

## Interdisciplinary Ideas

### LANGUAGE ARTS

1. Look at the picture of Mona pretending to carry water on her head. Write about customs in the story you think you would enjoy and give explanations for your choices.
2. Naomi Nye dedicates her book to her grandmother, "...and all grandmothers everywhere who give our lives gravity and light." Write about what you think she means by "gravity and light."
3. Look up the meanings of the words "simile" and "metaphor." Find examples of both on the page where Sitti is patting Mona's head. Write a simile and a metaphor about someone's voice.

### SOCIAL STUDIES

1. Research customs/traditions of Arabic women (e.g., wearing head coverings, carrying water on their heads, or wearing tattoos on their hands) and report to your class.\*
2. Research and play the game of marbles. Find out about other games children play in the Middle East.

\* Visit [www.heartwoodethics.org](http://www.heartwoodethics.org) and choose Teaching Heartwood, Culture Keys, for more on the history, culture, and geography of this book.

### ART

1. Look for illustrations that show global connectedness. Then draw or paint your own impressions of this theme.
2. Cut pictures of daytime and nighttime activities from magazines to make a collage titled "The Other Side of the World." On a sheet of paper draw a rough sketch of the world and paste daytime pictures on one side and nighttime pictures on the other side, overlapping to create a collage.

## Sitti's Secrets

Naomi Shibab Nye  
1994  
New York: Four Winds Press

### CONCEPTS

Love  
Loyalty  
Hope

### SUMMARY

**This compassionate story describes the love between a Palestinian grandmother and her American granddaughter. During a visit to the West Bank, Mona and Sitti develop ways to communicate and share family traditions. Mona returns home with love for Sitti in her heart and hope for world peace. Nancy Carpenter superimposes maps and planets over her rich illustrations, enhancing the message that we are all connected.**

### LOVE

*Palestinian village, West Bank*  
*Realistic Fiction*  
*Reading Time: 9 minutes*

### OBJECTIVES

The student will be able to define and discuss love, loyalty, and hope as they apply to this story. The student will observe responsibility and trust in building relationships.

# After the Story

## Sitti's Secrets

### DISCUSSION

1. How is the word "secret" used in this story? What does it mean? What are Sitti's secrets? Why do you think Mona says "I feel as if I know a secret" when she sees Sitti's hair? How is this kind of sharing related to love and trust?
2. How do Mona and her grandmother communicate without words? How does her father help? Did you ever try to communicate with someone who speaks a different language?
3. What kinds of things does Sitti teach Mona about her culture and about herself? What is culture?\* How do you share your culture?
4. Which illustration lets us know there is fighting and unrest in Sitti's country? Why does Mona write a letter to the President of the United States? Which attributes are involved in this action?

### ACTIVITIES

1. Find the West Bank on the world map.
2. In groups of three or four, list ways Mona and her grandmother express love for one another. Think about non-verbal communication (e.g., body language, sounds, facial expressions, and actions).
3. In groups of three or four, brainstorm ideas for achieving world peace. Then write a letter or send an e-mail to the President of the United States ([president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:president@whitehouse.gov)) listing your suggestions and wishing him well in his peacemaking efforts.

### JOURNAL

1. Write your thoughts about one of these quotes from the book: "People are far apart but connected," or "If grandmas ran the world, I don't think we'd have any wars" (from author's note).
2. Pretend you have a grandparent living in another country. Write a loving letter telling him or her about your life.

### HOME CONNECTION

1. Ask at home if anyone has visited a relative or friend in another part of the world. Talk about that person's culture and traditions. Take notes and ask permission to share with your classmates.
2. Retell the story at home. Discuss ways family members show caring toward one another without words, as Sitti and Mona did.

### VOCABULARY

Sitti  
habibi  
lentils

mish-mish  
padlock