabila?
- Why does the author describe the walk towards the woman's house as feeling 'like an eternity' (p. 42)? What happens to Nabila's body? List all the injuries, sensations and hallucinations she experiences. What are we learning about what happens to humans during traumatic times? Why is it hard for Nabila to tell what's real and what isn't? How does she comfort herself? What are some symbols and memories she recalls?

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- Nabila is found, cared for and protected by others in her village (p. 45); what does this indicate about her people and the community?
- Nabila's father finally finds her and carries her to the olive grove, where he tells her 'This is our home for now' (pp. 45–46). Has there been other times in the story where the olive grove was home? Why does Nabila's father say 'for now?' What are we finding out about their actual house?
- 'First came [...], then came [...], they came [...]' (p. 47): Which literary device is being used here and what is the effect of this repetition?
- 'When the wind blew in the right direction, she could smell the za'atar and a great sadness wrapped its arms around her' (p. 48): How does smell affect mood/memory? Can you think of a time in your own life when a smell has triggered a memory or changed your mood? Share with a friend.
- What do we learn the teacher has done (p. 48)? How do values, and what we assign value to, shift during times of war?
- Why does the author describe the gun as a British relic from a past war and why is it described as 'effective as stones thrown at a tank' (p.48)?
- How do you think Nabila feels in when her teacher is killed and 'Gone forever' (pp. 48–49)? What did the teacher previously represent to her? What does he represent to her now? How does Nabila reconcile this violence? What does she want to do with her memory and why? What might this tell us about how humans deal with traumatic violence? Can we tell just by looking at someone if they've been through something similar in their life? Why/why not?
- 'The adults told them the fighting would be over soon [...] *And then I can go to school*, Nabila said to herself, often' (p. 49): How does Nabila see school? For what reasons does she hang on to the hope of going to school? (Going to school represents the future, personal growth, and a return to home or return normal life for most children living in the Global North – see https://kids.kiddle.co/North%E2%80%93South_divide for more information). How is a child missing out on education affected throughout their life?
- Many decades have passed since 1948, but have Nabila and Palestinians been able to return to their homes, their homeland?
- Why has the author chosen the word stolen on p. 50: 'fruit stolen from their own trees'? How can one steal from oneself? What is being inferred?
- What does forage mean? What is foraging? (p. 50)
- 'That even though they had raised white flags, people in their village had been killed' (pp. 50–51): What is this telling us about other civilians? What does the white flag mean? What is it telling us about the soldiers? And their attitude towards the white flag?
- On p. 51, we learn that even the Hakawati's stories changed. How long do you think it took for these new terrifying stories to become normal for Palestinians? Is it normal? To whom? Why/why not? How does storytelling shape our cultural identity? What changes occurred to Nabila's cultural

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identity from before the Nakba? (E.g. Her primary way of relating with the world is through nature and now she relates through colonialism, loss and terror.)

- ‘the images the hakawati had planted in her head’ (p. 52): How do stories affect our dreams and the images in our heads? Think about how stories help shape our imaginations and our minds; what are the positive and negative effects of truthful storytelling? Make a list of both. With respect to violent and horrific stories, is it better to know or not? Why?
- ‘When the soldiers eventually forced them out of the olive grove, they went further away, finding shelter in a cave that was dark and damp’ (p. 52): We track Nabila and her family’s displacement from her house to the olive grove and now to a cave. Describe the cave? How might you imagine Nabila and her family are feeling? What would you do in this situation?
- ‘Now the howls of the wolves weren’t distant, but loud and close’ (p. 52): Danger is everywhere now and seems closer still. Which literary device (extension) is being used here, alluding to them being fed to the wolves?
- The migratory journey of Nabila and her family is: Home > olive grove > cave > north > Lebanon > a new country. What do people miss out on developing when they’re constantly moving? (E.g. Education, family, health, community, finances, security)
- Why do her parents say, ‘We will not be returning to our house, not now, but one day we will be back. Look, we have our key’ (p. 53) to Nabila? Why do they keep the key? What does the key become a symbol for?
- Nabila visits the olive grove one last time before she leaves (pp. 53–55) and we learn trees are family. Why does Nabila see trees as family? What do olive trees provide for Palestinians? Which literary device is used to describe Nabila and how? What might her movements be like? Her character? Write three to five points describing Nabila based on her being the village sunbird.
- Why does Nabila ‘[make] herself remember’ the last olive harvest (p. 55)?
- Watch a typical Palestinian family during the October olive harvest season (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSbWdm635tQ&themeRefresh=1>) In a class discussion, guess what they may be singing about? What is the main singer wearing? How important are olives, olive trees and the olive harvest season to Palestinians? How can we tell?
- ‘The journey was long [...] Many only had the keys to their houses and the clothes they stood up in’ (pp. 55–56): How does the imagery in this passage affect you? What do think it may have been like for Nabila and her people to walk through such atrocity for days? What do the items that people take with them show you about what they value? Or about it being the only thing they could get before they left. What would you take with you if you were only allowed one thing and made to leave your home/homeland?
- The author ends Chapter 8 with ‘On bleeding feet, Nabila and her family walked out of their country into an uncertain future’ (p. 56). What does

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‘bleeding feet’ mean? And why has the author chosen to specify ‘an uncertain future’ instead of another land or country by name? What do we learn about the harrowing journeys people take to safety? What does this tell us about war? Politics? Migration? ‘Friendly relations among nations’? The author repeats ‘the new country’ (p. 63), ‘a new world’ (p. 63) and ‘their new country’ (p. 67) but never names a place. Why does the author choose language that keeps the identity of the place to where they migrate ambiguous? (E.g. Placing distance between migrants and the new country; legacies of colonialism; not wanting to name a place that bears a similar and unacknowledged history of dispossession; highlighting that nowhere will ever be home like Palestine.)

- Look up how the colour Tyrian purple was made; describe the process and how it got its name (p. 57).
- Think about some food flavours of the Sham region listed in this book (e.g. mulberry, za’atar, orange, pomegranate, pistachio). If you had to invent an ice cream for children based on these flavours, what would it be? And why did you choose these flavours? (Students can also create a drawing or colour in a template graphic to label and share/paste in books.)
- What are Nabila’s initial impressions of the city (pp. 58–60)? What comparisons does she make between the city and her village? Find two examples in the text that show Nabila is missing and longing for her home?
- Compare and contrast: Make two columns: ‘Countryside’ and ‘City’. List what Nabila would encounter in each of them (e.g. birdsong, trees vs tanneries, sewing machines). Is it easier to connect with the city or country? Why? Which is best for Nabila? Which would suit you and why? Can one or both help us connect with place? Why? Why not?
- What do we learn about Nabila’s sensitivity to sounds (p. 60)? Which sounds bother her? Which sound does she like? What is its Arabic name? What information does this give us about Sham region culture? Where else in the book do we learn about cohesive multi-faith culture?
- What do we learn about Nabila’s father (p. 63)? How do the ravages of war affect survivors in the long term? (E.g. migration, injuries, illness, loss of home, livelihood, fractured families) What are the challenges in rebuilding one’s life from scratch?
- ‘He told them all about the peculiar animals and the sun that was even hotter than the one they were used to [...] Nabila wasn’t sure she wanted to be in yet another new country, and this one sounded much stranger than the one she was in’ (pp. 63–64): Which country do you think is being described here and why?
- Why did Nabila keep a stone from her homeland (p. 64)? How might this keep her connected to her country? How does it activate memory and give hope?

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- On p. 64, Nabila looks into the water while waiting to board the ship. Write five words that represent how Nabila is feeling in this moment.
- What are 'refugee camps' (p. 64)? How are they made? Why are they made? Do people go there by choice? When was the last time you went camping? Was it fun or not? Why? What might be difficult about living in a refugee camp? How might people in refugee camps make the best of their situation?
- How is the tale of Jonah and the whale used to tell Nabila's story (pp. 66–67)? (I.e. As a metaphor for moving through and watching the world from within the 'belly of a beast' – a contained world within another contained world.) How does this show how Nabila feels about life and about the world? Does she feel free/trapped/separate? Why does she think about the whale tale while she remembers Khalil? How is the imagery of water used to draw connections between them? (E.g. seas, bodies of water that now divide us, bodies of water as stores of memory in some cultures.)
- What examples can you find in the text that allude to a sense of hope or looking to the future positively?
- Where in the text gives the impression that Nabila is overwhelmed (e.g. p. 68)? Discuss as a class or write a reflective paragraph: How would you feel if you had to pack up and leave everything you had, and everyone you knew, to start over in a new country with a new language? What are your hopes, fears, dreams? Who might you look to for support?
- Why do you think the author jumps from 1954 to 2025 on pp. 68–70 without telling us about Nabila's life settling and her living in a new country? Why do you think the author takes us straight into the 2025 protest rallies? How does this help locate Nabila in her community?
- Why could Nabila have felt guilt when she was younger (pp. 70–71)? What does she discover about herself and her life in maturity? Why is this good advice to give to Zane?
- Which literary device is used in the line: 'He reminded her so much of herself when she was his age. Behind those deep, dark eyes she saw the same fire, a fire that burnt strong and bright' (pp. 71–72)? (E.g. metaphor for passing the torch, the flame carried within lineages of people and within their stories.)
- Nabila teaches Zane to hold the stone close to his nose and smell the (past) autumn rains of another land (p. 72). How does Nabila know that smell connects us to memory and place? What tips does she give Zane to help him experience this?
- Why does the end of the story contain elements of the past (memory), the present (action/protest) and the future (imagining a homecoming) (pp. 72–73)? What does this tell us about how time works? How do memory and imagination work together? What effect does this have on the reader? What

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does it tell us about Nabila, her relationship with Zane and the land, and her symbols?

- Write five emotive words about how the ending makes you feel.
- Write five descriptive words of what you imagine for Nabila's future. (Do the same for your future.)
- Consider the Author's Note (pp. 75–80). Why do you think it's important that the author included a list of cultural items and their explanations?
- Consider the author's inclusion of an Arabic glossary (pp. 81–84). Why do you think the author has included words in Nabila's mother tongue?
- Choose one of all the illustrations in the book. Describe how it reflects Nabila's feelings and thoughts at a particular moment in the story.

TABLES & INDEXES

Symbols/motifs in <i>The Sunbird</i>		
Type	Symbols	Motifs
Fauna	Sunbird, butterfly, fox, wolves, jackals, eagles, vultures, flock of storks, goats, donkeys, crickets, jar of leeches	Sunbird
Geological	Stone, pebble, rock, fossil, shell, limestone	Stones
Flora	Olive, oak, sycamore, orange, pomegranate, cactus, mulberry	Olive
Nature's abundance	Olive, barley, wheat harvests, za'atar, dried figs, wildflowers, red poppies, white anemones, pink cyclamens, yellow marigolds	Olives, Zaytoun
Cultural	Key, zir, tatreez, thobe, keffiyeh, watermelon, Tyrian purple, dabke, backgammon	Key

Timeline: Chapter/Year	
Prologue	2025
Chapters 1–2	1947
Chapters 3–7	1948
Chapter 8	1948–1949
Chapter 9	1949–1954
Chapter 10	2025

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AUTHOR MOTIVATION

This younger readers' version of *The Sunbird* came from the same place as the adult novella that preceded it: an unshakeable belief in truth and justice, and a commitment to speaking up as loudly as possible against a genocide that continues, at the time of writing, to unfold in real time.

I grew up learning about Palestine. The extended Lebanese family who raised me was firmly committed to supporting Palestinian liberation. As a child I wasn't interested in the issue, but I absorbed everything that was going on around me and developed a strong sense that what had been done to the Palestinians was terribly wrong. As I got older, I became more engaged and began to educate myself. As an adult I have always come up against people who tell me the issue is complicated. My early education coupled with my exposure to what I came to realise was most of the world put me in a somewhat rare position to communicate a story to those who didn't know the truth. I knew what they thought. I knew how they thought. I knew what they didn't know. And I knew what they needed to hear.

I wish the people I have encountered as an adult, those who have told me 'it's complicated', had grown up learning what I did. If they had, I don't think we'd be where we are now. So, I guess, *The Sunbird* is the story I wish those people had read when they were children. The whole of the Al-Sham region – my ancestral homeland – is under threat. So, my motivation in writing *The Sunbird* is also to preserve and celebrate my culture. This is a work of resistance as much as it is a work of solidarity with the Palestinian people who have endured and suffered too much for too long, who have been dehumanised to such an extent that a genocide has been able to continue, in full view, for over two years.

At the time *The Sunbird* went to print, marches for Palestine were still happening all around the world. In some cities, like mine, they had been happening pretty much every week for over two years. Children know what's going on and many are engaged and interested. But it's important for them to develop empathy and to understand current events in the context of history. This is where *The Sunbird* comes in.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sara Haddad is an editor and writer who has worked in publishing for over thirty-five years. A Lebanese Australian, she lives on Gadigal land. *The Sunbird* is her debut novel.