

One Book, Many Communities: “Returning to Haifa”

The “One Book, Many Communities” project by Librarians and Archivists with Palestine aims to introduce readers to the richness of Palestinian literature, and create a broader awareness and understanding of Palestinian history and the struggle for self-determination. Explore the recommended books and films below for more about the themes and events in Ghassan Kanafani’s “Returning to Haifa.”

Books and Articles

“Ghassan Kanafani: A Bibliographical Essay” (pages 1-12) and “Introduction” (pages 13-28), *Palestine’s Children: Returning to Haifa and Other Stories*.

The introductory essays to *Palestine’s Children* are a great source for the life of Ghassan Kanafani and other historical details, but be aware that they contain spoilers to “Returning to Haifa” and some of Kanafani’s other works.

Arab Hyphen, “Returning to Haifa” (2013)

An exploration of the themes and political context of the story (also contains spoilers).

<https://arabhyphen.wordpress.com/2013/02/14/ghassan-kanafani-returning-to-haifa/>

Golda Slept Here (Suad Amiry, 2014)

Amiry’s latest assemblage of anecdote, memory, and history focuses on the reverberations of the Nakba. In Jerusalem, what became of some of these homes, and the Palestinian families who lost them in 1948?

Progressive Librarian, “A Report on the Librarians and Archivists to Palestine Delegation,” Issue No. 42, Summer 2014 (page 153).

Summarizes the history of Israeli control of Palestinian libraries and archival records, with an account from a 2013 delegation of information workers to Palestinian libraries.

http://progressivelibrariansguild.org/PL_Jnl/pdf/PL42_summer14.pdf

Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation (Saree Makdisi, 2008/2010)

Makdisi pulls together timelines, statistics, and individual stories to highlight the bureaucratic horror of Israel’s policies affecting internal borders and permits, particularly in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Palestinian Walks: Forays into a Vanishing Landscape (Raja Shehadeh, 2008)

Lawyer Shehadeh draws on legal cases and the tightening boundaries of his local geography to make sharp observations about Israeli repression as optimism following the Oslo Accords wanes.

Mornings in Jenin (Susan Abulhawa, 2006)

This 2015 One Book pick was directly inspired by “Returning to Haifa” and tells the story of one family forced to flee the Palestinian village of Ein Hod in 1948.

Progressive Librarian, Issue no. 21, Winter 2002 (page 49)

A collection of articles about the destruction of Palestinian libraries and archives in the West Bank after the Israeli invasion of 2002.

http://progressivelibrariansguild.org/PL_Jnl/contents21.shtml

I Saw Ramallah (Mourid Barghouti, 2001)

What does it mean to return to your homeland after 30 years? A poet's reflections on his decades in exile from his native city of Ramallah after the 1967 war.

Men in the Sun and Other Palestinian Stories (Ghassan Kanafani, 1999)

This collection features "Men in the Sun," the story of three Palestinian refugees trying to make their way to Kuwait, in addition to several other short stories.

This Side of Peace: A Personal Account (Hanan Ashrawi, 1996)

Legislator Ashrawi's memoir discusses her own experience during the Oslo negotiations and the way that the Oslo Accords were stacked against Palestinians from the beginning. Also deals with First Intifada.

The Secret Life of Saeed: The Pessoptimist (Emile Habibi, 1974)

A hapless Palestinian experiencing the vagaries of Israeli repression transitions from collaboration with the occupier to redemption of a kind in this absurdist and satirical tale.

Films

The Great Book Robbery (dir. Benny Brunner, 2012)

Explores the history of the removal of Palestinian libraries and archival records into Israeli repositories.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/witness/2012/05/20125915313256768.html>

Five Broken Cameras (dir. Emad Burnat and Guy Davidi, 2011)

What resistance looks like in one among many West Bank towns.

Slingshot Hip Hop (dir. Jackie Reem Salloum, 2008)

This documentary traces the history and development of Palestinian hip hop.

Divine Intervention (dir. Elia Suleiman, 2002)

An inventive and surreal portrayal of families and lovers under Israeli occupation.

From "Identity Card" (Mahmoud Darwish [trans. Denys Johnson-Davies], 1964)

Put it on record.

.....I am an Arab.

You stole my forefathers' vineyards

.....And land I used to till,

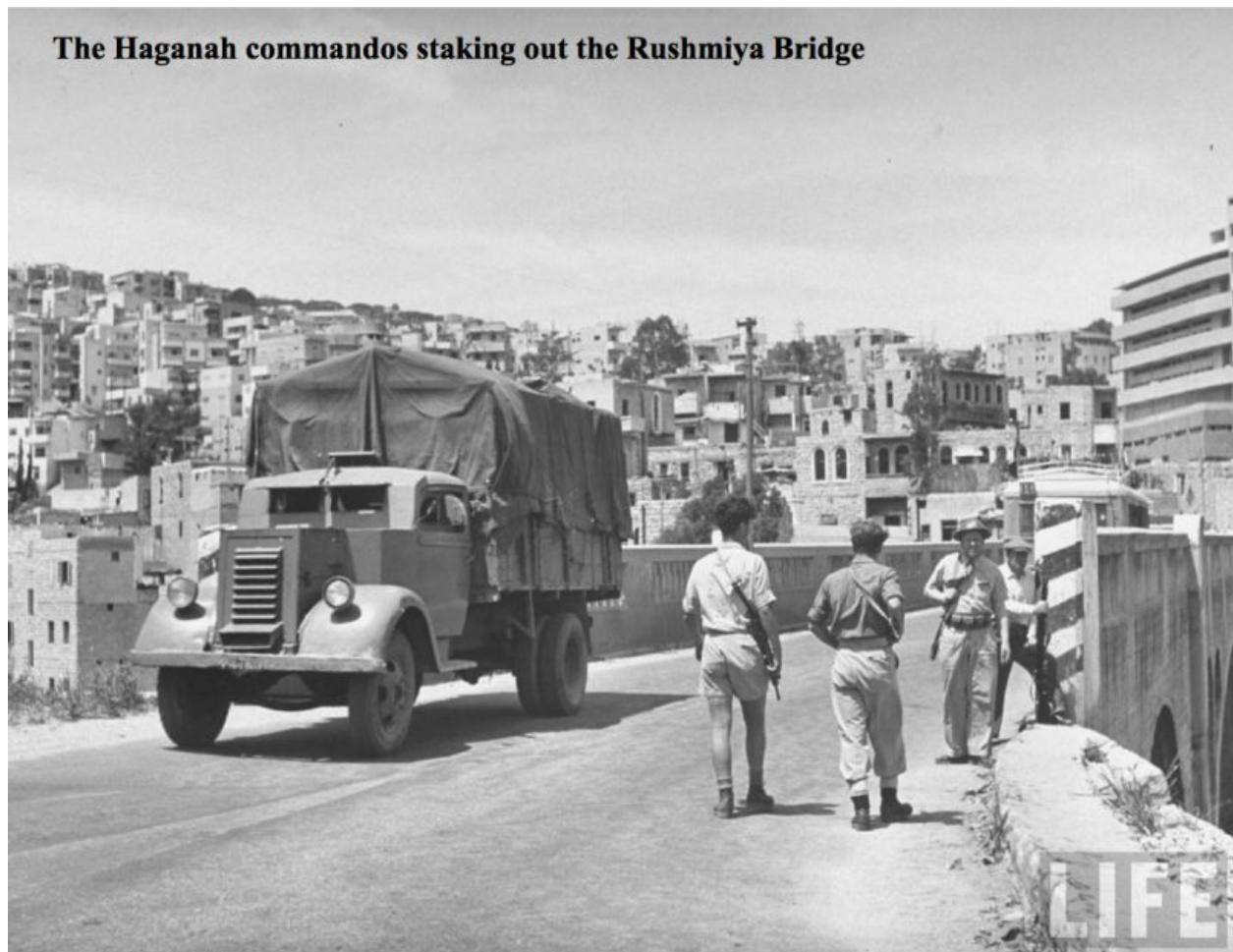
.....I and all my children,

.....And you left us and all my grandchildren
.....Nothing but these rocks.
.....Will your government be taking them too
.....As is being said?

So!

.....Put it on record at the top of page one:
.....I don't hate people,
.....I trespass on no one's property.
And yet, if I were to become hungry
.....I shall eat the flesh of my usurper.
.....Beware, beware of my hunger
.....And of my anger!

The West Bank, April 3, 2002



Rushmiya Bridge, Haifa, in 1948. Courtesy of Zochrot (zochrot.org)