

A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR

PALESTINE

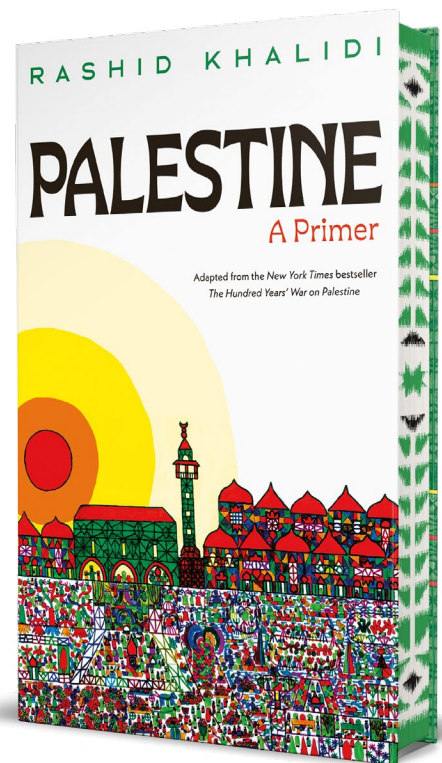
A Primer

About the Book

*Come for a walk with me, if you would, along the streets of Jerusalem.
My family has walked these streets for more than a thousand years . . .*

Rashid Khalidi invites readers to learn more about Palestine in what is both a deeply personal and yet expansive account of the last hundred years of the country's history. By blending detailed research with firsthand experiences, this book is in equal parts compelling and informative—the perfect educational resource for all ages. From the Balfour Declaration to Israel's siege of the Gaza Strip, Khalidi delivers a thorough portrait of the intricacies of the geopolitical conflict occurring in the Middle East while keeping the text broadly accessible.

This edition features beautifully designed patterned edges along with a plethora of maps, photographs, and illustrations. There has never been a more engaging way to learn about the history of this region.



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About the Author

Rashid Khalidi is the author of *Palestinian Identity*, *Brokers of Deceit*, and *The Iron Cage*, among others. His writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and many other journals. He is the Edward Said Chair Emeritus in Arab Studies at Columbia University and was the editor of the *Journal of Palestine Studies*.

Introduction

Khalidi ends this young adult adaptation by stating: *In a future world, Palestinians and Israelis could take these enormous steps to craft a different trajectory than that of oppression of one people by another. Only such a path based on equality and justice is capable of concluding the hundred years' war on Palestine with a lasting peace, one that finally brings with it the liberation of the Palestinian people from the colonial tutelage they have endured for more than a century—a peace they surely deserve.*

This book allows the reader to learn about the unfolding events in the ancient land of Palestine through a historical, personal, and statistical approach. To understand the complexities of the present-day situation between Palestine and Israel, we must first examine its historical roots. This book allows students, educators, and other readers to learn about Palestine not only as a colonial project but also as a bastion for Western powers.

Standards

C3 Social Studies Standards Alignment

Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries/C3 Indicators: D1.1.6-8, D1.1.9-12, D1.5.6-8, D1.5.9-12

Students can:

- Generate compelling and supporting questions about Palestine, identity, nationalism, colonialism, and human rights.
- Investigate historical and contemporary issues using multiple sources.

Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence/C3 Indicators: D3.1.6-8, D3.1.9-12, D3.2.6-8, D3.2.9-12, D3.3.6-8, D3.3.9-12

Students can:

- Analyze primary and secondary sources.
- Evaluate author perspective, purpose, audience, and reliability.
- Corroborate evidence across multiple texts.

Historical Thinking/C3 Indicators: D2.His.1, D2.His.4, D2.His.14, D2.His.16

Students can:

- Analyze continuity and change over time.
- Examine causes and consequences of historical events.
- Compare multiple perspectives.
- Evaluate historical narratives and collective memory.

Geographic Reasoning/C3 Indicators: D2.Geo.1, D2.Geo.4, D2.Geo.7

Students can:

- Analyze the relationship between people, place, migration, borders, and resources.
- Examine how geography shapes conflict and identity.

Civics and Human Rights/C3 Indicators: D2.Civ.2, D2.Civ.4, D2.Civ.10, D2.Civ.14

Students can:

- Evaluate the role of governments and international organizations.
- Analyze civic participation and movements for social change.
- Examine human rights frameworks.

Taking Informed Action/C3 Indicators D4.1, D4.4, D4.7

Students can:

- Develop evidence-based claims.
- Create public-awareness campaigns, presentations, or policy recommendations.
- Engage in informed civic dialogue.

Common Core ELA Standards Alignment

Reading Informational Text: Grades 6–8 RI.6.1–RI.6.8, RI.7.1–RI.7.8, RI.8.1–RI.8.8; **Grades 9–10** RI.9-10.1, RI.9-10.2, RI.9-10.6, RI.9-10.8

Students can:

- Cite textual evidence.
- Determine central ideas.
- Analyze how ideas, events, and individuals develop.
- Evaluate arguments and claims.

Writing Standards: W.6-12.1, W.6-12.2, W.6-12.7, W.6-12.8, W.6-12.9

Students can:

- Write evidence-based arguments.
- Develop explanatory texts.
- Conduct research projects.
- Synthesize information from multiple sources.

Speaking and Listening Standards: SL.6-12.1, SL.6-12.4

Students can:

- Participate in collaborative discussions.
- Evaluate diverse perspectives.
- Present claims using evidence.

Language and Vocabulary Standards: L.6-12.4, L.6-12.6

Students can:

- Analyze academic and domain-specific vocabulary.
- Determine meaning through context and source analysis.

Pre- and During Reading Activities

1. **Essential Questions:** Teachers can create a list of essential questions that can be used as students read the book. These questions can be but need not be limited to:
 - How does history shape the way people understand Palestine today?
 - How do narratives influence our understanding of historical events?
 - What responsibilities do historians have when telling difficult histories?
 - How can examining multiple perspectives deepen our understanding of conflict?
 - What role does human rights play in contemporary global issues?
 - How does geography influence identity, belonging, and power?
2. **Geography:** Provide students with a map to label so that they might gain familiarity with the Middle East. Geographic location provides context but also allows students to learn how the colonial structures created borders that were constantly changing in the region and that still impact policy today.
3. **Maps of Palestine:** The book is divided into parts, each of which contains a map that reflects the topic of that part. Have students analyze each map before reading with a [See-Think-Wonder](#). After reading each part, have students return to the map to discuss new learning that they can apply to the map.
4. **Timeline of Learning:** Create a timeline for students to capture their learning as they progress through the book. This can be a simple worksheet or they can copy the timeline into their notes section.

Top of timeline: new facts and ideas that help answer the essential student questions



Bottom of timeline: personal reflections, stories as students explore the readings

Important Events, People, and Documents

This book includes names of leaders, places, political documents, and events. To ensure students are able to keep track of all of the details, provide them with graphic organizers that allow them to fill in necessary information that includes but is not limited to the following:

- United Nations resolutions
- Palestinian freedom movements and organizations (Palestine Liberation Organization, Hamas, Fatah, etc.)
- Agreements and adoptions
- British political and social leaders
- American political and social leaders
- Palestinian political and social leaders
- Israeli political and social leaders
- United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees
- Jewish National Fund

Notes for the Educator

Here are a few ideas to keep in mind as you teach this book:

- The topic of teaching this history has always been considered “controversial” or “sensitive.” Please be aware of the lived experience your students bring to this topic. The book uses historical facts, data, and personal experiences to tell the story of how Palestine was transformed by a colonial project.
- Always use the term “Palestinian” or “Palestine” when referring to the people and the country. The use of the word “Arab” instead of “Palestinian” is a form of erasure.
- Ensure that students understand that the ideology of Zionism does not reflect the thoughts and ideas of all people who identify as being Jewish. There are many anti-Zionist Jewish communities around the world. Learn more about the history of the anti-Zionist Jewish community at [A Brief History of Anti-Zionist Jews](#) and in Ben Moser’s *Anti-Zionism: A Jewish History*.
- **Center Inquiry, Not Debate:** Palestinian history and contemporary events are often deeply personal for students and families. Avoid framing the existence, humanity, or rights of any people as a debate topic. Have students always focus on the question “What does the evidence tell us?” rather than “Which side is right?”
- **Avoid Treating Palestinians Only Through Conflict:** Many students encounter Palestine only through war, violence, or humanitarian crises. This can unintentionally reduce Palestinians to their oppression. Students should understand Palestinians as a people with rich histories, traditions, and identities—not solely through conflict.

"SOONER OR LATER A FALSE BELIEF BUMPS UP AGAINST SOLID REALITY, USUALLY ON A BATTLEFIELD." —GEORGE ORWELL

Discussion Questions

1. How does Khalidi use his family's status to teach and write about the history of Palestine? Why is this important as a historian?
2. Explain how the Ottoman Empire united the region. Why was that an obstacle for Western nations trying to colonize the region?
3. The printing press revolutionized how people learn and collect information outside of their own "world," and it transformed Palestinian culture and society. Examine how media and technology change our lives. Compare how such changes impacted early twentieth-century society.
4. Provide students with information on the idea of nation-states in Western countries. Have them apply that knowledge to how it influenced the colonization of Palestine.
5. The [Balfour Declaration](#) is sixty-five words long. Have students read the declaration then do the following:
 - a. Analyze the document
 - b. Highlight important words
 - c. What do you believe is being offered?
 - d. Who is being centered? Who is being erased?
 - e. Do you believe this declaration is fair? Explain.
6. What was the societal and psychological impact on the Palestinians after the defeat of the Ottomans by the British?
7. Throughout the book, Khalidi describes the various tactics used by the British, Israelis, and Americans to suppress information provided to the native population. Examine the various methods used and how they impacted Palestinian society. Do you find similarities in our society today?
8. "The surest way to eradicate a people's right to their land is to deny their historical connection to it" (page 17). Why does the author state this fact? How was this practiced by Zionists in Palestine?
9. Khalidi describes three steps used to create erasure of Palestinians. List the steps, then write a statement telling which one you believe is the most egregious.
10. An American delegation sent by President Woodrow Wilson warned: "If the American government decided to support the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, they are committing the American people to the use of force in that area, since only by force can a Jewish state in Palestine be established or maintained" (page 19).
 - Use this quote throughout the book to examine how this "commission accurately predicted the course of the subsequent century" (page 19).
11. Examine the methods used by the Palestinians to gain their freedom. How were their demands met?
12. The image below is from the 1936 Farmer's Revolt. After students examine the photo, have them:
 - a. Research the revolts of 1936–1939.

- b. Explain the significance of the revolts.
- c. How are these revolts still relevant today?



[Library of Congress: Palestinians at Abou Ghosh take oath of allegiance to protest British occupation and reject Zionist immigration. 1936](#)

- 13. The British used the same brutal tactics to suppress the people they colonized. Have students create a chart that examines the similarities between British colonial rule and the tactics used in various other colonies, for example: Palestine, India, Ireland, Hong Kong.
- 14. Examine the Peel Commission. What were the larger ramifications of this action by the British? Why do you believe the Palestinians rejected this commission?
- 15. The Nakba, Arabic for “catastrophe,” changed the lives of Palestinians for generations to come. Have students use infographics from [Visualizing Palestine](#) to learn more about the impact of the Nakba on Palestine.
- 16. What were the major social, economic, and mental effects of the Nakba on Palestinians? How did that event change Palestinian identity?
- 17. What role did other Arab countries play in the ongoing turmoil in Palestine? What was Khalidi’s perspective on Arab countries?
- 18. Why was the Six-Day War in 1967 a turning point in the relationship between Israel and the United States?
- 19. Describe the impact of the Israeli siege on Beirut. Why was this historic? Describe how the civil war in Lebanon was the turning point for:
 - a. Palestinian refugees
 - b. Palestinian freedom movements

- c. The Israeli image
 - d. The relationship between Israel, America, and Palestinians
20. Create a Venn diagram of the different religious and cultural groups in Lebanon: Druze, Shi'ite, and Sunnis. How did each change their support for Palestinians and why?
21. Ariel Sharon stated in December 1981: "We were going to see American-made munitions being dropped from American-made aircraft over Lebanon, and civilians were going to be killed" (page 111). Using information from [Visualizing Palestine](#), create a social media campaign that shows the amount of funds, arms, and military aid provided to Israel and how these funds can be better used for American needs.
22. There were two intifadas, or uprisings. Create a visual timeline that shows the historical significance of each uprising and how these changed the way Palestinians reacted to Israeli occupation.
23. Why does Khalidi say that the first intifada was similar to the 1936 revolts? Explain the similarities.
24. What were the Oslo Accords? What was the goal for each party at Oslo? Did either party achieve the goals that had been mapped out?
25. Khalidi explains that the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) failed to provide proper leadership for the Palestinians. Have students list all of the issues Khalidi lays out as failures of the PLO and write a letter to the PLO leadership explaining what they could have done to reflect stronger leadership for their people.
26. Read the [Declaration of Principles](#). How was this the turning point for Palestinians? What new advantages did this document give Israel?
27. What is Khalidi explaining with this statement: "Enlisting the PLO as a subcontractor for the occupation" (page 147)? How is this dangerous for Palestinians? What does this say about the role played by the occupier and the occupied?
28. Gaza was and still is the center of an area of massive contention for Palestinians and the Israeli government. Have students research the area of Gaza and create a digital or physical poster that shows:
- a. The historical significance of the city (coastal city and port for trade)
 - b. The changes of rule throughout the years
 - c. Who controlled the local government: Hamas versus Fatah
 - d. The effects of the many wars waged on Gaza from 2008 to the present
29. Examine the [Dahiya Doctrine](#). Why would this be hidden from American media? What do you think the responsibility of the United States is toward this type of doctrine being implemented by Israel?

Extension Activities

- **Palestine Through Images:** Have students choose two to four images of Palestine before Israeli military occupation using the [Palestine Photo Project](#) and have them create a poem that reflects the images they picked.

- Provide students with statistics from [Visualizing Palestine](#) or [Amnesty International](#) to create a slide deck explaining the continuous issues being faced by Palestinians under Israeli military occupation.
- **Analyzing Media Coverage:** Have students compare multiple news articles about the same event and evaluate:
 - Word choice
 - Framing
 - Sources cited
 - Missing perspectives
 - How does language influence understanding? What evidence supports each account?
- **Human Rights Investigation:** Have students explore articles from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and determine which rights are discussed throughout the book. Create a human rights report:
 - Relevant article(s)
 - Evidence from the text
 - Modern-day connections
- **Museum Exhibit:** Have students research and collect photographs, posters, artwork, family objects, embroidery (*tatreez*), passports, keys, or maps connected to Palestinian history to create a museum exhibit that amplifies Palestinian history.

Culminating Performance Task

How do stories, history, and evidence shape our understanding of Palestine and the people who call it home? Have students create a multimedia exhibit titled **Beyond Headlines: Understanding Palestine Through History, Culture, and Human Stories**. The exhibit should include:

- Historical evidence
- Geographic context
- Human rights analysis
- Personal reflection
- Recommendations for further learning

Abeer Ramadan-Shinnawi, MEd, is a Palestinian American educator, curriculum designer, and founder of Altair Education Consulting with more than twenty years of experience designing inquiry-based, culturally responsive curriculum. She is passionate about helping teachers bring historical complexity, multiple perspectives, and underrepresented narratives into the classroom. She develops inquiry-driven resources that amplify underrepresented histories and equip educators to engage students in thoughtful, evidence-based conversations about the world and its diverse communities.