

We Love Reading Children Books

Explore what lies beyond the pages



Summer|2024

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Letter from the Founder



Dear all,
Assalamu Alaykum,
To encourage reading, there are three stages:

1. Illiteracy is when children don't know how to read.
2. Aliteracy is when they know how to read, but they don't love reading.
3. Lack of books is the third stage, when there are not enough books.

At «We Love Reading,» we address stage two: fostering a love of reading so children can reap the benefits of reading. As more and more children fall in love with reading, we come up against stage three: a lack of children's books.

That is why at WLR we have embarked on a journey to develop children's books to enrich the literature, especially in Arabic. Most importantly, our books are for reading for fun!

Choose your favorite book and read it out loud to your friends and family.

رنا الرجاني



About We Love Reading

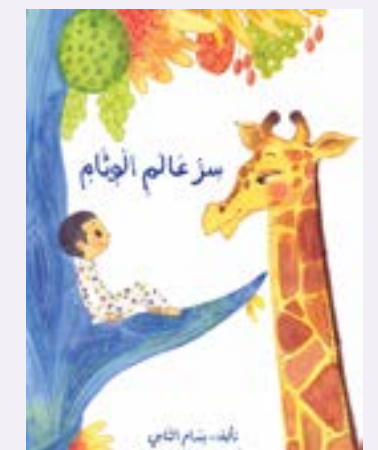
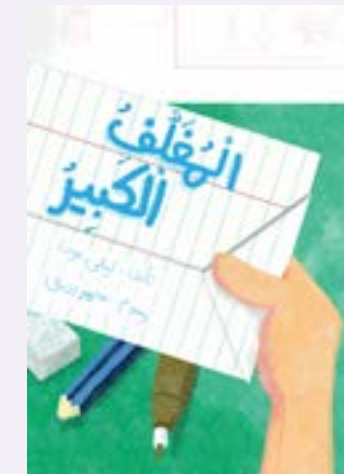
“We Love Reading” is a program that aims to changing mindsets through reading to nurture changemakers. Since its founding in Jordan in 2006 by Dr. Rana Dajani, the program has expanded to 71 countries with thousands of WLR ambassadors around the world.

Based on science and research, WLR aims to instill a love of reading for pleasure among children. Our philosophy is implemented by training local and international volunteers, both men and women of various ages, to read aloud in their native language to children in their local neighborhoods, nurturing a generation of changemakers through reading.

Read the Book



WLR Children Books

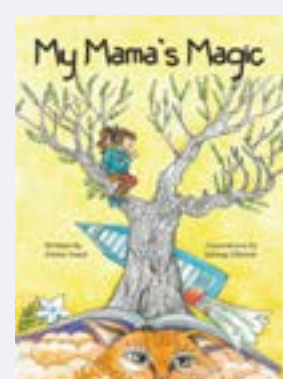


«Explore each book by clicking on it».



Our English Books

WLR Catalogue



Catalogue Review:



«Explore each book by clicking on it».



Children's Books Development

Since its establishment, We Love Reading has sought the optimal way to spread the joy of reading and studied the reasons why children don't read for fun. We delved deep into research and found that many children struggle to find books that suit their ages and cultures. Recognizing the importance of books, their role, and their content, we established a Children's Book Development Department within the We Love Reading program, which aims to produce books for children with neutral content from the local context in our rich Arabic language. This places in the hands of children all the factors that help them fall in love with reading. Additionally, we produced three children books in English to introduce our culture and civilization to other communities and cultures.

What is the process of book development?

The specialized department for developing children's books at the WLR program was established to create enjoyable and imaginative books that allow children to unleash their creativity. This is achieved by developing stories according to specific standards and methodologies, considering the book's theme and its suitability for the child's culture, background, language, and age. The We Love Reading program collaborates with writers, illustrators, designers, publishers, language editors, and educational consultants to ensure that the content of the books is of the highest quality and achieves the overall goal of making reading a beautiful world that children choose to visit.



It's worth mentioning that our latest book was printed using food-grade vegetable inks, such as soy ink, due to their printing quality and environmentally friendly properties. Until now, We Love Reading has developed 38 children's books covering a diverse range of topics.

The topics include:

- Environment: Resource conservation and waste management
- Compassion and social cohesion
- Non-violence
- Refugees
- Gender equality
- Disability
- Climate change

The We Love Reading program has distributed over 283,306 books across Jordan.

Arab Thought Foundation`s Criteria for Classifying Children`s Literature Books:

The books in the “We Love Reading” program have been classified in accordance with the standards of the Arab Thought Foundation, an independent international organization. The foundation aims to spread knowledge and develop structures and mindsets. Through the “Arabi 21” project, a set of criteria was adopted for classifying children’s literature books targeting students at all educational levels, Arab publishers, foreign publishers printing in Arabic, children’s literature authors and illustrators, educational and cultural institutions and associations encouraging reading, and educational teachers at various stages.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

Because the WLR Program seeks to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the books we develop are aligned with the SDGs “The SDGs are a call for action by all countries to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs, including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection.”



We Love Reading Online Training

We Love Reading aims to catalyze long term cultural change through reading and skills development. Our program helps thousands of local volunteers build new capabilities and enable them to act creatively for themselves and their communities.

We do so by training volunteers to read aloud to children. Join the «We Love Reading» online training with video subtitles available in 10 languages, and become a part of an unlimited community with thousands of WLR ambassadors in 71 countries around the world.

Get the training:





The Impact of We Love Reading Books in Research and Studies

In collaboration with top research institutions and international universities around the world, the We Love Reading program, through our Research and Studies Department, conducts scientific research on the impact of the WLR program on children and communities. This is done to evaluate its effectiveness and continuously improve our approach. Some of this research includes studies on WLR books and their effects on children, highlighting their potential impact in terms of developing essential social and emotional skills, increasing empathy, promoting positive social behavior, and fostering emotional care for others.

Among these studies, we mention the following:

Reading social stories in the community: A promising intervention for promoting children's environmental knowledge and behavior in Jordan

The study evaluates the effectiveness of a reading intervention aimed at increasing children's environmental knowledge and promoting eco-friendly behaviors.

By developing reading materials and stories within the We Love Reading program that address environmental issues such as water, energy, and waste disposal, the effectiveness of these materials is assessed by measuring changes in children's environmental knowledge and behaviors.

After analyzing the data and testing children before and after the intervention using worksheets, the results showed an increase in children's environmental knowledge and positive behavioral changes. The study indicates that the intervention positively impacted children's awareness and behavior regarding environmental issues.

Reading about people's feelings increases empathic concern and generosity in children

The study focused on empathy, revealing significant findings on the impact of reading on children's empathy and generosity. Conducted by researchers at Child Neurosis at the University of Chicago and the Hashemite University in Jordan, the study led by Jean Decety, Jason M. Cowell, and Rana Dajani examined how exposure to stories about people's emotions influences children's emotional development and positive social behavior.

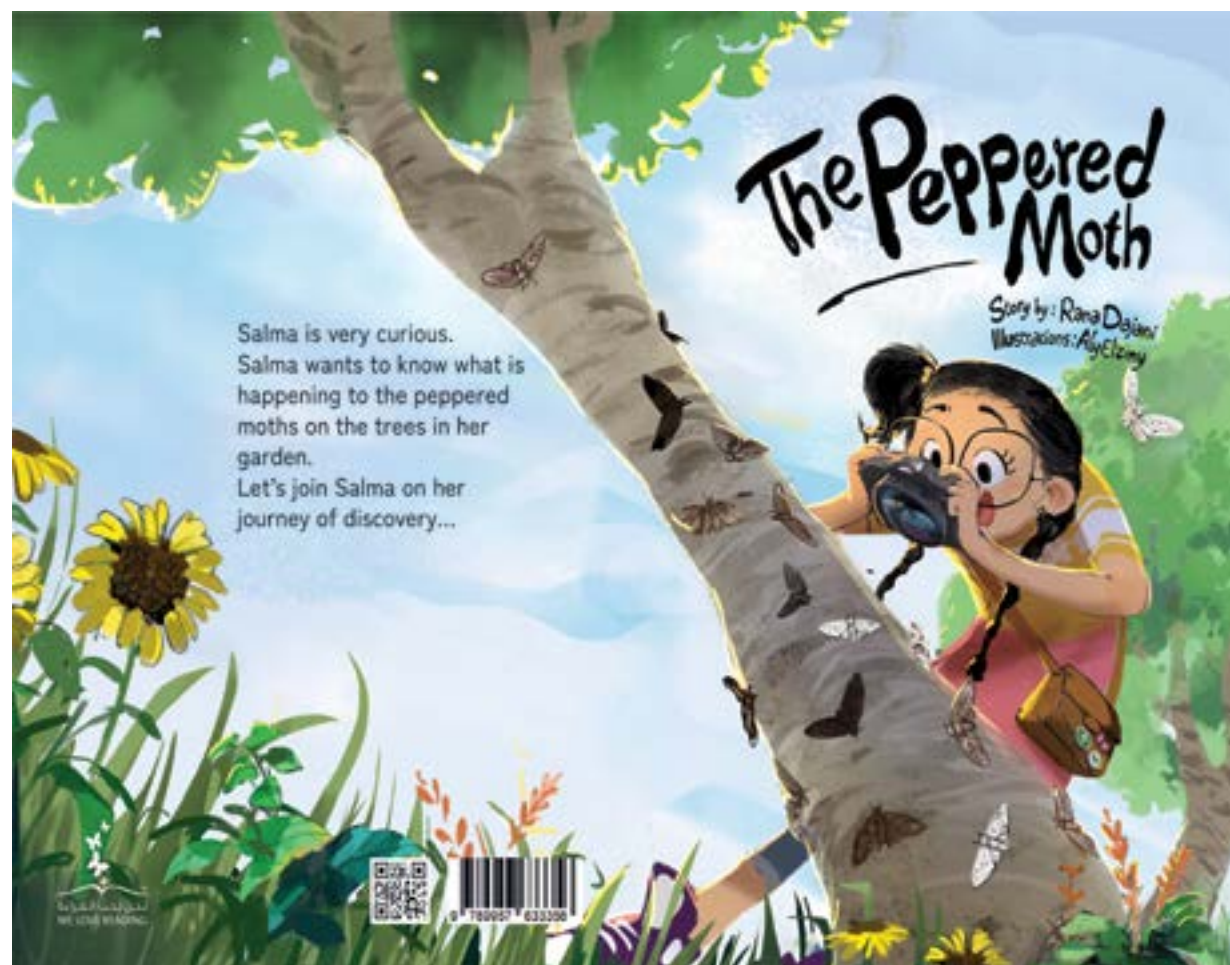
The study aimed to determine whether a targeted intervention involving emotional reading stories could enhance children's empathy and generosity. Through carefully designed experiments and assessments, the researchers sought to measure the intervention's effectiveness in promoting positive social behaviors among children.

The research included the children's levels of generosity, emotional concern, and sensitivity to others' pain using various measures, including a modified dictator game and physical booklets depicting scenarios of physical harm, along with WLR books about people's interactions and feelings. The control group did not receive any specific intervention.

The results revealed a significant increase in children's generosity after the intervention. Data analysis showed nearly a 100% increase in the generosity of children in the intervention group compared to the control group. Moreover, children who participated in the intervention exhibited greater empathetic concern, characterized by feelings of tenderness and compassion towards others. However, the intervention did not significantly impact children's sensitivity to others' pain, but it markedly enhanced positive social behavior and empathetic concern for others.

Numerous other studies have highlighted the potential of storytelling as a powerful tool to promote various positive behaviors among children. The innovative approach of the We Love Reading program not only enhances literacy but also nurtures essential social and emotional skills in children.

WLR's reading method inspires children to think independently. All the WLR's books have been read aloud to children. In this magazine, we share stories and reviews from the program's ambassadors and their experiences.



Book Review:



The Peppered Moth: Ignites Curiosity for Exploration in Science

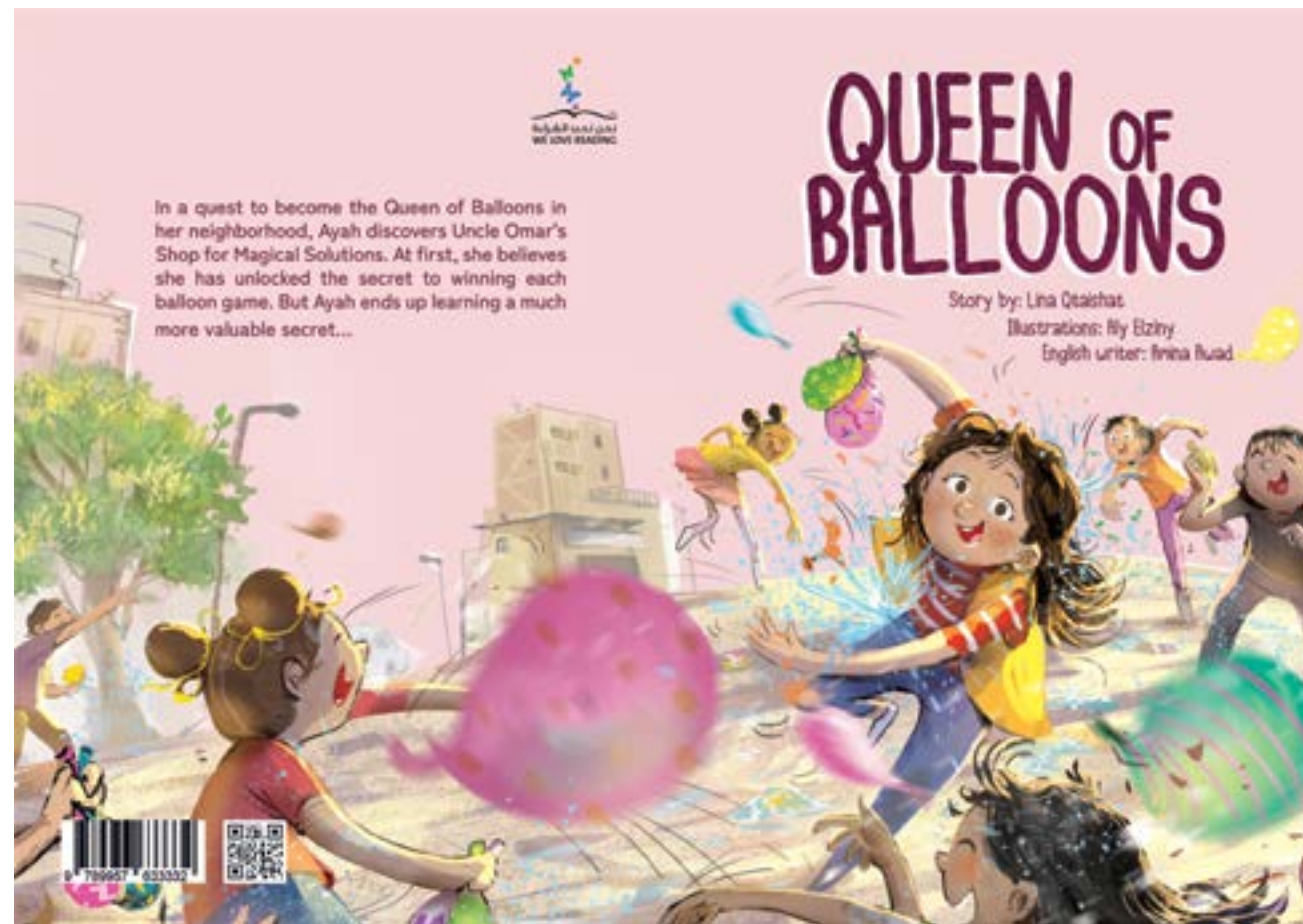
«The Peppered Moth» addresses multiple important issues in addition to being fun, entertaining, and beautiful. Through the scientific method employed by the protagonist, Salma, the story discusses the basic principles of natural selection, living organisms, biodiversity, mathematics, and climate change. It explores how organisms evolve and how we coexist in harmony with life and with each other. The book encourages children to think critically and serves as a journey through their real-life experiences.

«The Peppered Moth» was produced in both Arabic and English, written by Dr. Rana Dajani, with illustrations by Ali Al-Zaini, and translated into Arabic by Nada Abu Al-Dahab. The title of the story was chosen to introduce children to new concepts in science and to encourage them to search for and understand this name. Following the philosophy of engaging children's curiosity, it is important not to explain everything in books. Creating space for children to think and imagine is crucial, as explaining words during reading sessions interrupts their exploration journey and steals the fun. Speculation and investigation fuel curiosity within them, according to Dr. Dajani.

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«The story is rich in ideas, and its illustrations merge reality with imagination in a style that instills a love for knowledge and narrative suspense. This made children in reading sessions wonder and search for the peppered moth in the book and whether the moth is truly peppered, ultimately discovering the deeper meaning of the book,» says WLR Ambassador Amina Al-Jamil.

Our Ambassador Jameela Abu Malham also notes, «Building the characters in the story based on thinking, imagination, and the quest for exploration, presenting possibilities related to environmental pollution, teaches children new ways and methods of thinking about problems as well as finding solutions.»



Book Review:



Queen of Balloons: Stimulates Creativity and Innovation to Solve Problems

«In a quest to become the Queen of Balloons in her neighborhood, Ayah discovers Uncle Omar's shop for magical solutions. At first, she believes she has unlocked the secret to winning each balloon game. But Ayah ends up learning a much more valuable secret».

as you will discover in «Queen of Balloons» by the writer Lina Qatishat and the illustrator Ali Al-Zeini. The book has been released in both Arabic and English, translated into English by Amina Awad.

The issue of water scarcity and climate change is one of the most important global challenges troubling the world today. It opens the door to an infinite space of opportunities to find diverse solutions to spread awareness among both adults and children in all possible ways. This is the aim of the «We Love Reading» program through the book «Queen of Balloons», inspired by the character of the Jordanian scientist Omar Mounis Yaghi, a chemistry professor at UC Berkeley who invented a technique for capturing water from the air. This technique addresses the problem of water scarcity as one of the most important future challenges in the face of global climate change.

Given the importance of educating children from an early age indirectly, the writer tried to avoid perfection and give advice indirectly. The book focuses on a beloved activity for children without prohibiting them from doing it but rather encouraging them to search and innovate to find alternative solutions.

Additionally, common names in the Arab world were chosen for the characters so that the children could see themselves as characters within the book. The book focused on short paragraphs and rhymes, making the text comfortable to hear.

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“What caught my attention is that children aged 4 to 5 showed interest in the balloon game in the story, while children aged 10 to 11 focused on the plot and the scientific aspect. They wondered how the balloons were filled with water without anyone filling them. As a teacher, I appreciated the interactive idea presented in the book. Moreover, the story enriches language skills in children and enhances their problem-solving abilities,” says our ambassador, Huda Abu Al-Khair.



Book Review:



The Word Cook: Changing Bullying Behavior

This book addresses a social issue that children often face and helps them express their feelings, guiding them to distinguish between wrong and right behavior in an enjoyable and indirect manner.

Written by Maya Abu Al-Hayat and illustrated by Noor Dawood, «The Word Cook» has resonated with many reading ambassadors and their children. We mention some of those positive scenarios:

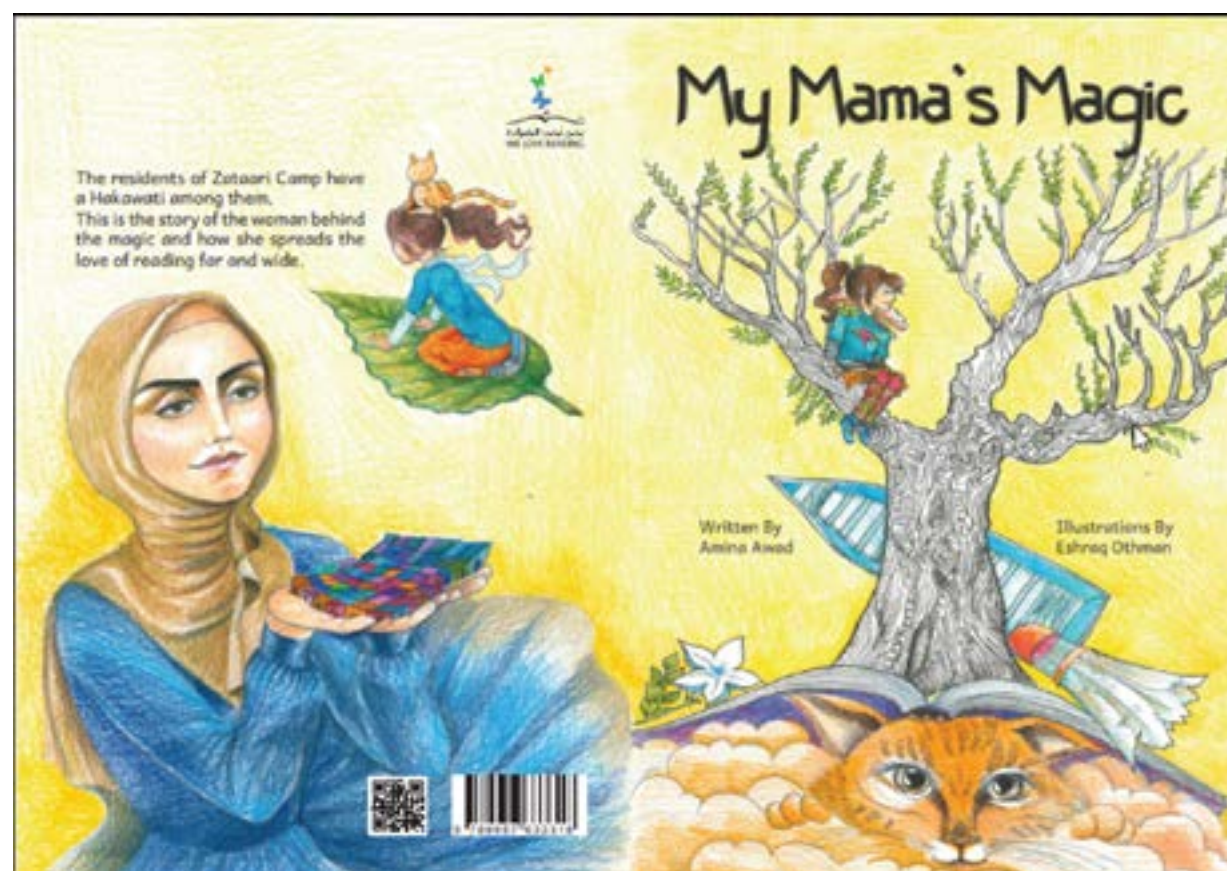
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«My child told me that he was being bullied at school by a friend because of a minor issue with his eye, so I asked him not to answer his friend back. Rather, I chose to employ the «We Love Reading» strategy to modify this tendency. I requested permission from the teacher to read the story of «The Word Cook» in his class among the students. When the children heard how we can cook up beautiful words and their impact, as well as the impact of negative words, the story indirectly made the other child feel embarrassed and led him to apologize for his words to the teacher as well as my child when he realized the consequences of those words. At that moment, I realized the impact we can have simply by reading a book,» says Amina Al-Jamal.

Ambassador of WLR Amneh Al-Jamal from Al-Zarqa Governorate shares how she was able to indirectly change the behavior of children through reading sessions and by reading «The Word Cook».

In this context, it's worth mentioning the research conducted by the «We Love Reading» program in collaboration with Harvard and Chicago universities on the effectiveness of the program's books in increasing children's empathy and significantly contributing to their emotional intelligence.

Many of the WLR ambassadors have also expressed the impact of «The Word Cook» on children and its role in making them think before speaking. They have highlighted the urgent need for such stories, which aspire to change children's behavior unconsciously by narrating stories that address topics from their daily lives and their own world.



Book Review:



My Mama`s Magic: Reading Aloud as a Savior From the Depths of Challenges

This book is based on the life of Asmaa Al-Rashid, a young Syrian mother of four who lives in the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan. Like most Syrian refugees, Asmaa has lived through the struggles of war and displacement, but she saw opportunity in every hardship and did not give up on the difficult living conditions. Asmaa's participation in the WLR training held in the Zaatari camp in 2014 was a turning point in her life. Afterward, she started holding reading sessions aloud for the children in the camp, then began building her own initiatives for reading books and personal development for teenage girls until she became an inspiring community leader capable of bringing about change.

Asmaa recounts that when she distributed the story to children in schools and camps, she saw the enthusiasm ignite in their eyes—they didn't want to go home to read it; instead, they stood at the school gate talking about it and reading. "I will never forget the scene," Asmaa recalls.

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She continues, "The book had a great impact, and I remember one of the girls who had cancer asking me, 'Can I be a hero and recover from cancer like the hero of the story?' When I told her about the great hidden power within humans and that she could be the hero of her own story, she embraced the story as if she felt it was a source of hope for her. Here, I realized the importance of reading inspiring real-life stories."

During the reading session, Asmaa didn't tell the children that she is the character in the book. She says, "It was amazing to see the children in the reading sessions flipping through the pages, comparing the illustrations with my features, and their eyes telling me that it's you."

In terms of impact, Asmaa points out that the echoes of the book conveyed a mix of feelings of strength and sadness among the children and created interaction with sentences that invited them to applaud and engage. But what impressed Asmaa the most was when she read the story in France. She says, "I was reading 'My Mama's Magic' next to one of the children who was translating it, and I was amazed by the repetition of the same feelings and interaction when I read it to Arab children. At that moment, I felt that a child is a child, that they are similar in every society and place, despite the differences in lifestyle, but the feelings are the same."

It is worth mentioning that in addition to the Arabic and English books, Asmaa's story has been adapted into a documentary titled "The Neighborhood Storyteller," which has won numerous international awards and was directed by Alejandra Alca and produced by "Home Storyteller."



Book Review:



Zanbout: A Reading Session Full of Imagination

«A new day with the siblings Fares and Dima is filled with inventions and explosions. But this time, something unexpected happens with a strange guest who loves popcorn. Who is this guest? Where did he come from? And how will he leave?»

In the book «Zanbout,» written by Leila Oudah with illustrations by Eshraq Othman, laboratories and explosions happen in Dima and Fares' laboratory, which you will discover.

This book is considered one of the most enjoyable stories for children due to its attractive colors, captivating illustrations, and adventurous characters. The book is full of exciting events, funny sentences, and imagination, making it endearing to children's hearts and close to their world. In addition to its vibrant colors and detailed illustrations saturated with story elements that captivate their attention, the book indirectly and intelligently discusses people with disabilities in a very friendly and unusual manner.

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“Zanbout” is one of the books that children ask to read more than once; it represents real joy during reading and inspires children through its funny sentences, striking at the center of their imagination. It stimulates them to think as if they were scientists. After reading it, they started looking for their own enjoyment and establishing their own corner to ignite their passion.

“In my opinion, after each reading session, the more the child asked, the more the book touched them, and the more they imagined. Despite the fact that WLR's books taught my children to choose suitable books and gave them artistic taste, the WLR training taught me something I used to overlook while reading, which is acknowledging the author and illustrator of the book. This surprised me when I found the children memorizing the names of their favorite book writers. But for me, ‘Zanbout’ was one of the books that sparked questions in the children's minds. In addition, ‘Zanbout’ taught our children to imagine and dream,” says Seba Hassa, Ambassador of the WLR program.

Questions in a Travel Bag



Book Review:



“What questions can a child carry in a travel bag? Does the taste of stuffed zucchini in the new house differ from its taste in the old house? Perhaps we find one answer to the question, and perhaps we find thirteen. But first, let’s gather some questions in the travel bag.”

The children’s book “Questions in a Travel Bag” by Maya Abu Al-Hayat, with illustrations by Eshraq Othman, raises topics and questions that children might find difficult to articulate. They might discuss these questions among themselves rather than with adults, so the travel bag arrives, collects the questions they have in a book, and reads them aloud.

Here, the book’s goal is to express what we are unable to express and to articulate what is imprisoned within us.

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Our ambassador in Lebanon, Suzanne Stellah, tells her story with the book, saying: “It was a coincidence when I stumbled upon the We Love Reading (WLR) training. While searching for the book ‘Questions in a Travel Bag’ to find it on the WLR website, I connected with the team, and they recommended the WLR training. Afterwards, I conducted a reading session for ‘Questions in a Travel Bag’ using the special technique of the WLR program ‘reading for pleasure.’

I felt the profound impact of the book on us as Palestinians and refugees. I endeavored to convey its messages to our children, ensuring not to confine them within the ‘travel bag.’ I want them to understand what the ‘travel bag’ signifies and how it can always transport us to the joy that We Love Reading helped me discover during the reading session.”

From WLR ambassadors and their discussions through the WLR community, we have touched on the fact that “Questions in a Travel Bag” extends not only through its content but also through the illustrations of the book. WLR ambassador Zhour Dghimat mentioned: “The children ask me to place the book on the floor to meditate on the detailed drawings as well as the fantastic colors, as if they would not miss anything from its illustrations and capture it through their eyes.”



Book Review:



Tomorrow I will be: Children's Compass Guides Them on the path of Their dreams

In "Tomorrow I Will Be," the young adventurer lives wondrous stories after each bedtime tale is read, awakening the next day to embark on a journey you never expected. Who will the young adventurer be tomorrow? "

Tomorrow I Will Be," written by Bassam Al Taj and illustrated by Diala Zada, captivates children's minds by attempting to answer the question of who they hope to become one day, drawing them into a world brimming with imagination where they can be anything they wish.

Through WLR ambassadors, we learn about the profound impact of books and how they, alongside reading sessions, have been instrumental in instigating change and fostering reconsideration in children.

Ambassador Jamila Abu Malham from Jerash shared one memorable incident when she read the book at a school. She began the reading session by asking the children what they wanted to be in the future. Among the varied answers ranging from engineer to doctor to carpenter to teacher, one child expressed a desire to be a "thief." Abu Malham recalls:

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"Despite my attempts to explain to him that it's not a good profession, he wasn't affected. But after concluding the session with the book 'Tomorrow I Will Be,' the child came to me to say that he wants to become an ophthalmologist to treat my eyesight problems instead of wearing glasses. That's when I touched the greater impact of the book. If I had spoken to him repeatedly, perhaps he wouldn't have changed his mind like the book did."

This book beautifully illustrates the transformative power of literature, showing how it can shape aspirations and redirect paths toward more constructive and beneficial futures.



Book Review:



The Big Envelope: Changes a Common Behavior in Schools

A large envelope turns the story upside down between Omar and Hamza. So, what's beyond the big envelope? And what's inside it?

The book «The Big Envelope» by Leila Ouda, with illustrations by Samar Zariq, discusses an issue widespread among children.

Despite its prevalence, its solutions are often limited, traditional, and not effectively changeable. «The Big Envelope» is part of the children's book development section of «We Love Reading,» aimed at discussing social issues and addressing behaviors that may cause problems for children and persist with them.

«We Love Reading» ambassador Lena Al-Ghurair draws attention to «The Big Envelope» as one of the books that has made the most impact through its experiments. As a teacher, Lena considers the behavior around which the story revolves to be very prevalent in schools. She emphasizes the urgent need for such books to gradually eliminate such behaviors among children.

Through multiple read-aloud sessions within the school, Al-Ghurair has noticed a change in the behavior of children and their retreat from wrongdoing. She has spread a new culture of apology among the children. Whenever a child engages in wrong behavior, they are reminded of Omar and Hamza in the story, causing them to retract. It's as if they are searching for the character of goodness to represent them in the book and distancing themselves from a character they used to imitate.

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However, their perspective has become broader after seeing that character in the book and its end, according to Al-Ghurair. «Teaching children to solve their problems by themselves in a manner that is close to them and within their capabilities, away from what we currently see in the form of solving problems among friends through violence, but rather through smart and extremely friendly communication methods,» says Lena Al-Ghurair.

Rights of the Reader



Daniel Pennac is a French novelist and writer of children's literature. In his book "Better than Life," he discusses the transformation that occurs in individuals after they learn to read in childhood, discovering a vast world that changes them permanently. Pennac reminds us that reading is, above all, an act of pleasure and free will. In his "Ten Rights of the Reader," Pennac lists ten rights that every reader must enjoy:

1. The right not to read.
2. The right to skip.
3. The right not to finish a book.
4. The right to read it again.
5. The right to read anything.
6. The right to mistake a book for real life.
7. The right to read anywhere.
8. The right to dip in.
9. The right to read out loud.
10. The right to be quiet.

Thanks to Those Who Helped Us Imagine!



"The pleasure is the key element in writing for children. If a child enjoys a book, he will read it and be influenced by its ideas. If not, he will set it aside and likely won't return to it. To create a generation of readers, we must provide them with authentic and engaging books that draw them in and speak to their interests." Taghreed Najjar is a pioneer of modern children's literature in Jordan.

We have been moved by the impact of WLR books on our ambassadors and their children, covering a myriad of topics.

Many children have evolved into discerning readers of high-quality literature, choosing stories that resonate with their own experiences and interests. As a result, they have gained the ability to critique and appreciate stories both as writers and readers.

They often recall specific sentences and illustrations in their daily lives. "Earthquake in the Kitchen" has become a common phrase when chaos erupts in their kitchens. "Kenan and the Watermelon Head" helped them understand themselves better.

They've discovered the secrets of dreams in "The Secret of the World of Harmony" and have delved into environmental issues through books that explore our planet's hidden treasures. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the creators behind these captivating books who have sparked a love for reading in our children.

These sentiments reflect the shared goal of every writer and artist: to instill a love of reading in children. The genuine joy found in these books springs from the minds and hearts of our writers and illustrators, who envision themselves as children first, before authors and artists. They deserve our gratitude and admiration for creating books that can transform children's lives and illuminate a brighter future for them.

How to Develop a Children's Story

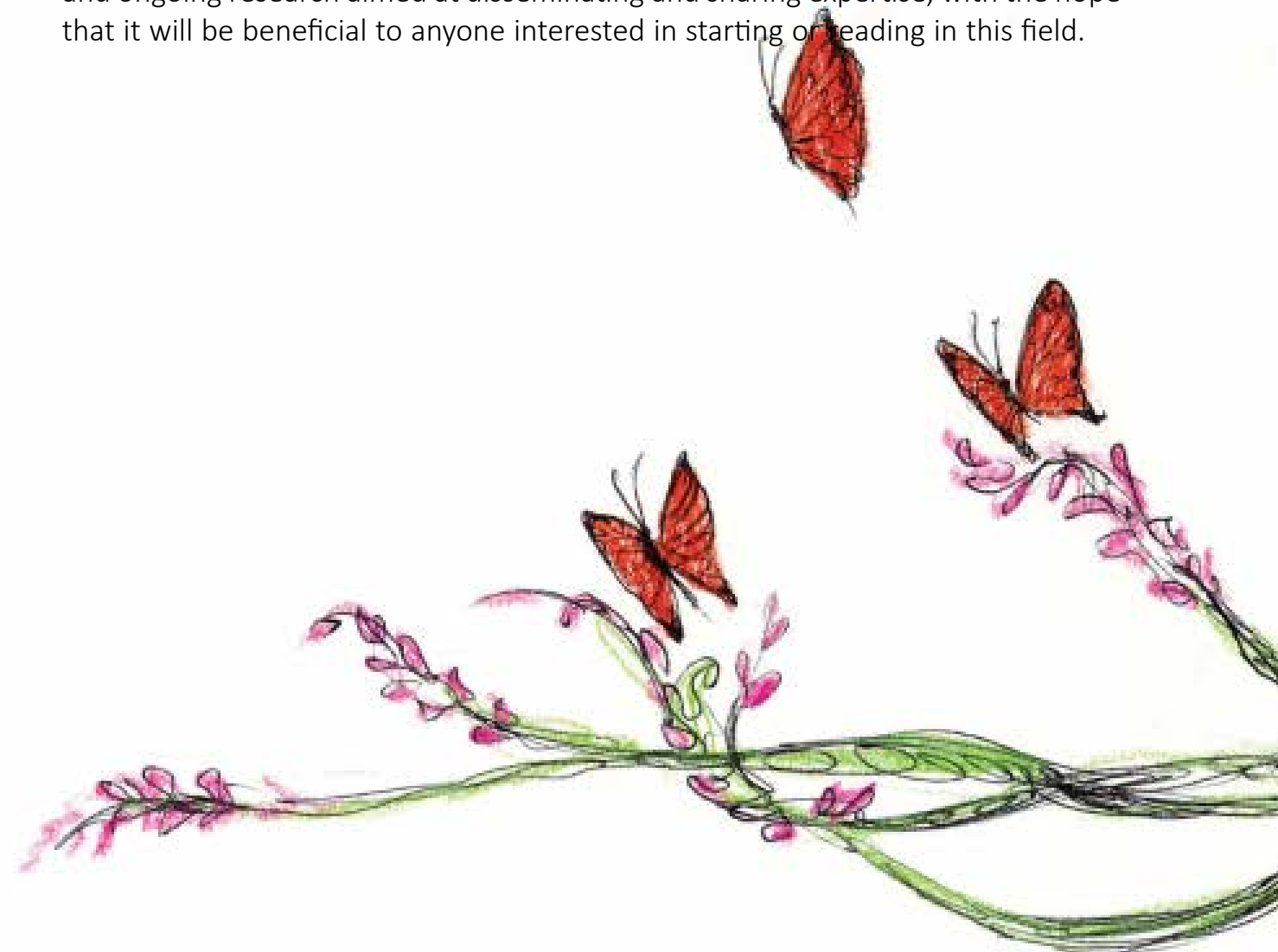
We Love Reading's Guide to Developing Children's Books

The guide for developing illustrated children's books aims to introduce anyone interested in the field of children's literature to the fundamental components and stages regarding written content, illustrations, and design for creating and writing illustrated children's stories. This concise guide is the result of continuous research in the field of children's books, in addition to accumulated work experiences through managing several projects in this field. The guide was written from a personal perspective through working with a distinguished and specialized team within the «We Love Reading» program, where we were involved in all stages of intensive work with writers, illustrators, designers, and language editors.

Through this guide, we have referenced examples of books that we developed in the WLR program to illustrate ideas and concepts. It's worth noting here that this guide is not a scholarly reference but rather a reflection of personal experiences and ongoing research aimed at disseminating and sharing expertise, with the hope that it will be beneficial to anyone interested in starting or leading in this field.



Review the guide:





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