

AS LONG AS THE LEMON TREES GROW

ZOULFA KATOUH
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE PACK



Dear reader,

This educational resource pack is based on Zoulfa Katouh's breathtaking debut *As Long as the Lemon Trees Grow* and provides an excellent teaching resource for students in KS4. It includes a range of discussion questions and activities designed to keep readers engaged and keen to explore the important themes of the book. Key themes featured throughout this hard-hitting novel include: Syria – past and present, war and conflict, refugees, hope, family and friendship, grief, love, freedom and Injustice.

We hope you enjoy reading and discussing this unforgettable story but please note that this book covers some incredibly sensitive and potentially triggering issues.

It is advised that teachers, parents or carers read the book before sharing with students.



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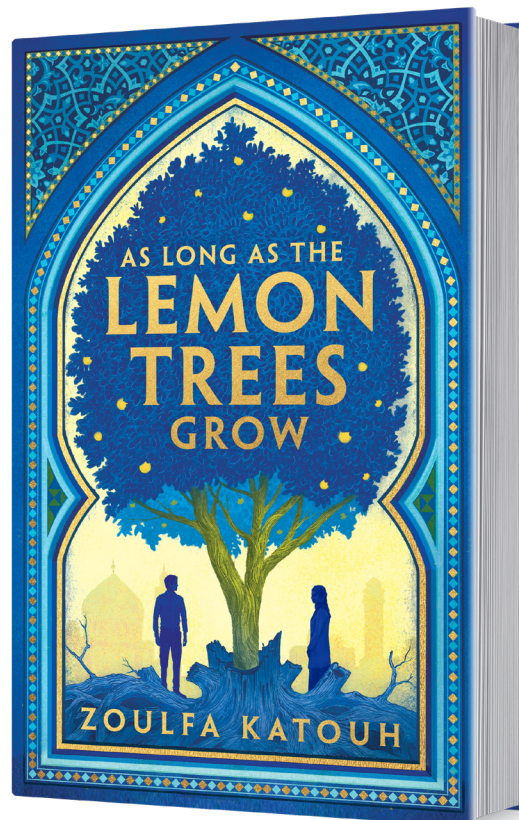
ABOUT THE BOOK

BURNING WITH THE FIRES OF HOPE AND POSSIBILITY, AS LONG AS THE LEMON TREES GROW WILL SWEEP YOU UP AND NEVER LET YOU GO.

Salama Kassab was a pharmacy student when the cries for freedom broke out in Syria. She still had her parents and her big brother; she still had her home. She was even supposed to be meeting a boy to talk about marriage.

Now Salama volunteers at a hospital in Homs, helping the wounded who flood through the doors. She knows that she should be thinking about leaving, but who will help the people of her beloved country if she doesn't? With her heart so conflicted, her mind has conjured a vision to spur her to action. His name is Khawf, and he haunts her nights with hallucinations of everything she has lost.

But even with Khawf pressing her to leave, when she crosses paths with Kenan, the boy she was supposed to meet on that fateful day, she starts to doubt her resolve in leaving home at all. Soon, Salama must learn to see the events around her for what they truly are—not a war, but a revolution—and decide how she, too, will cry for Syria's freedom.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Zoulfa Katouh is a Canadian writer with Syrian roots. A trilingual pharmacist, currently pursuing a master's in drug sciences, Zoulfa is the first Syrian author to be published in both the US and the UK in the young adult category. When she's not talking to herself in the woodland forest, she's drinking iced coffee, baking aesthetic cookies and cakes, and telling everyone who will listen about how BTS paved the way. Her dream is to get Kim Nam-joon to read one of her books. If that happens, she will expire on the spot. *As Long As the Lemon Trees Grow* is her debut novel.



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CONTENTS

Explore Themes of: √ Syria - past and present √ War and conflict √ Trauma √ Refugees √ Hope √ Family and friendship √ Grief √ Love √ Relationships √ Freedom √ Injustice

Subject Checklist: √ English √ History √ PSHE √ Citizenship √ Geography

This pack contains extracts, discussion prompts and activity suggestions suitable for use in classroom, book club or library sessions.

1. Exploring key themes and concepts

Objectives: Identify key themes in the novel; use quotations from the text to understand the key themes.

Activity: Discuss the front cover; match quotations from the text to themes.

2. Discussing extracts from the text

Objectives: Develop a personal response to the text through discussion of themes, characters and plot; use textual references including quotations to develop and explain ideas.

Extract 1: Trauma and fear

Objectives: Discuss the impact of trauma; explore the theme of plants and botany in the novel.

Activity suggestion: Make a flower scrapbook.

Extract 2: Sunset in Homs

Objectives: Analyse the theme of colour in the novel; gain an understanding of the history and culture of Syria.

Activity suggestion: Record how colour is used in the novel; research Syrian history and culture.

Extract 3: To stay or to leave?

Objectives: Empathise with the experience of refugees; understand the theme of stories and storytelling in the novel.

Activity suggestion: Create a mind map of different stories included in the novel.

3. Reflecting on the novel

Objectives: Consider and summarise the messages of the text; reflect upon the impact of the novel on the reader; discuss key themes in the novel.

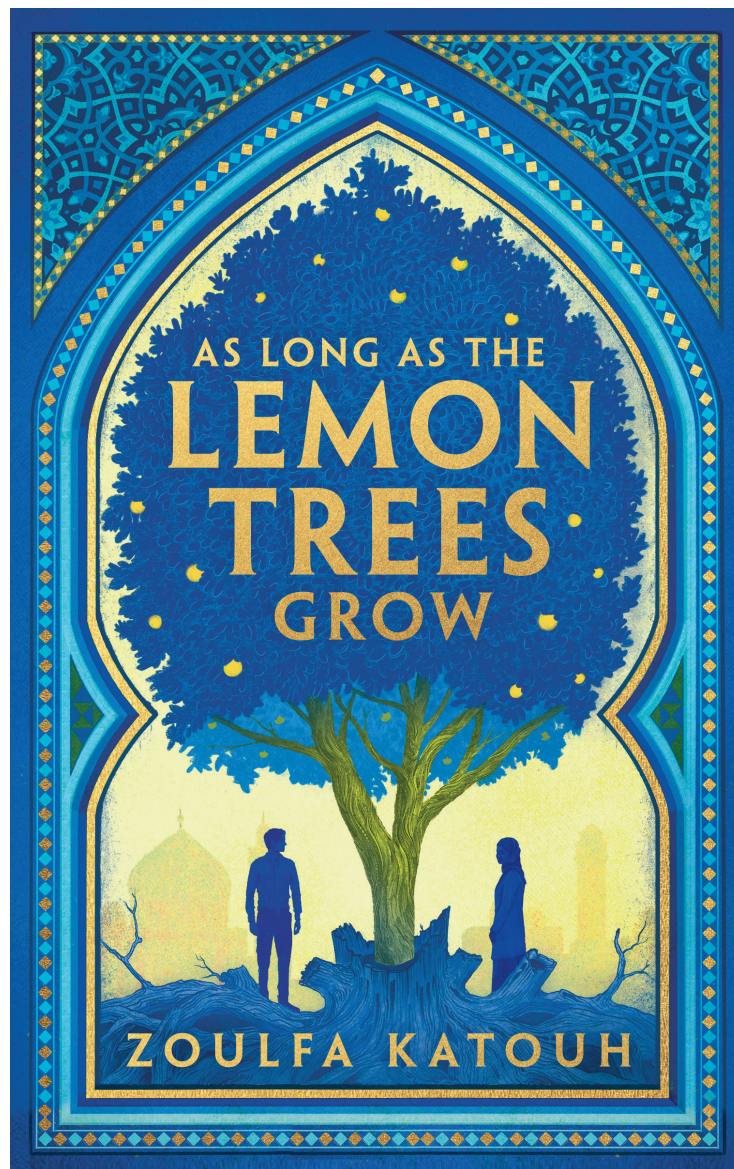


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EXPLORING KEY THEMES AND CONCEPTS



1. What prominent images or imagery do you see on the cover?
2. Where do you think the book might be set?
3. Can you guess any themes or concepts that might be explored in the book?
4. What do you like/dislike about this cover?



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Themes are the main ideas that lie beneath the surface of a text. Below are some of the key themes that run through the novel *As Long as the Lemon Trees Grow*. Can you think of any more themes explored within the novel? See if you can add at least two more to the list.

- Syria
- War and conflict
- Trauma
- Hope
- Refugees
- Plants and botany
- Love
- Belonging
-
-

Extracts and quotations from a novel can help us to understand its themes. Below are some quotations from *As Long as the Lemon Trees Grow*. Underneath each quotation, write down which theme (or themes) you feel it relates to.

‘It’s not a war, Salama. It’s a revolution.’ – Layla, page 12

‘He’s a defence mechanism my brain has provided, trying to ensure my survival by any means necessary.’ – Salama, page 35

‘As soon as I allowed myself to think about leaving, seedlings of hope grew in my brain, taking over my imagination.’ – Salama, page 115

‘No matter what happens, you remember that this world is more than the agony it contains. We can have happiness, Salama.’ – Layla, page 152

‘Germany is not the answer to a life of guaranteed joy. It’s not home. But it’s safety.’ - Salama, page 160

Can you pick out some more interesting quotations from the book? How does each quotation help you to understand the underlying themes and characters in the book?



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EXTRACT 1: TRAUMA AND FEAR FROM PAGES 206–207

In this extract, Salama has said goodnight to Layla and is going to bed ...

The sun's feeble rays have vanished from my room's scratched floorboards, and the dark cloak of the night takes over Homs. My teeth chatter for a bit with anticipation before I clamp my lips shut, swallowing thickly. Whatever control I exude during the day falters when the sun sets. I sit on my bed, close my eyes and take deep breaths. I need to clear my mind. I need to focus on something other than the fear and pain that have taken root in my soul.

'Sweet alyssum. Sweet as their name,' I murmur, praying for my nerves not to fail me. 'White petals. Used for pain relief. Also for colds, abdominal cramps and coughs. Sweet. Sweet.'

It works. My lungs begin distributing the oxygen evenly to my blood. I open my eyes and watch the thicket of grey clouds outside my window. The glass is chipped at the sides from when Layla's home took the impact of a nearby bomb, and the frame is splintered. When I moved in, I had to wash blood from the pane.

Despite the window being locked, a chill sweeps the room, and I shiver, knowing what's about to happen. The horror I see isn't just confined to the hospital. My terror has mutated in my mind, bestowed with a life and a voice that never fails to show up each night.

'How long are you going to sit there without talking to me?' The deep voice comes from beside the window sill, sending gooseflesh all over my neck.

His voice reminds me of the freezing water I splash over myself when I come home drenched in the martyrs' blood. It's stones weighing on my chest, sinking me to the earth below. It's heavy as a humid day and deafening as the bombs the military throws on us. It's what our hospital is built on, and the wordless sounds we make.

I turn towards him slowly. 'What do you want now?'

Khawf looks at me. His suit is crisp and clean. It troubles me, though, the specks of red lining his shoulders. They've been there since we met, and I still haven't got used to them. But I don't like looking at his eyes either – icy blue. With his midnight-black hair, he doesn't look human, which I suppose is the point. He looks as close to human as he can try to be.

'You know what I want,' his voice ripples, and I shiver.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Can you find any evidence in the text to suggest that Salama feels and acts differently during the day than during the night? Why do you think this is?
2. Why do you think Salama repeats the name of the plant 'sweet alyssum'? How does reciting information about the plant help her?
3. What do you think Salama means when she says, 'My terror has mutated in my mind, bestowed with a life and a voice that never fails to show up each night'?
4. Can you underline any words or sentences that tell you how Salama feels when she hears Khawf's voice?
5. Do you have an image of Khawf in your mind? How would you describe him? Where do you think he comes from?



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EXTRACT 2: SUNSET IN HOMS

In this extract, Kenan has taken Salama up on to the roof of his old home ...

He turns towards me, his smile serene. 'When was the last time you saw the sunset, Salama? Properly saw it.' I frown. 'I don't remember.'

'With all the destruction happening down there, it's easy to forget the beauty that's up here. The sky is so beautiful after rainfall.'

'*The most beautiful sunsets are always the ones that come after a rain,*' I said to Layla once when we were at her family's summer house in the countryside. We'd been stuck inside all day, watching a storm rage against the windows, unable to go swimming in the river beside the gardens. Layla had played with my hair while we watched *Castle in the Sky* from Baba's laptop. It was the perfect comfort movie when the clouds were grey and the raindrops chased each other on the windows.

And I was right.

The sky is now a burst of purple and pink fragmenting through the tangerine orange, the clouds taking on a lavender tinge.

'You asked me if you could see colours again, Salama. If we deserve to see them,' Kenan says quietly. 'I think we do. I think you can. There's too little of it in death. In pain. But that's not the only thing in the world. That's not all that Syria has. Syria was once the centre of the world. Inventions and discoveries were made here; they built the world. Our history is in the Al-Zahrawi Palace, in our mosques, in our earth.'

He points to the ground below and I peek over the ledge, my nerves electrified with the fear of falling. I squint and see two little boys and three girls laughing, playing some sort of game.

'Look at them,' Kenan says. 'Look how even the agony hasn't stripped their innocence.'

Then he points to a tree situated at the street's side. Its three thick trunks twist through each other, the branches brittle-looking, a hint of green leaves surfacing through its pores. 'That lemon tree's been here forever. I used to climb it all the time when I was younger. I think there's a picture Baba took of me sitting atop it, with Yusuf hanging to my side.'

I stay silent and glance at him. His tone is full of melancholy, his eyes capturing the golden light. He sighs, shaking away the memories, and looks at me, smiling. 'There's still beauty, Salama. Still life and strength in Homs.' He nods towards the sun. 'There's colour.'

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Kenan brings Salama to watch the sunset?
2. What does the word 'serene' mean? Can you give some synonyms and antonyms of the word 'serene'?
3. Kenan points out the contrast between the destruction on the ground and the beauty of the sky. How many other contrasts can you find within this extract and within the novel as a whole?
4. What signs or symbols of hope can you find in this extract?
5. Can you underline all the colours in this extract?



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ACTIVITY SUGGESTION 1: COLOUR

In the grid below, note down where each of the colours appears in the novel.
(You can add any more colours that you spot in the text in the empty box at the bottom)

BROWN	Mama's hair, Salama's eyes ...
BLACK	
GREY	
RED	
BLUE	
YELLOW	
GREEN	
PURPLE	
PINK	
GOLD	
ORANGE	

Discuss the following questions with a partner or group:

- What is the significance of colour in the novel?
- Can you find any more quotes from the book that help you to understand the theme of colour?
- Look at the front cover of the book. What colours has the cover designer chosen to use in their design? Why do you think they chose each of these colours?
- Imagine you're a cinematographer and you're adapting *As Long as the Lemon Trees Grow* into a film. What colour palette will your movie have? How will you use colour to convey the characters' emotions and tell the story?

Challenge:

Can you use colour to create a piece of art exploring one of the themes or characters in the novel?



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ACTIVITY SUGGESTION 2: SYRIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

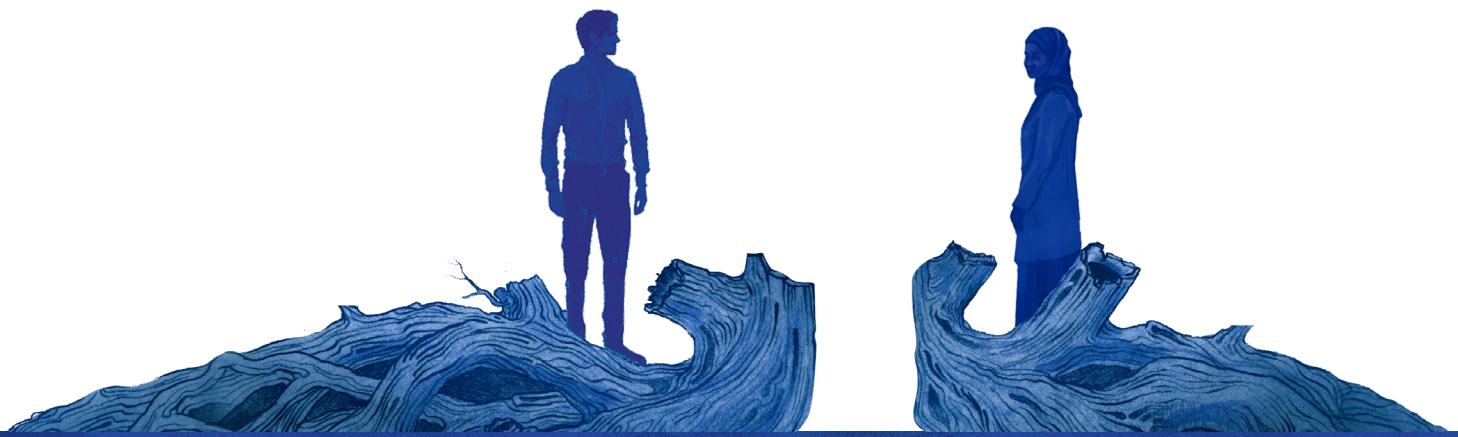
Kenan says, 'Syria was once the centre of the world.' What do you know about the history and culture of Syria? What would you like to know? Research the history and culture of Syria using books and online sources. If you know anyone from Syria, you could talk to them too.

You might like to find out about Syria's:

- History
- Language
- Religion
- Architecture
- Art, music and literature
- Food
- Location and landscape

Use your research to create a collage about Syrian history and culture inside the image of the arch on the following page. You could include drawings, photos, maps and facts you have discovered about Syria. When you have finished your collage, consider the following questions:

- How do Salama and Kenan feel about Syria?
- How does the idea of leaving Syria make Salama and Kenan feel?
- In what ways do Salama and Kenan's thoughts and feelings about Syria change throughout the novel?



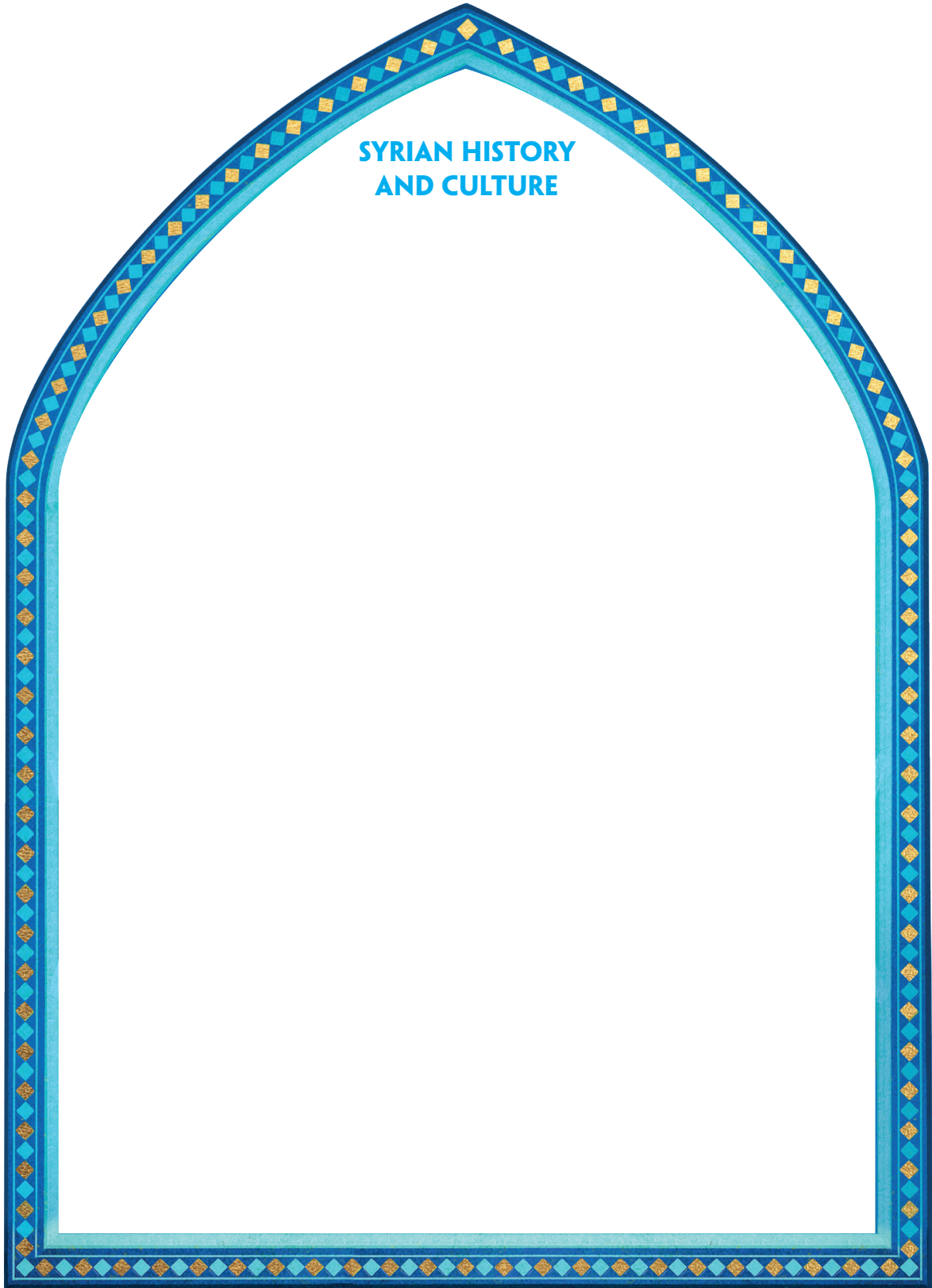
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SYRIAN HISTORY
AND CULTURE



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EXTRACT 3: TO STAY OR TO LEAVE? FROM PAGE 229

In this extract, Salama and Kenan are in the hospital ...

‘Kenan,’ I say hesitantly.

He turns around, looking like he’s in physical pain.

His voice sounds broken. Defeated. ‘Yesterday, after you brought up what happens to the refugees in Europe, I went back home and researched more of it.’ He stops, blowing out a forced breath of air. ‘People are getting tricked, robbed – left alone in the middle of nowhere. Girls are ... being trafficked or married off. And boys are forced into child labour.’

He sinks to the ground like his legs can’t carry him any more and I rush to him.

‘Kenan!’ I kneel beside him.

A strangled sound escapes his throat. ‘You’re right. I promised my father I’d take care of them. That I’d carry them in my eyes. I can’t guarantee they’ll find my uncle when they land in Italy. I can’t even guarantee that Lama will survive being dehydrated. But – I also have a duty to my country.’ He threads his hands through the dirt, and the dull red-brown stains them, smearing itself into his nailbeds and the cracks in his skin. ‘Salama, you have to at least acknowledge that this isn’t right.’

‘Of course it isn’t!’ I exclaim. ‘It’s not fair and it’s not right. But you can’t abandon Lama and Yusuf.’

‘One by one, everyone leaves,’ he whispers, and rubs his eyes, streaking Syria on his forehead, smearing himself with the land of our ancestors. ‘Soon enough there won’t be anyone left to defend Syria.’

‘Not true. You, more than anyone, can change the world. Do you have any idea what your imagination can do? Didn’t you see how the people looked at you in there?!’ A glimmer shines through his dark green eyes. ‘The fight isn’t over, and it’s not only here. Syria’s entire history has become faded in people’s memories. They don’t know what a gem she is. They don’t know the love this country has. You owe it to them. You owe it to us,’ I say fiercely.

He runs a hand over his face then clears his throat. ‘What about the guilt?’

‘Your love for Syria will drive you. The guilt is just a side effect.’ I smile sadly. ‘Without that love, your stories would lose their meaning.’

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What risks will Lama and Yusef face when they leave Syria?
2. Can you write a list of Kenan’s reasons to stay in Syria and a list of his reasons to leave? How do you think Kenan feels as he is faced with this choice?
3. What do you think Salama means when she says, ‘Do you have any idea what your imagination can do?’ What does Salama think Kenan could do?
4. Kenan has been acting as a citizen journalist. What is the difference between a citizen journalist and a traditional media journalist? Why is journalism important during war and conflict?
5. Can you think of three examples of love in the novel? What forms of love are expressed in this extract?



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Activity suggestion: Stories

In the space below, create a mind map to help you explore the theme of stories and storytelling. Write down all the stories contained within the novel including the stories that characters read or watch and the stories they tell themselves, each other and the world.



Discuss the following questions with a partner or group:

- Why are stories important to the characters in the novel?
- How is the theme of 'stories and storytelling' linked to the other themes of the book?
- What impact has reading *As Long as the Lemon Trees Grow* had on you as a reader? Have you learnt anything that you didn't know before? Has reading the book changed you in any way?



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REFLECTING ON THE NOVEL

- What do you think about the end of the story? Was it the ending you expected, or did it surprise you?
- If you could speak to Salama and Kenan at the end of the novel, what would you like to say to them? What do you hope the future looks like for Salama and Kenan?
- Imagine Salama and Kenan have been asked to give a talk to a group of students about Syria and their experiences. What are the key points you think they would want people to know and understand? Write a list of the main points you think they would like to communicate.
- Why do you think the author chose the title, '*As Long As the Lemon Trees Grow*'?
- Compare Salama's thoughts about the conflict on page 12 to her thoughts on pages 243–244. How have her thoughts and beliefs changed throughout the novel? Why do you think this is?
- Have a look back at the themes listed on page 4 of this document. Which do you think is the most important theme in the novel? Can you put the themes in order from most to least important? Compare your order with a partner or group and discuss.
- Which themes are closely related to each other? Can you put the themes into pairs? Compare your pairings with a partner and discuss.
- Can you find out more about the experience of Syrian refugees? Do you know any books, films or art created by Syrian refugees? Do you know any organisations that help and support refugees from Syria and elsewhere?
- Who might you recommend this book to and why?
- If you could ask Zoufka Katouh five questions, what would they be?

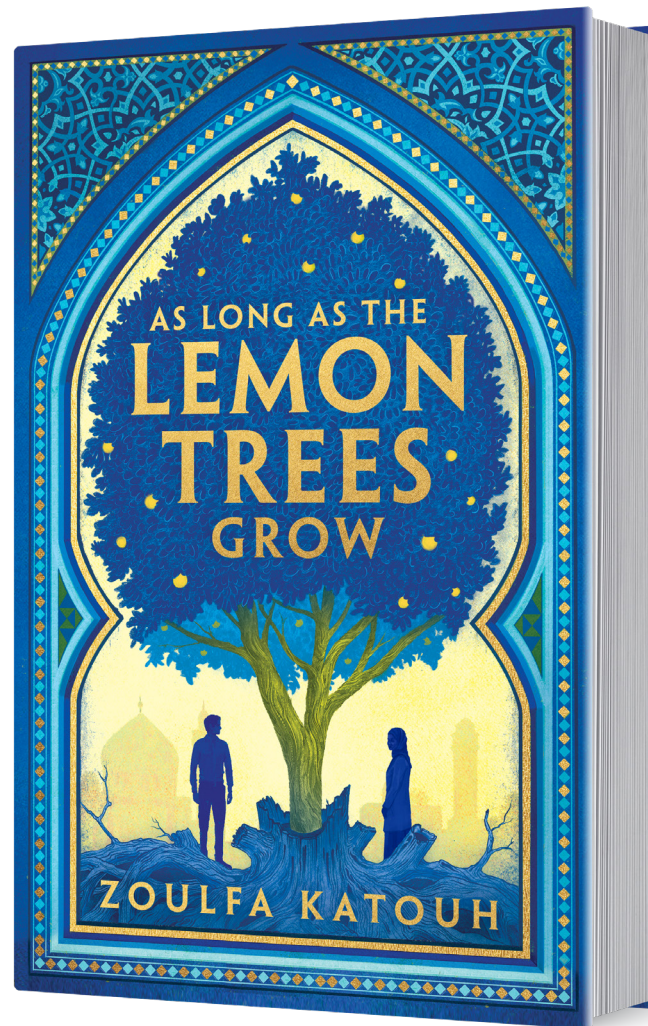


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**YOU'VE NOW REACHED THE END OF THIS RESOURCE PACK FOR
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We hope these notes have proved to be a thought-provoking and interesting introduction to the many important themes explored by Zoulfa Katouh throughout this novel.

We would love to see examples of any work created as a result of this pack or hear your thoughts about the book, so please do email them over to us on:

CHILDRENSMARKETING@BLOOMSBURY.COM

or share on Twitter tagging us at

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