

LORGNETTE

Quarterly Review of Children's and Young Adults' Books

Author

Ghanameh, Aya

Illustrator

Illustrated by the author

Reviewer

Isbell, Melinda

Pages

Unpaged

Price

\$18.99

ISBN

978-0-593-52518-0

Publisher & Date

Viking, 2023

Classification

Fiction

Grade Level

PreK-2

Book Review: THESE OLIVE TREES

This story is set in 1967 in Nablus, Palestine. Oraib is a young girl living in the Balata refugee camp where she lives in a tent with her family. This is the only home she has ever known. Oraib's family supports themselves by harvesting olives from the ancient trees near the camp. One day, while Oraib is helping her mother harvest the olives, her mother tells her that "the war has come to our doorstep again," and everyone has to leave the camp. They do not know where they are going, but Oraib knows that they will have each other wherever they are. At the end of the story, Oraib plants one last olive seed there in Nablus in hopes that one day she will return to harvest its fruit.

This is an amazingly written story with illustrations that provide subtle suggestions about what life was like in the Palestinian refugee camps. Unless the reader is familiar with that time in history, it is not obvious that the story refers to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Even in the author's note, Israel is never mentioned. Instead, Israel is referred to as "the occupying state." If you are interested in a children's story that tells the Palestinian side of the early Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this is a good book with which to start.

