

Bringing Literature to Life: Strategies for Supporting Arab and American Student Success in a First-Year Foundations Course**Gina Zanolini Morrison**Division of Global Cultures
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First-year courses for entering university students are vital to supporting their success and fostering lasting connections between them and their academic environments. To that end, four First-Year Foundations (FYF) instructors from one small private university in northeastern United States selected a common read to use with their diverse classes, including five classes with large numbers of students from Arab countries. The team worked together to bring literature to life for these first-year students by selecting an intergenerational novel about life in Palestine entitled *A Curious Land: Stories from Home*, then bringing the award-winning author Susan Muaddi Darraj to campus to meet the students and discuss her novel in both formal and informal settings. The challenges involved in accomplishing this task are shared in this paper, as are the successful results. Sample study guides developed by the FYF academic team are also shared for those instructors who wish to use the same book for their own students, or who might find a model of this method of bringing literature to life useful in planning their own instructional activities.

Keywords: best practices with first-year students, first-year foundations, international university students, literature enrichment, Palestinian conflict

Cite as: Morrison, G. Z., Balester, M., Maieran, A., & Valkenburg, M. B. (2018). Bringing Literature to Life: Strategies for Supporting Arab and American Student Success in a First-Year Foundations Course. *Arab World English Journal for Translation & Literary Studies*, 2 (3). DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awejtls/vol2no3.2>