



Damascus: The Story of a City

Written & illustrated by Alaa Murtada

Published by Dar al-Balsam, Cairo (2018)

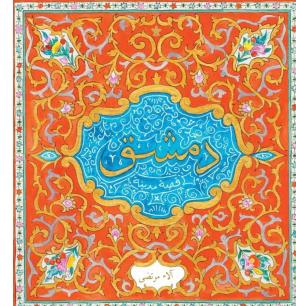
Target age: 6+

Category: picture book / history / folklore

Awards: 2019 Etisalat Award for Arabic Children's Literature, for Best Text

Original Language: Arabic

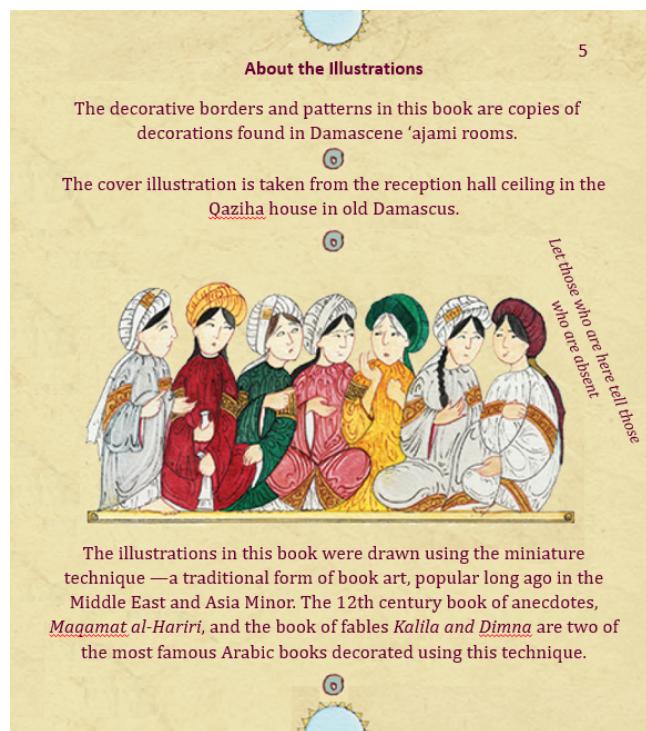
Rights enquiries: Dar al-Balsam, Egypt dar@al-balsam.com



Damascus: The Story of a City explores the ancient and enduring history of the capital of the capital city of Syria, widely believed to be one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, with evidence of habitation dating back thousands of years. The book follows Kitkitkan as he explores the story of the great city of al-Sham, one of the names for Damascus. The illustrations in this book use the miniature technique, a form of book art popular in the medieval Middle East.

Sample translation

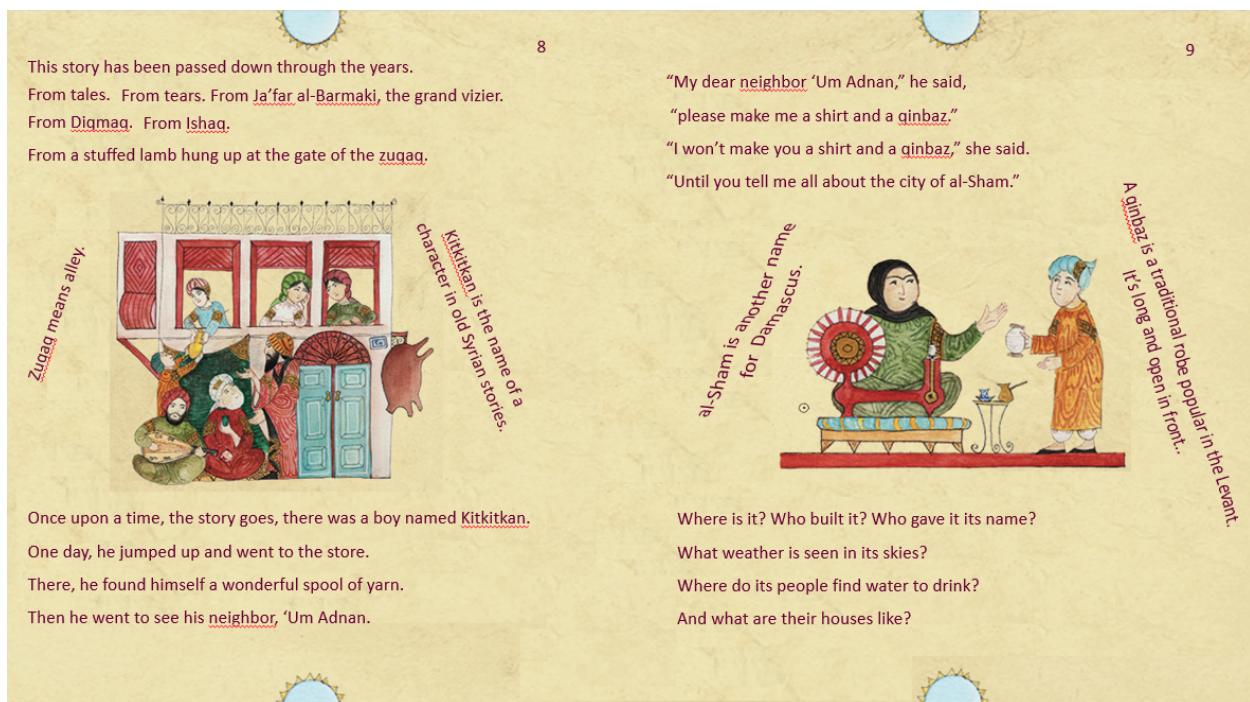
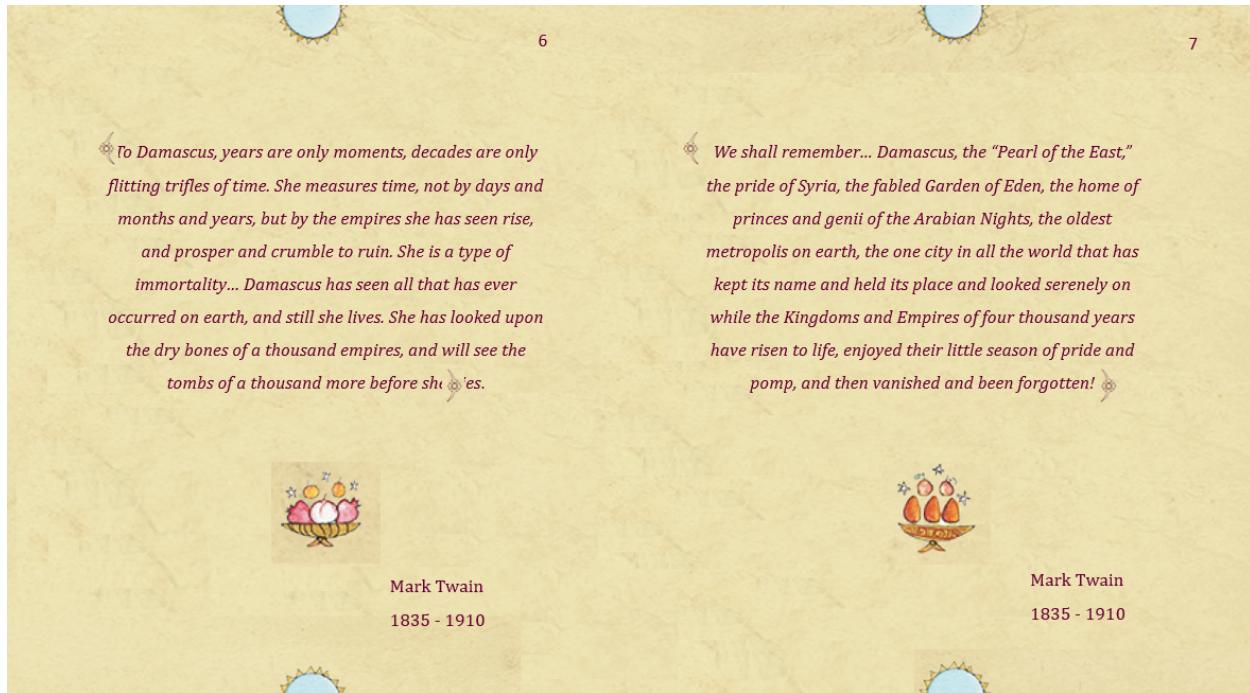
Translated from Arabic by Marcia Lynx Qualey





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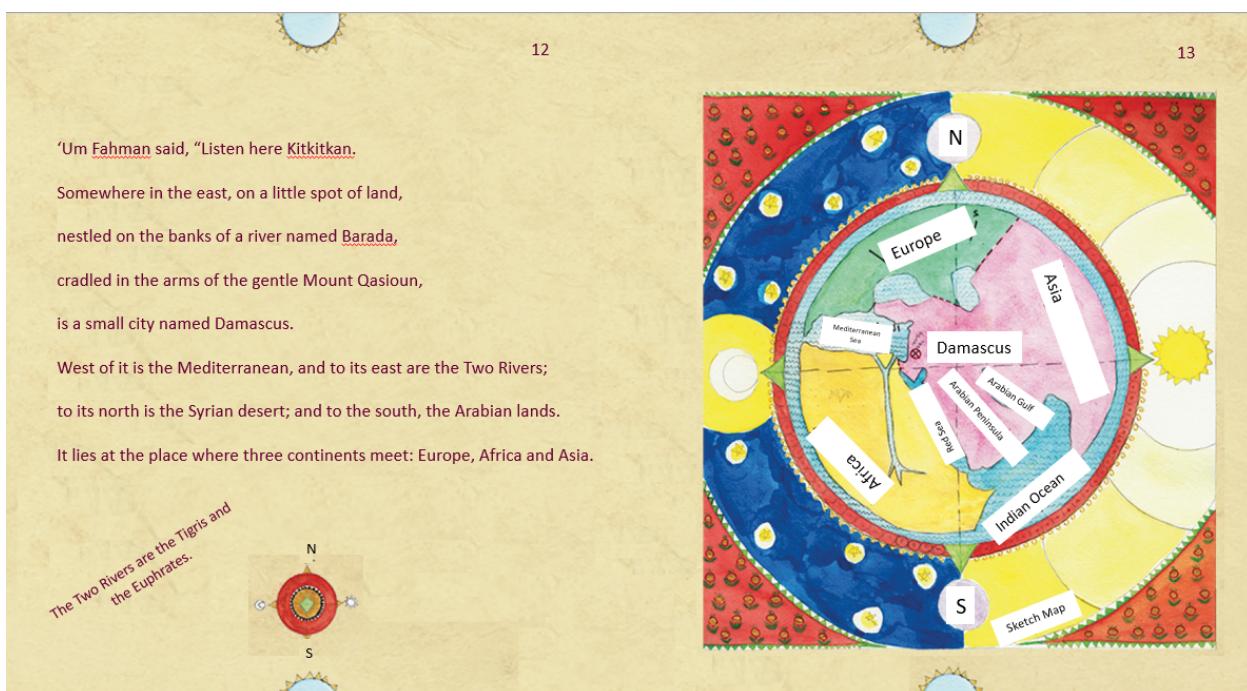
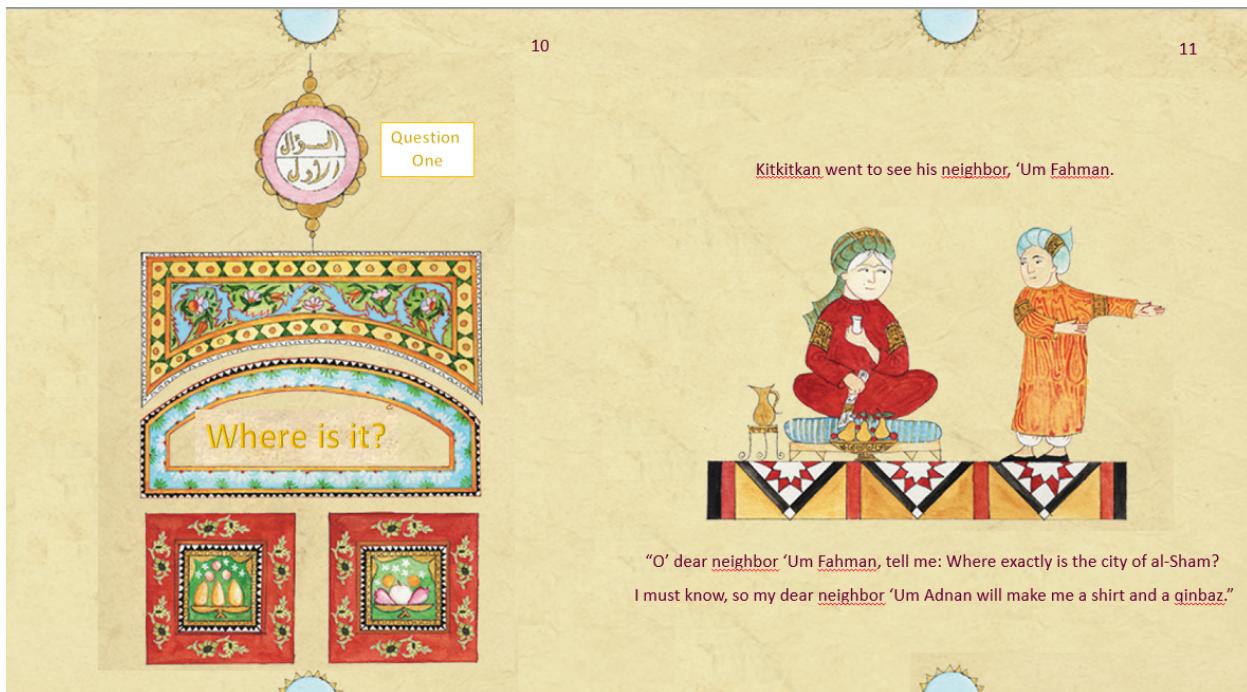
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"And this small place, called Damascus," 'Um Fahman said,
"is sacred beyond measure.
For we're told by Ibn 'Asakir, the historian both famous and clever,
that there, between Mount Qasioun and the Paradise Gate,
rest some seventy thousand walis, believers, and saints.
And it's said that the first person passed Mount Qasioun on his travels,
and worshiped in a cave on that gentle slope.
Cain murdered Abel there, and gave us history's first grave:
a lesson that echoes from age to age.

The Prophet Yahya — or John the Baptist — is buried in Damascus.
And to its Ghouta orchards, Jacob brought his sheep to graze.
Further north, in Barzeh village, Abraham was born
and in the name of One, Majestic God, Abraham gave praise.
Jesus Christ journeyed through Damascus with his mother Mary.
And there, Elijah found protection from the tyrant king.
These tales have passed from them to us, in turn, from mouth to ear.
And proof?
We've none —but in Damascus, these are stories that everyone holds dear."

Paradise Gate or Bab al-Faradis is
one of the ancient city-gates of
Damascus.

A wali is holy person or saint in
Islam