



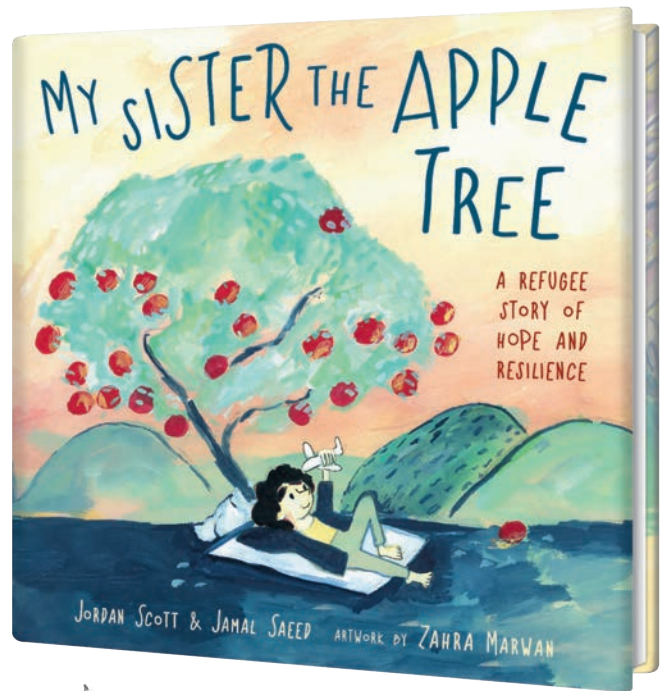
MY SISTER THE APPLE TREE



ABOUT THE BOOK

When a young boy asks his parents why he doesn't have a brother or sister, his mother replies that on the day he was born, they planted an apple tree in their front yard. "The apple tree is your sister," she says. At night, the boy wraps a blanket around his sister's trunk and during the day he shares all his secrets with her. One day, they see helicopters in the sky and his parents tell him they must flee. But how can he leave his sister behind? Instead he digs her up and carries her away from their homeland. When they arrive to a new place, the air is colder and the ground is hard. Home feels so far away. But as his sister grows taller and her branches blossom, the boy realizes that he will always be connected to his homeland, even as he begins to embrace his new home.

This moving and hopeful refugee story is written by Syrian activist Jamal Saeed alongside acclaimed poet Jordan Scott. Illustrated by award-winning artist Zahra Marwan, who drew inspiration from her own emigration from Kuwait, this gorgeous book reminds readers that nothing is left behind forever.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BEFORE READING

- Have you ever gone through a big change, like moving houses, moving schools, or learning a new language? What was that like? How did it feel?
- What is a refugee? Consider reading the book *What Is a Refugee?* by Elise Gravel to build background knowledge. Ask:
 - Who are refugees? Why do they need to leave their homes?
 - What are the challenges refugees face? What can people do to make them feel welcome in a new country?
 - What does it mean to seek asylum? What is the difference between a refugee and an immigrant?
- What does home mean to you?

HELPFUL WORDS TO KNOW

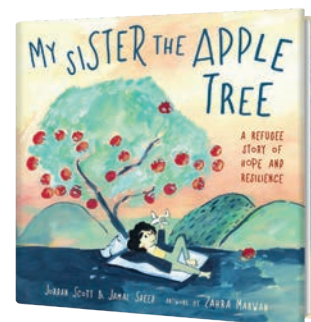
- **Symbol:** a symbol is a visual code that stands for something else.
- **Metaphor:** a creative representation of an idea or concept that associates a particular similarity.

DURING READING

- Why do you think our main character calls the apple tree his sister? In what ways is the tree like a sister to him? How do you know?
- What changes in the story, and why? How do you think our main character feels? How would you feel?
- Why does he bring the apple tree with them? Why is this difficult?
- What do the apple tree and the boy have in common?
- How does he feel about his new home at the end of the story? How does he find comfort?

AFTER READING

- Be sure to read the author's note. Based on the author's note and the story, discuss again:
 - What are the challenges refugees face? What can people do to make them feel welcome in a new country? Where do we see evidence of this in the text?
- If there are refugees in your community (or any other newcomers), organize a gathering as an opportunity to put into practice some of the ideas for welcoming others that you came up with.
- Does home make us who we are? Why is home important?
- What are the characteristics of an apple tree? Considering this, what do you think the apple tree is a metaphor for in this story?
- Make a collage. Gather interesting objects like: paper scraps, cardstock, old magazines, maps, dried flowers, and newspapers—anything that draws your attention. Use the reproducible activity sheet to create and explain your collage.
- Write a "Where I'm From" poem about yourself. Use the reproducible template to brainstorm your poem.



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MAKE A COLLAGE

Directions: Let what interests you shape the collage. Include objects and images that excite you. Once you feel content with your creation, ask yourself: What does this mean? Why does this speak to me? What could this be a metaphor for?

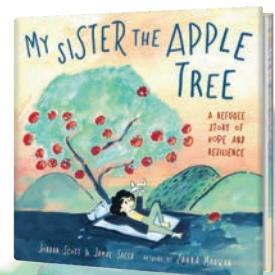


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"WHERE I'M FROM" POEM

At the end of the story, the main character takes comfort from telling his apple tree what he misses about home. Consider what your home is like, focusing on your senses. Brainstorm using the organizer below. Then ask yourself, which of these things makes you YOU? Once you have your core images, write a poem on a separate sheet of paper. If you speak multiple languages, feel free to incorporate as many languages as you'd like into your finished poem.

Where were you born? Where is your family from? What do you associate with this place?	Think about the people in your school or community—how do they do that make you feel?	List expressions and sayings your family uses or ones you've been told other relatives used:
What plants and animals do you see around your home? What do they look like, sound like, feel like?	Think of a time when you got in trouble; what were you doing?	What does your home sound like? Is there music or TV, a radio or laughing? Be specific.
What hobbies do you see people in your home enjoying? What hobbies do you share?	List foods your family eats—what do they taste like, smell like, look like?	What else makes you YOU?



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