

THE KITES ARE FLYING

by Michael Morpurgo

Upper primary/Lower secondary

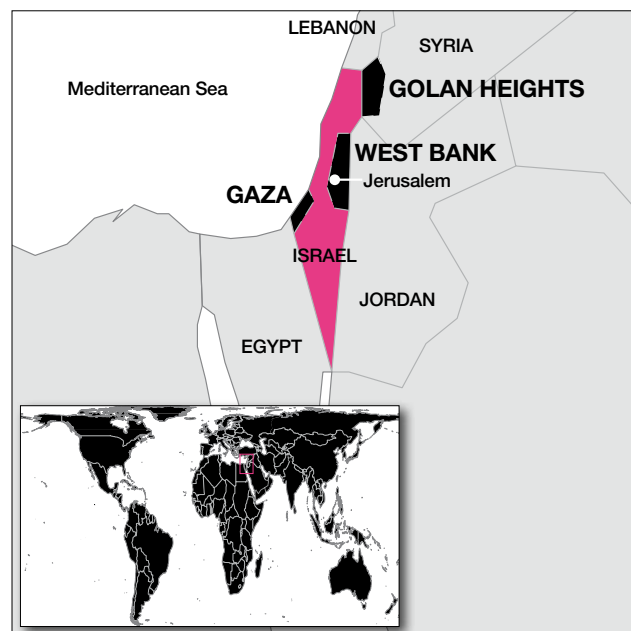


This uplifting story highlights the conflict on the West Bank. It includes themes of love, loss, hope and the desire for peace. Max is a journalist and film-maker who travels to the West Bank to make a film about the wall that divides the Palestinians and Israelis. Said is a Palestinian boy whose older brother Mahmoud was killed in the conflict. The two are brought together, and Max begins to understand why Said does not speak and the importance of his kite-making.

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Walker Books

BACKGROUND

The story is set in the West Bank, part of the occupied Palestinian territories. Since the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948 there has been conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians over ownership of land. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced in the fighting of 1948. Since 1967 the Israelis have occupied the West Bank and have built many settlements in the occupied territory which are deemed to be illegal under international law. It is in the shadow of one of these settlements that Said and his family live.



IDEAS FOR THE CLASSROOM

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How have Said's family suffered in the last few years?

Possible answers:

- Said's father in prison
- Mahmoud's death
- Said not talking
- Losing their best land
- Lack of water for crops (diverted to settlements)

2. Despite their suffering, how does the family show their kindness to the stranger Max?

Possible answers:

They freely provide food, cold water for his ankle, shelter while he recovers, and an improvised crutch. They also allow him to film them.

3. 'It's the only time we can forget all our troubles and sadnesses, and just be happy again.' (p.15) What do the kites symbolise for the boys?

Possible answers:

- Freedom
- Innocent joy
- Hope
- Escape from daily troubles on earth
- Friendship, reconciliation and peace
- Keeping memory of brother alive

4. What do you think of the ending of the story? What did the kites mean for Said and the Jewish girl? What moral do you think the author is expressing?

5. Look again at the dedication at the start of the book: 'For the children who live on both sides of the wall, who will one day bring it tumbling down. No guns or trumpets needed.' Do you think this might be possible?

ROLE PLAY

In pairs imagine the interview film-maker Max might have had with the girl in the blue headscarf. Would she have shared Said's ideas?

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Article 3: We all have the right to life, and to live in freedom and safety.

Article 9: Nobody has the right to put us in prison without a good reason, to keep us there or to send us away from our country.

Article 25: We all have the right to a standard of living that is adequate for our wellbeing.

Article 28: We have a right to peace and order so that we can all enjoy rights and freedoms in our own country and all over the world.

FOLLOW-UP WORK

Make a wall display of kites with messages for Said and the girl in the Jewish settlement on them.

Do some research into the conflict in the Middle East. What must life be like for children living in a war zone?

You will find a short version of this story in Amnesty International's anthology of short stories *Free*. In this version *No Trumpets Needed*, we do not hear Said's voice. Compare the two. What do you think the story loses or gains?

Watch a short film about adapting this story for the stage at <http://vimeo.com/50531016>

FIND OUT MORE

Further teaching resources can be found at: www.amnesty.org.uk/education