THE PROMISE OF ISRAEL Resources for Middle School and High School Students

Available at the Ratner Media and Technology Center of the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland

FICTION

AFTER THE WAR by Carol Matas. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996.
Ruth, a young Holocaust survivor, joins the Jewish underground organization, Brichah, and helps with the dangerous task of smuggling refugees into Palestine.

THE GARDEN by Carol Matas. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997.

Israelis teens, survivors of the Holocaust, must fight to protect their land after it is partitioned by the U.N. and attacked by Arabs. The story takes place in 1947, shortly before the State was declared. A sequel to AFTER THE WAR.

LIGHT YEARS by Tammar Stein. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005.

An accomplished first novel about an Israeli girl who seeks both emotional and physical distance from Israel, where her boyfriend was killed in a suicide bombing. It is told in chapters that alternate between Charlottesville, Virginia, where she is attending college, and Israel. Maya's family and social life are revealed, along with interesting glimpses into the lives of Israeli young people who are of the age for army service. Some sex scenes make this appropriate for older teens and adults.

REAL TIME by Pnina Moed Kass. New York: Clarion, 2004.

Set in Israel, this powerful teenage novel is told in many voices: a German boy on his way to work on a kibbutz; a Russian immigrant girl reclaiming her Jewish heritage; an elderly Holocaust survivor; an aspiring Palestinian "martyr" and his family; emergency medical staff, doctors, nurses, and the police. Their lives all intersect in one violent moment, revealing the reality of a suicide bombing from many different perspectives. Excellent for discussion and winner of the 2004 Sydney Taylor Book Award for Older Readers.

RUNNING ON EGGS by Anna Levine. Asheville, NC: Front Street/Cricket Books, 1999.

There are no villains, only misunderstandings, in this story of a tentative friendship between an Israeli girl and an Arab girl who are teammates on their school track team. Although the Arab-Israeli conflict is the central issue, many other aspects of contemporary Israeli life are explored.

SAMIR AND YONATAN by Gabrielle Carmi. New York: Arthur A. Levine/Scholastic, 2000.

Frightened to be the only Arab child in the children's ward of an Israeli hospital, Samir withdraws into himself. Gradually, Yonatan, the boy in the next bed, draws him into another world where sickness, fear, and conflict can be overcome. An extraordinary exploration of the power of children's imaginations.

THE SINGING MOUNTAIN by Sonia Levitin. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998. Contemporary Jewish identity and the search for religious authenticity are the interwined themes of this engrossing novel set in California and Israel and portrayed through the lives of two teenagers and their family. To the consternation of his assimilated parents, Mitch becomes a baal teshuvah and decides to stay in Israel. Differences in Jewish belief are explored with understanding.

UNDER THE DOMIM TREE by Gila Amagor. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995.

Teenagers in a youth village in Israel after the Holocaust search for lost parents and try to deal with survivor guilt. Based on the author's experiences, this is an absorbing look at post-Holocaust Israel and at young people dealing with issues of identity, community, and grief. There is also a video of the same title.

WHEN I WAS A SOLDIER by Valerie Zenatti. New York: Bloomsbury, 2005.

Zenatti's memoir, originally written in French, reveals what is is like to be an Israeli teenager and soldier. She writes about her home in Beersheva, school, friends, pop stars, romances, first sex, getting plastered - all with the same flippant, somewhat cynical tone used to describe her army experiences.

NON-FICTION

THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT by Mark Rackers. San Diego, CA: Greenhaven, 2004. This is a compilation of historic speeches representing Israeli and Arab points of view from 1946-2002. The introduction sets the context but contains a major error, stating that the U.N. Partition plan was "not a plan to create two homelands..." when, indeed, it was. The speeches are divided into sections pertaining to the establishment of the State of Israel, the Six Day War and its aftermath, steps toward peace, the first Intifada and Oslo, and the second Intifada. There are brief biographies of each speechmaker, a chronology through October 2003, a bibliography of adult books, and an index. Part of the Great Speeches in History Series and useful primarily in schools.

ARIEL SHARON by Norman Finkelstein. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner, 2005.

A brief and objective account of the life of Ariel Sharon, stressing his military accomplishments, his political career, and the controversies that have surrounded him. It is organized chronologically, written in a clear, direct, and unbiased manner, illustrated with black and white photographs, and appended with an index, a timeline, and a list of further readings and websites that includes two very poor books about Israel.

THE CREATION OF ISRAEL by Linda Jacobs Altman. San Diego, CA: Lucent, 1998.

Beginning in ancient times, this chronicles the Jewish experience of alienation and persecution in country after country for two thousand years. In response to the terror inflicted upon them in the Diaspora, the Jews turned to political Zionism as the solution. The majority of the book deals with the establishment of the modern Jewish state. Well illustrated and suitable for student research.

HANDBOOK OF THE MIDDLE EAST by Michael G. Kort. Brookfield, CT: Twenty-first Century Books/Millbrook, 2002. Sixteen countries are identified as being part of the Middle East. Each is described in terms of its geography, topography, climate, environment, population, economy, political system, history, and culture. Profiles of some of the states include information about their relations with Israel. There is also a section on maps and flags, a chronology from ancient times to 2000, and an A to Z "encyclopedia" of people, places, and events, with photographs, that will help students writing reports. Useful and authoritative.

ILAN RAMON, JEWISH STAR by Devra N. Speregen. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2004.

A biography with photographs that focuses on Ilan Ramon's years of training as an astronaut and on life aboard a space shuttle.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOLDA MEIR by Deborah Hitzeroth. San Diego, CA: Lucent, 1998.

This detailed account of Golda Meir's life presents her as a human being instead of a legend. Fully half of the biography is about her formative years in Russia and the United States. Paralling the narrative of political struggle is one of the personal toll that her activism had on Meir's life. Well illustrated and useful for reports.

INSIDE ISRAEL'S MOSSAD: THE INSTITUTE FOR INTELLIGENCE AND SPECIAL TASKS by Matt Webster. New York: Rosen, 2003.

A brief but informative account of Israel's formidable foreign intelligence agency started by David Ben Gurion in 1951. The structure and goals of the Mossad are given, along with descriptions of some of its successes and failures.

ISRAEL by Adam Garfinkle. Modern Middle East Nations and Their Place in the World Series. Philadelphia, PA: Mason Crest, 2004.

Notable for its accuracy and lack of bias, this is an excellent account of Israel from its beginning to the modern state. The emphasis is on Israel's place in the world today, with issues of security and conflict at the forefront.

ISRAEL by Louise Shipley Slavicek. Broomall, PA: Chelsea House, 2003.

This is a welcome exception to the anti-Israel books published by Chelsea House. It gives an objective account of the birth and growth of modern Israel, from the Jewish people's bond with the land since biblical times up until the present. Important issues are discussed and analyzed and the book is illustrated with documentary photographs. It includes a chronology, bibliography, Internet sources, and an index.

ISRAEL IN PICTURES, REVISED EDITION by Margaret J. Goldstein. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner, 2004.

Keyed to the publisher's Visual Geography website, <u>www.vgsbooks.com</u>, this objective and clearly written book is geared to the informational needs of elementary and middle school students.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE HOLY LAND by Mitch Frank. New York: Viking, 2005.

Despite his use of the ubiquitous but objectionable term "occupied territory" instead of "disputed territory" or West Bank, the author brings remarkable objectivity to this book of questions and answers. Each chapter is posed as a question, with related questions within it. The chapter organization is topical but the overall narrative is chronological, bringing some coherence to a complex subject. The writing style is brisk and readable. Both Israelis and Palestinians are criticized but the author's intent seems to be not blame, but understanding.

THE PALESTINIANS by Anna Carew-Miller. Broomall, PA: Mason Crest, 2003.

Part of the Modern Middle East Nations series, this is an impartial overview of Palestinian peoplehood, government, history, land, religion, economics, and foreign relations. The conflict between Jews and Palestinians is treated objectively. There are a few errors, including the claim that Palestinian Arabs are descendants of the ancient Canaanites, who occupied the land circa 3,000 BCE. Color photographs, an index, informative sidebars, a chronology, bibliography, and list of Internet sources are included.

A PROMISE FULFILLED: THEODOR HERZL, CHAIM WEIZMANN, DAVID BENGURION, AND THE CREATION OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL by Howard Greenfeld. New York: Greenwillow/HarperCollins, 2005.

A concise history of modern Zionism is delivered through the stories of three men who shared what seemed like an impossible dream. Spanning ninety years, it chronicles events, achievements, and setbacks that led to the founding of the State of Israel. The personality of each man is revealed, showing how their backgrounds, experiences, and personal traits influenced history. The section on Herzl is particularly interesting.

WE JUST WANT TO LIVE HERE: A PALESTINNIAN TEENAGER, AN ISRAELI TEENAGER – AN UNLIKELY FRIENDSHIP by Amal Rifai, Odelia Ausbinder and Sylke Tempel. St. Martin's Press, 2003.

Tempel, a German journalist, facilitated this exchange of letters between two teenagers living in Jerusalem. The Palestinian girl is constrained; the Israeli opinionated and critical of Israeli society and the Sharon government. Between them, they present a reasonable sample of opposing views. Excellent for discussion of issues involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for a demonstration of free versus unfree speech (the Palestinian girl's name is not her real one), and for what it suggests about the choices and life options open to young Israeli and Palestinian women.

YOUR TRAVEL GUIDE TO ANCIENT ISRAEL by Josepha Sherman. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner, 2004.

Readers are taken on a journey back in time to experience life in ancient Israel at the time of King Solomon. Clothing, accommodations, foods, local customs, transportation and more are included.

Compiled by Linda R. Silver, Librarian June 2005