

TEARS OF JOY PUPPET THEATRE

Tears of Joy brings amazing puppet theatre to audiences throughout the U.S. and abroad. Founded in 1971, the theatre is recognized nationally for its commitment to excellence and innovation. Three of the theatre's productions have received American puppetry's highest honor, the *Citation of Excellence in the Art of Puppetry*.

The mission of Tears of Joy Theatre is to produce, develop and present puppet theatre that celebrates the diversity of world cultures, and to teach children and enrich their lives by helping them experience, create and perform art with professional artists. . www.tojt.org

MALIKA, QUEEN OF THE CATS

BACKGROUND

Palestinian fairy tales appear designed to teach children as well as to entertain them. These fairy tales dwell on what is socially accepted and necessary for village life. Sharing with neighbors is almost a necessity in small villages for the survival of all, as is friendliness. Good is defined as putting the good of the community and others before self. Evil is often defined as selfishness. Reality is often harsh and to soften that reality, there is a "what if" element of make believe. The magic always works for good, for the betterment of some character that deserves a better life.

-- from *Sitti and the Cats* by Sally Bahous

This tale takes place hundreds of years ago when Palestine was part of a large empire. The current boundaries in the Middle East (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Iraq and Saudi Arabia) did not occur until after World War I when the empire of the Ottoman Turks was divided into individual countries. Since 1948, much of the land of Palestine has become part of the State of Israel. Palestinian people speak Arabic. Some Palestinian people are Christians and others are Muslims (following the religion of Islam.) Cats are important creatures in Islamic culture. According to one story, Muhammad, the founder of the religion of Islam, was so fond of cats that when one fell asleep on the sleeve of his shirt he cut off the sleeve rather than wake the cat.

Our play is based on the book *Sitti and the Cats* written by Sally Bahous who grew up in Palestine. The book was copyright in 1993 by Sally Bahous and published by Roberts Rinehart Publishers, in Boulder, CO.

STYLE OF PUPPETRY

Malika, Queen of the Cats will be performed using rod puppets. The puppeteers will be sitting on stools and operating puppets held above their heads. The puppeteers will not be seen. There will also be some shadow puppets used in the cave of the cats.

MUSIC

The Middle Eastern music that accompanies *Malika, Queen of the Cats*, was composed and recorded by Al Andalus Ensemble. This group specializes in music of the Middle East and they may have performed at your school. They use two special instruments: the **oud** is a stringed instrument that preceded the guitar, and the **tabla** is a drum.

CHARACTERS

Sitti	a kind, generous, contented old woman (Sitti also means grandmother)
Im Yusef	sharp tongued next door neighbor (Im means “mother of”)
Ali	Sitti’s neighbor
Yasmine	eight-year old girl
Nahid	five-year old boy
Malika	Queen of the Cats (Malika means “queen” in Arabic)
Leila	a precocious kitten (Leila means “night” in Arabic)
Cat	bodyguard to Malika
Other Cats	to entertain
Chickens	
Bees	
Wasps	

VOCABULARY

Souk	Marketplace
Olives	small fruit used for both oil and to eat
Olive trees	trees with gnarled trunks that are easy to climb
Turkish Delight	a very sweet candy with pistachio nuts dusted with powdered sugar (also a favorite with Edmund in <u>The Lion, The Witch & the Wardrobe</u>)
Arabic bread	round loaves of flat bread are called “pita” in America
Dabkhe	a traditional Palestinian folk dance (performed by the cats in our play)
Piaster	a unit of currency—money
Brazier	a container for fire—used for light, heat, or cooking

BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

1. If possible, read the story Sitti and the Cats.
2. Go over the vocabulary words.
3. Locate Palestine on a map.
4. List the countries that share a border with Palestine.
5. There will be a wonderful lobby exhibit mounted by the Arab American Cultural Center featuring rug, clothes, etc. Be sure you look at these items on your way into the theater.

DURING THE PERFORMANCE

1. Listen to the music. See if you can hear the **oud** and the **tabla**.
2. Look at the set. What does it suggest about the land of Palestine?
3. Look for the **dabkhe**—a traditional Palestinian folk dance (performed by the cats.)

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

1. Draw a picture of the character you liked best. Tell why you like this character.
2. Write a letter to Tears of Joy Theatre telling the performers what you liked about the play.
3. Make a classroom list of character traits admired (valued) by the people of Palestine.
4. Learn to dance the **dabkhe**.
5. Arrange a classroom snack of olives, pita bread and humus.
6. Choose a species of animal that you like a lot and describe their traits and characteristics. What value does this animal possess that humans can learn from. (Are they affectionate, intelligent, independent, loyal?) Give an example of how this animal displays this behavior.
7. Write your own story in which you or someone else finds themselves learning something important from the animal you described.