



Classroom Guide for
Sharing Our Homeland:
Palestinian and Jewish Children at
Summer Peace Camp
Written by Trish Marx
Illustrated by Cindy Karp

Reading Level

*Reading Level: Grade 4

Interest Level: Grades 1–6

Guided Reading Level: S

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: 5.9/1.0

Lexile™ Measure: 960

*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Themes

Friendship, Respect, Summer Camp, Working Toward Peace, Middle East, War, Israel-Palestine Conflict, Jewish Interest, Muslim/Muslim American Interest, Multiethnic Interest

Synopsis

Alya, a Israeli Palestinian girl, and Yuval, a Israeli Jewish boy, live a short distance from each other in Israel, yet they have totally different and separate lives. Then one summer they have a chance to meet when they attend Peace Camp, a day camp operated by Givat Haviva, an educational organization that works toward Jewish-Arab peace.

As Alya, Yuval, and the other children arrive at Peace Camp, they are excited, but their excitement is mixed with apprehension. For hundreds of years, Palestinian and Jewish people have fought over the land where these children live. The children wonder what campers from the “other side” will be like.

At Peace Camp, the Jewish and Palestinian children experience two weeks of fun in close contact with one another. They participate in sports, arts and crafts projects, field trips, a sleepover, and other camp activities. They begin to understand what their shared ancient homeland means to the “other side.” Most of all, they learn not to be afraid of and to respect one another. They begin to realize that they could become friends.

Here is a timely message of understanding and hope not often heard from this part of the world. With engaging text and captivating photographs, *Sharing Our Homeland* gives an inside view of how one summer camp is working to create a foundation for peace. As readers gain insight into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this eye-opening book offers hope for breaking down the distrust and violence that define this conflict. The children's experiences at Peace Camp may well help their generation build a foundation for living together peacefully in one homeland.

Background

History of Conflict in Israel (from page 11–12 of the book): “Beginning in 1517 the area was under Turkish rule for four hundred years. In 1917, during World War I, the British took control of the Holy Land, and called it Palestine. The British promised the Jewish

people a homeland in Palestine and also promised to protect the rights of the Palestinians living there. Many Jews moved to the area and began work to create their own state. As more and more people arrived, tensions rose. Clashes among the Jews, Palestinians, and British erupted. Eventually, in 1937, the Palestinians called for their own independent nation.

In 1947 the United Nations recommended that Palestine be divided, with the idea of creating two separate states: one Palestinian and one Jewish. The Palestinians rejected this plan. They did not want to give up their land. The Jews accepted the plan and in 1948 established the independent nation of Israel. Several neighboring Arab nations, which supported the Palestinians, then went to war with Israel. Israel succeeded in defending itself and took control of more of Palestine. The rest was held by Egypt and Jordan. In 1967 war broke out between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, and Syria—a conflict known as the Six Day War. Israel won and expanded into the rest of Palestine.

The land then consisted of Israel and two areas controlled by Israel: the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. These areas, known as the Occupied Palestinian Territories, are where many Palestinians live today, while others live in Israel, outside the boundaries of the territories, and are Israeli citizens.

After the Six Day War, the United Nations called for Israel to withdraw from the Territories and allow the creation of a Palestinian state. This was not done. Over the years there have been talks to try and find a peaceful resolution, but none has been successful. Violence and conflict continue between Israel and Palestinians over land both feel belongs to them. They have not yet been able to come to an agreement about how to resolve their differences peacefully.”

Givat Haviva: Givat Haviva, an internationally known peace organization, operates Menashe Summer Peace Camp, where the story takes place. The author and photographer attended Peace Camp and worked closely with Givat Haviva in developing the book. Givat Haviva was founded in 1949 as the national education center of the Kibbutz Federation and also supports the Jewish-Arab Center for Peace. According to the [Givat Haviva website](#), the organization “is dedicated to promoting mutual responsibility, civic equality, and cooperation [among] divided groups in Israel as the foundation for building a shared future and shared society—critical elements of a sustainable and thriving Israeli democracy.” Givat Haviva won the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education in 2001 for its longstanding work in promoting Jewish-Arab dialogue and reconciliation. For more information on how the author, Trish Marx, found Givat Haviva’s Peace Camp and the children, Alya and Yuval, who are profiled in the book, check out the [Lee & Low Books’ BookTalk](#) about *Sharing Our Homeland*.

BEFORE READING

Pre-Reading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

1. Take a look at the front and back covers. Take a picture walk. Ask students to make a prediction. Do you think this book will be fiction or nonfiction? What makes you think so? What clues do the author and photographer give to help you know whether this book will be fiction or nonfiction?
2. What do you know about texts that are informational nonfiction? What are the typical features of informational nonfiction texts? What are some things that will not happen

- in informational nonfiction texts? Why do authors write informational nonfiction texts? How do you think their reasons differ from authors who write fiction?
3. What do you already know about the Middle East? What countries are in the Middle East? What do you know about the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians? What questions do you have about these topics? What do you think this book might teach you about these topics?
 4. What do you already know about Judaism? Christianity? Islam? What are some holidays that people who follow these religions celebrate?
 5. What does the word *prejudice* mean? What does the word *tolerance* mean? What does the word *understanding* mean? What does the word *peace* mean? How do you think knowing what these words mean will help you understand the information in the book?
 6. What are some things children do at summer camp? What are some reasons parents have for sending their children to summer camp? What do you think kids might do at a "peace camp"? Share a memory you have of attending a summer camp or a book that has a character who attends a summer camp.
 7. Why do you think I chose this book for us to read today?

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

Read and talk about the title of the book. Ask students what they think the title means and why the book might be called *Sharing Our Homeland*. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and who the book might be about. What places might be talked about in the text? What do you think might happen? What information do you think you might learn? What makes you think that?

Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, acknowledgments, dedications, photographs, map, backmatter (suggestions for further reading and websites of interest), author's note, pronunciation guide and glossary, and author's sources.

Ask students to predict what kind of information the text will provide. Which parts of the book did they use as clues to make their predictions?

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and how it affects Palestinian and Jewish people living in Israel
- how programs like this summer camp are working to foster peace and understanding
- why the book is titled *Sharing Our Homeland*

Encourage students to consider why the author, Trish Marx, would want to share this story with children.

VOCABULARY

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below. Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create

a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

CONTENT SPECIFIC

Israel	Muslim	Islam	Israeli armed forces	Palestinian	Jewish
Jerusalem	settled	holy land	homeland	Judaism	Arab
Christianity	World War I	Palestine	independent nation	hijab	Arabic
Hebrew	bomb squad	gunman	United Nations	"planted" a bomb	
West Bank	Gaza Strip	settlement	terrorist	hostage	kibbutz
Sabbath	mosque	blessing	on leave	capoeira	Mecca

ACADEMIC

ethnic	religious	conflict	worship	village	custom
culture	traditional	relatives	wages	irrigated	profits
ancient	ancestors	centuries	rejected	citizen	sacred
conquered	tension	clashes	erupted	established	expanded
consisted	boundaries	withdraw	violence	peaceful resolution	
resolve	apprehension	counselor	respect	sign language	erupt
competition	equipment	volunteer	suspicious	dispose	bulky
communal	lopsided	region	peddlers	eagerly	wounded
torches	courage	gobble	disagreement	acrobatic	mutual
martial art	equality	disappear	immortality		

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1 and 3)

1. Who is Alya? Where does she live? What did you learn about her and her family?
2. Who is Yuval? Where does he live? What did you learn about him and his family?
3. Describe Meiser, where Alya lives. Describe Maor, where Yuval lives. How are these communities similar? How are they different?
4. How did Alya and Yuval meet? What experiences did they share?
5. What did you learn about Islam? What did you learn about Judaism? What are some Islamic rituals and traditions Alya practices? What are some Jewish rituals and traditions Yuval practices?
6. Why is there tension between the Palestinian and Jewish people? Summarize the Palestinian-Jewish conflict in your own words.
7. What is the Holy Land? What region in the world does it refer to? Why do people call the region the Holy Land?
8. What is the West Bank? What is the Gaza Strip? Where is Jordan in relation to Israel? Where is Egypt in relation to Israel? Where is Syria in relation to Israel? How do you know?
9. What is a hijab? Why does Alya wear a hijab? What does it mean to her?
10. Which languages are spoken at Peace Camp? Why does the camp have its name in three languages?
11. How do the campers communicate with one another if they don't share a common language? How does the camp make everyone feel welcome no matter what language they speak?
12. How is Peace Camp like other summer camps? How is it different?

13. What special visitors come to the Peace Camp? What are some of the lessons the campers learn from the visitors?
14. What are some of the reasons why the Israeli government built a barrier around most of the West Bank? What are some of the problems with having a barrier?
15. Where did the campers go on their field trip? What did they do? What did they learn?
16. What did Yuval, Alya, and the campers learn about what life was like in the region before the 1950s? What did people do for a living?
17. What is Alya's weekend like at home? What food does Alya's family prepare for dinner? What is Yuval's weekend like at home? What food does Yuval's family prepare for dinner? Compare and contrast the children's experiences.
18. What have the campers been looking forward to for two weeks? How are the activities during the sleepover different from the rest of the camp's activities?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking
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(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strand 6)

1. How do you think Alya's family and Yuval's family each feel about the conflict between the Jewish and the Palestinian people in Israel? What makes you think they each feel that way?
2. Even though Yuval and Alya live close to each other, why have they, their families, and their communities remained so separate? What factors or perceptions have kept (and continue to keep) the Palestinian Israelis divided from the Jewish Israelis?
3. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, what do the Palestinian people want? What do the Jewish people want? How does the author present the issues for both groups? Do you think the author presents both sides fairly? What makes you think so?
4. How do Alya and Yuval feel about going to Peace Camp in the beginning? Why do they feel that way? How do their feelings change by the end of the book?
5. What is the goal of the Peace Camp? (see page 17 of the book) Do you think the camp achieved its goal by the end of the book? Why or why not?
6. What does Peace Camp do well in promoting peace and understanding? What areas do you recommend Peace Camp improve upon for future campers?
7. Do you think a peace camp would be useful in the United States? What would the camp here be like? Who might most benefit by attending?
8. Why do you think the counselors planned an Olympics day? What do you think they wanted the campers to learn?
9. Why do you think the counselors planned for the police, medics, and a bomb squad to visit camp? What do you think they wanted the campers to learn?
10. Why do you think the counselors planned the field trips and the bread baking? Why would the trip include making bread in both a Jewish community and an Arab community? What do you think they wanted the campers to learn?
11. On page 39, the text mentions a camper who was wearing a T-shirt that said "the unspoken word never does harm." What do you think that saying means? How does Peace Camp help campers explore this message?
19. Why was the sleepover at camp important? What did the campers learn? What experiences did they share?
20. Why did the counselors plan a performance by Capoeira dancers? What do you think the counselors wanted the campers to take away from that performance? What do you think an art form created to practice traditional fighting skills can teach people about respect and equality?
21. Why do you think Peace Camp is for children? Do you think adults should go too? Why do you think so? How might Yuval and Alya's experiences help their families?
22. How might you use what you learned from this book to solve a problem in your life or your community?

Literature Circles

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

If you use literature circles during reading time, students might find the following suggestions helpful in focusing on the different roles of the group members.

- The **Questioner** might use questions similar to the ones in the Discussion Question section of this guide.
- The **Passage Locator** might look for lines in the story that explain aspects of Jewish and Palestinian culture.
- The **Illustrator** might create a large map of the region and include where Alya lives, where Yuval lives, and where the camp is located.
- The **Connector** might find other fiction and nonfiction books with themes of peace, respect, and tolerance. Suggestions from Lee & Low Books: [First Come the Zebra](#), [Bein' with You This Way](#), and [The Legend of Freedom Hill](#). The Connector can also investigate some of the recommended books and websites on page 44 of the book.
- The **Summarizer** might provide a brief summary of the group's reading and discussion points for each meeting, paying close attention to the theme of the book and the main idea.
- The **Investigator** might look for more information about the Israeli Palestinian and Israeli Jewish cultures described in the story.

*There are many resource books available with more information about organizing and implementing literature circles. Three such books you may wish to refer to are: GETTING STARTED WITH LITERATURE CIRCLES by Katherine L. Schlick Noe and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 1999), LITERATURE CIRCLES: VOICE AND CHOICE IN BOOK CLUBS AND READING GROUPS by Harvey Daniels (Stenhouse, 2002), and LITERATURE CIRCLES RESOURCE GUIDE by Bonnie Campbell Hill, Katherine L. Schlick Noe, and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 2000).

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)
(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3, Craft & Structure, Strands 4–6, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. On page 39, the text mentions a camper who was wearing a T-shirt that said "the unspoken word never does harm." How is this phrase important to the central meaning of the book? How would attending Peace Camp help the campers understand this phrase?
2. How have Alya and Yuval's lives been touched by violence? How does knowing about their experiences help you understand their perspectives and the need for Peace Camp?
3. Think about the barrier around the West Bank described in the book. How does the barrier keep the people of Palestine and Israel safe? How does it contribute to the conflict?
4. Why are adults sending their children to Peace Camp? How do you think the adults in this book hope the camp will change the situation in Israel?
5. Which parts of the book did you connect to the most? Which parts of the story did you connect to the least? Why? What memory can you share of attending a summer camp? What was it like to meet children from a different school, neighborhood, or town?
6. Have students write a book recommendation for *Sharing Our Homeland* explaining why they would or would not recommend this book to other students.

ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
 - Review the photographs in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
 - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about what they admire about a central figure in the story.
5. The story contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Student who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These may also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

Social Studies

(History/Social Studies Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1–2 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

1. Ask students to research Judaism and Islam. What are each religion's central beliefs? What are some of their major holidays? Where did Judaism and Islam originate? What are some traditions of each religion? Why is the Israel/Palestine region important to both religions? Compare and contrast the two religions. How are they similar? How are they different?
2. Allow students to investigate other current conflicts in the world where two or more cultures clash and struggle to find peace. How is that conflict similar to or different from the Israel-Palestine conflict? What are some solutions? What caused the tension?

Social Studies/Science

Have students explore the geography of the Middle East. What countries are in the Middle East? What are the physical features and the environments of the land? What is the climate like? Students may create several maps, each representing a specific aspect of the geography of the region. Also encourage students to think about how the geography of the area has historically made it difficult to create country lines in the Middle East.

Math

(Mathematics Standards, Measurement & Data, Solve Problems Involving Measurements & Conversions of Measurements, Strand 1)

1. Ask students to research recipes for the two breads, challah and taboon, described in the book. If you have access to a kitchen, divide students into groups and follow the directions in the recipe to bake the bread, providing hands on practice with measurement and temperature.
2. Have students practice converting the units of measure in the recipes. For example, if the recipe calls for one cup of flour, what is that equal to in tablespoons? If the recipe needs two tablespoons of honey, how many teaspoons is that? For older students, standard U.S. measurements could also be converted into metric units.

Writing

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 3)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strand 3)

1. Have students imagine that after summer camp for Yuval and Alya is over, they want to stay in touch. Students should write a letter or email as Yuval or Alya to the other. What questions might Yuval ask Alya? What questions might Alya ask Yuval? What might Yuval say about his life and family after camp? What might Alya say about her life and family after camp?
2. Peace Camp lasts only two weeks, and while some campers return year after year, most campers do not. If the author, Trish Marx, were to interview Yuval and Alya a year after they attended Peace Camp, what questions should she ask them? Have students come up with a list of interview questions, such as: What are Alya and Yuval up to now? What lessons from Peace Camp are still important to them?

Character Education

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3)

The following activities aim to promote respect and have been selected directly from [ABC Teaching Human Rights](#), created by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2003). To obtain this document as a PDF, and for additional tools on a peace curriculum, check out the [United Nation's CyberSchoolBus](#), a global teaching and learning project.

1. "In the Same Boat" (page 35): The teacher explains that people sometimes don't recognize ways in which they are alike. Then the teacher names a category (e.g. month of birth, number of siblings, kind of pet, favorite toy or game) and asks students to form a group with others who share that category with them. Older students can respond to more complex categories (e.g. number of languages spoken, career aspiration, hobby, favorite school subject). The game concludes with the question "What did you learn from this activity?" and a discussion of people's unrecognized similarities and differences.
2. "Cultural Identity/Cultural Diversity" (pages 71–72): Tell the class everyone has a cultural identity, of which they are often unconscious because it is so much a part of them. However, in countries with ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities or minorities of indigenous origin, cultural identity often becomes a human rights issue, especially when a more powerful group seeks to impose its culture on less powerful groups. Examine your own community.
 - Are there cultural minorities?
 - Are their cultures respected?
 - Do they participate freely and publicly in their culture, or are they expected to do so only privately or not at all?
 - Does your school encourage respect for the culture of minority groups?

- Discuss: Why is the right to cultural identity so important? Why is it important to preserve, develop, and appreciate different cultures? Why do dominant groups often seek to impose their culture on minority groups?

Art

1. Ask students the following questions: What does peace look like? What does it feel like? Have students create a painting or drawing that expresses the concept of peace. Students may also use old magazines and other print materials to create a collage with phrases and images that remind them of peace. Invite students to share their creations with the class and talk about what their images say about peace.
2. Create a class "peace quilt" whereby each student contributes one square and all the squares are assembled together. Students can draw, paint, or write about ideas that represent peace. These squares could be paper and then be stapled or taped together. Or the squares could be cloth and sewn together by students or adult volunteers. This peace quilt might be hung in the school hallway or in the classroom.

Home-School Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strand 2 and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strand 7)

1. Invite students to interview their parents, grandparents, or guardians. What was an activity or event that taught them about a new culture or group of people? Why was the activity or event so meaningful?
2. Encourage students with their parents, grandparents, or guardians to research local summer activities, camps, and other programs. What are the goals of the programs? What do children in their neighborhood do during the summer? If students were allowed to create a summer camp that lasted two weeks, what would be the goal of the camp? What activities would be available to campers?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Trish Marx has written several books for young readers and has collaborated with Cindy Karp on four other titles. Marx specializes in nonfiction, especially current events and environmental issues, interests that stem from her background in teaching and journalism. Marx lives in New York City.

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Cindy Karp has had a distinguished career as a photojournalist. She worked in Latin America for a decade as a photographer for *TIME*, and has traveled the world covering wars, political figures, and breaking news stories. She now works freelance for a wide variety of publications. Karp lives in Miami, Florida.

Book Information

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RESOURCES ON THE WEB

Learn more about ***Sharing Our Homeland*** at:

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/382/hc/sharing_our_homeland_palestinian_and_jewish_children_at_summer_peace_camp