

NAILA

SHARES A STORY

by Lisa Suhair Majaj

illustrated by
Maya Majdalani



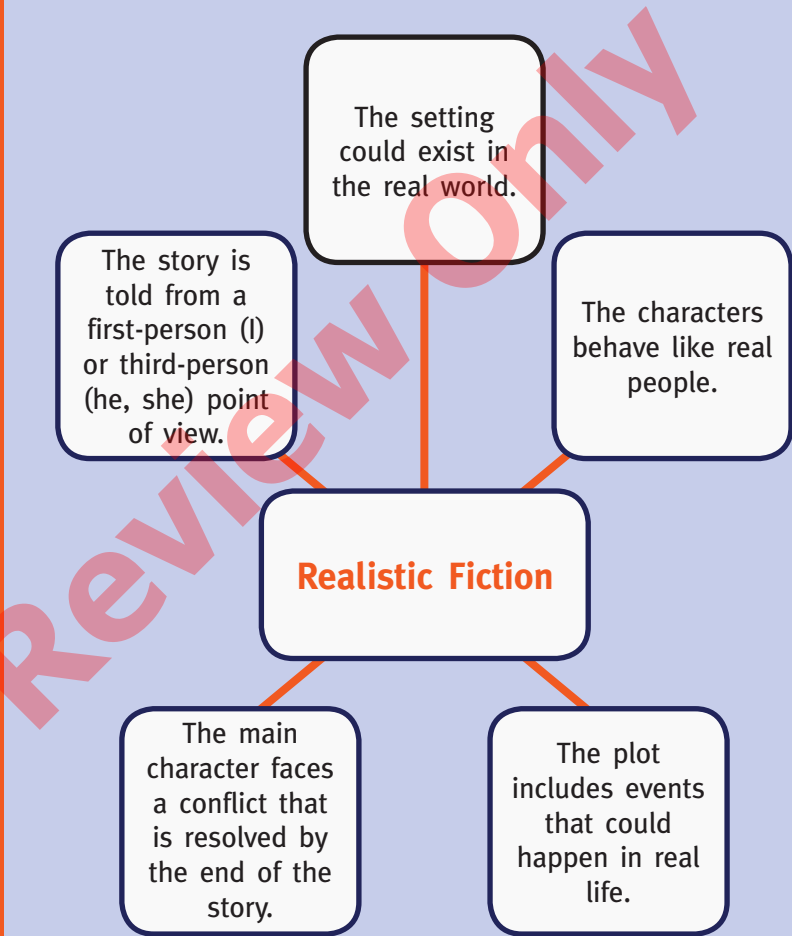
REALISTIC FICTION
LITERATURE

Level **R/40**
Lexile® **610L**

The folktale retold in this book is from Jordan.

Realistic Fiction

Look for the genre features noted below as you read this book. Use the features to help you understand the text.



© Benchmark Education Company, LLC. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. Printed in Guangzhou, China. xxx-xx-xxxx

LEXILE® is a trademark of MetaMetrics, Inc., and is registered in the United States and abroad.

E-books and additional digital resources available at benchmarkuniverse.com.

ISBN: 978-1-5322-6020-9

Toll-Free 1-877-236-2465
www.benchmarkeducation.com
www.benchmarkuniverse.com

BENCHMARK EDUCATION COMPANY
145 Huguenot Street • New Rochelle, NY • 10801

LEAVING JORDAN

“Yallah! Time to go!”

Naila hears her mother calling. She takes one last, unhappy look around the bedroom she has been sharing with her little sister.

“It isn’t fair,” Naila mutters to herself. “I don’t want to leave this country. I don’t want to leave Jordan.”

Through the window, she can see the orange tree her father planted last year. There are small oranges on it. She won’t even be able to taste the fruit when it becomes ripe!



Naila sighs, flips her brown hair behind her, and goes out to the main room.

Naila's grandmother calls her over. "Come here, *habibti*. My love."

Naila's grandmother, Teita Noor, is dressed in her best clothes. She's wearing her special necklace—the one with a *noon*, the Arabic letter N. The *noon* is for her first name, Noor, which means "light."

"Yes, Teita."

As she walks toward her beloved grandmother, Naila remembers how she used to sit on Teita's lap, playing with the pendant while Teita told her stories.

Naila loves Teita's stories. Her favorite is the one about the time Teita was milking the family goat and it kicked over the pail and ran away.

"After that, I learned to always tie a goat when you're milking, unless you want milk all over you as you chase a runaway goat," Teita used to say.

Naila even loves Teita's sad stories, like when Teita had to come to Jordan from Palestine because of the war in 1948 and couldn't go home again.

Teita gets a faraway look in her eyes when she talks about the stone house she had to leave, the one with the fig tree outside.

Now Teita fumbles with the chain of her pendant.

Next thing Naila knows, Teita's necklace is around her own neck.

Teita cups her palms gently around Naila's face.



“*Ya qamr, ya rohi*. My moon, my soul. This is my special present to you. I want you to take this necklace with you to America.”

Naila looks solemnly at her grandmother. She knows this is an important moment.

Her grandmother says, “You know that the letter *noon* is for my name. It’s also for your name, Naila.”

Naila nods.

“Naila is a special name. It means ‘generosity’—like when the moon shines in the dark, sharing its light.”

Teita sighs and then continues. “You must go and shine in the United States. Don’t forget to share the special things about you with the people you meet. If you feel lonely or scared, touch the *noon* and remember that I love you.”

Naila hugs her grandmother tightly.

Then Naila’s mother says, “*Yallah*, time to get in the car! We’re late!”

Naila pulls Teita Noor by the hand toward the door. The whole family is going to the airport with them. Naila doesn’t have to say goodbye yet. That’s one thing she’s glad about!

IN AMERICA

Naila jabs her pencil into the worksheet for her history homework.

“Enough, already!” she whispers to herself.

She is sitting at the kitchen table, trying to study. Naila doesn’t mind doing math—that’s easy. They are doing things she did last year in school. But the English ...

“Welcome to the show, kids! Today we’re going to learn ...”

Naila covers her ears. It’s hard to concentrate with her little sister’s TV show blasting in the background and her mother chatting with Mrs. Dalton, their neighbor. “No, no, you need to ground the chickpeas first for a falafel ...”

For two whole months they’ve been living squeezed into her aunt and uncle’s apartment in Detroit, Michigan. It hasn’t been easy.

Naila looks at her homework again and tries to concentrate. She learned English in Jordan, but most of her subjects were taught in Arabic. She’s finding it hard to study everything in a different language! And sometimes she misses things because she can’t understand the teacher’s accent.



Naila turns back to her history worksheet on the United States Civil War. She writes: “The colour of the Confederate soldiers’ uniforms was grey, while the Union soldiers wore blue.”

She groans with frustration as she crosses out “colour” and replaces it with “color” and changes “grey” to “gray.” In Jordan, they used British English. But American spelling is different. Naila has to remember not to put a *u* in words like “colour” and “favour” or the teacher will mark them wrong.

In the next room, Naila hears her mother say, “I’m getting worried.”

Naila holds her breath to hear better. She tries to listen over her sister’s TV show.

There is a lot to be worried about. Naila thinks about how her father is working extra hours to cover expenses. Meanwhile, her mother, who was a successful teacher in Jordan, can’t seem to get an interview.

The voices from the next room get softer. Naila strains to hear.

“The teacher says she never speaks in class. Never raises her hand. Doesn’t play with anyone at recess.”

Now Naila knows her mother is talking about her. It’s true. At school, she mostly tries to pretend she isn’t there at all. On her first day, some of the kids asked her questions that made her feel sure she’d never fit in.

“Did you ride a camel to go places?”

“Did you live in a tent?”

“Have you ever seen a bus before?”

They weren't trying to be mean, but they didn't understand anything about her or her country.

Thinking about that terrible first day still makes Naila's chest hurt. It feels like she's drowning.

