

Dunia Fi Lubnan (Dunia in Lebanon) Interactive Story Companion Guide

Dear Parents and Educators,

Thank you for your interest in our first Interactive Story Book (ISB).

Here you will find all the information you need to navigate through the educational material and enjoy it to the best.

Your feedback is extremely important to us and will help us improve our offerings for the years to come. Please take a few minutes to fill out the form on our website.

AlefB's Philosophy: The idea of the interactive story book emerged out of our enthusiasm about teaching Arabic to non-Arabic children learners in a playful and interactive way. We do recognize that learning a new language can have its challenges and moments of frustration, and we wanted to supplement your teaching materials with an interactive tool that will take the learner on a journey through an Arab country, all while introducing various language and culture themes. Through the story, the learners are transported to various real life situations where they are confronted with the thrills and challenges of needing to create with the language they acquire. For that reason, we chose to integrate in this material both colloquial and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). The narrative is in the latter, whereas the conversations that pop up on each page of the storybook are held in colloquial Levantine Arabic. In the same manner, we used both MSA and colloquial in the drills. However we tried to refrain from writing words in colloquial Arabic.

Dunia's Story: The story of Dunia is not too different from the story of many language learners; in the sense that she has acquired some knowledge about the Arabic language, yet she feels shy and uncomfortable with speaking. She worries that others may mock her or make fun of her accent. However, Dunia goes on to visit her grandparents in Lebanon, where she makes friends and slowly breaks out of her shell and overcomes the fear of speaking Arabic. The learner is not simply a spectator in this story, but rather an active participant in the process of helping Dunia overcome and navigate through certain situations. The learner is kept engaged and interested

in what goes in Dunia's life by seeking his/her opinion, soliciting information and asking for advice. The situations that Dunia encounters are similar to what a language learner would go through when traveling to a new place. Moreover, the situations carry within them many great lessons for increasing the learner's linguistic and cultural proficiency. The story has many characters that are essential to the learning process contained within the story. Below is a brief description of the main ones:

- Dunia (دنيا من أميركا): the main character is a child who grew up with some knowledge of the Arabic language, but was born and raised in the United States. She knows a little bit about the language, but feels shy and uncomfortable about using it. On the other hand, she is extremely talented in soccer and her skills help her make friends.
- Dunia's grandparents: the grandfather and grandmother live in Lebanon where Dunia travels to visit them. They are encouraging and try to create an environment where Dunia can learn and break away from her little bubble. They do so by introducing her to a little boy that lives nearby.
- Samir (سمير الخبير): He's the little boy that Dunia gets introduced to. She approaches him with some hesitation but also curiosity. She wants to play and make friends but is not sure how. Samir likes to learn and educates himself with his Ipad. He is also the energetic playful child that slowly helps Dunia overcome her fear and join him on fun and sometimes dangerous adventures.
- Children (Tarek, Rayan and Yara): They are the friends that Dunia makes along the way and shares fun adventures with.
- The bee (نحلة النحلة): Throughout the story, the bee comes up every once in a while to check on Dunia (And the learner) and to provide some helpful hints regarding the progression of the story. The bee represents a helpful entity for Dunia and a friend that is sort of always there. At some point, Dunia gets stung by a bee. This little scare however, provides a further opportunity for the characters to learn and grow by seeking help and navigating through the situation. The bee that stings Dunia is not Nahla, their friend. Dunia tries to explain that to family and friends. The learner is introduced to the idea that bees are nice and that not all bees are mean. In that sense, the bee acts as a

catalyst prompting the learner and the story characters to probe some more and look underneath the surface of what is going on.

What Does this Storybook Do? The interactive storybook is meant to be a supplemental tool supporting a set curriculum for teaching Arabic to children ranging from a novice-mid to an intermediate-mid levels (according to ACTFL standards)

This tool can be best used with children age 6-12. Since this is an interactive tool that requires navigating the web and uses references to online material, in the “Did you Know?” Section, we strongly advise that children are always supervised by adults (parents, Teachers, tutors etc...) This will ensure that the learner is immersed in a teaching environment that is safe, age-appropriate and more informative.

While the storybook has a diverse array of topics and can aid the learner in reviewing and learning various words and phrases, it’s not a comprehensive curriculum in and of itself. This interactive tool can be used by the learner with some supervision from a classroom instructor/parent/tutor. It can also be used in the classroom along with extra worksheets to supplement the language curriculum.

How do we Use this Storybook: The storybook can be used in the classroom as a supplemental tool to accompany the instructional materials within the core curriculum. This can best be achieved by pairing various parts of the story with the appropriate units within the curriculum. Additionally, it’s advisable that there are more activities designed to increase interpersonal communication among the learners. This can be done by dividing the students into groups and encouraging them to discuss the story amongst each other and practice asking/answering questions.

Alternately, the storybook can be used by the learners individually. This is possible due to the built-in periodic self-assessment within the storybook that allows the learner to recap what they have gathered from each unit and to practice/assess comprehension through drills and consistent prompts.

Overall, there is no one set way to use this tool. Here are a few ideas that can help you utilize this book based on your own instructional needs:

-Story time: The instructor can utilize the story book as a story with various chapters that bring up different situations and call for various uses of the language. When the learner/instructor clicks on the story, they will be guided from one chapter to the next and given the option of either continuing on with the story or “playing” by going to the drills section. The story can certainly be viewed and enjoyed without needing to complete the drills. However, before transition from one chapter to the next, the bee (being the little helper here) pops up to ask a question. This is done to keep the learner engaged and to somewhat test their general comprehension of the scene they just watched.

-Story and play/learning time: The instructor can showcase each chapter of the story and encourage the learners to complete some drills before proceeding to the next story chapter. In such case, it’s advisable that the instructor familiarizes him/herself with the drills to determine which ones are appropriate and can support the content of what’s being taught in the classroom.

-Learning through Drills: The drills can also be utilized on their own and as a separate component from the storybook. More on how the drills are designed is outlined in the following section.

Storybook Drills, the “Play and Learn” section: The drills that accompany the storybook are theme-based and can certainly be used as standalone language drills. The drills are divided into the following sections:

- ***Greetings and Farewell:*** this module contains various words and phrase that have come up within the storybook. It acquaints the learner with the various greetings (formal and informal) and takes the learner from learning the basic sounds and responses to building a basic dialogue using what has already been learned. In this section, we have employed both MSA and colloquial forms of greetings.

- **Keep the Conversation Going:** this serves as a “putting it together” module where the learner can move beyond some basic memorized words and phrases to creating basic dialogues within the Arabic language.
- **Color the “Bouza” flavors:** this is an introduction to colors, with the opportunity to connect colors with flavors. It’s also a typing drill.
- **Where, What, with Whom?** This section introduces the learner to question words in Arabic and give him/her another opportunity to create with the language. The drills always build up in terms of difficulty level and learner is usually quizzed on a concept that has already been modeled to him/her through the storybook and the previous drills.
- **Create your own Project:** It is recommended that the learner attempts to do this module after completing all previous drills and reading the story book. This is a chance for the learner to showcase what he/she knows by creating further with the language and to seek help from his/her surrounding, thereby engaging in interpersonal communication. The learner is asked to write a post card to his family or friends using specific guidelines and information. The postcard can also be sent to AlefB for review and feedback on this presentational task.

Each of the modules listed above starts with a recap glossary page, where the learner can click on words related to the module, listen and repeat. This serves as a recap of the most important vocabulary terms before embarking on tackling the various drills.

The final project can be printed out and assessed by the instructor. If the learner is working on the project on their own or with little supervision, he/she can send the final project to AlefB by email for feedback and for it to be published on the website.

Using Arabic Keyboard in Drills: Some drills require typing in Arabic, and in such case, a virtual keyboard will display allowing the learner to type the answer in Arabic. The purpose of this storybook is not teaching Arabic typing, but rather to familiarize the learners with the Arabic alphabets and to build on their existing knowledge with Arabic writing.

Cultural Notes in the “Did you know?” Section: As per ACTFL standards we, recognize that foreign language acquisition is closely knit with cultural awareness. We developed worksheets incorporating some of the themes tackled in the story and provided opportunities for the learner to expand his/her knowledge about the Arabic-speaking community in the US and abroad. To make learning more fun and to provide a greater incentive, we created a point gathering system, where the learner can engage in various cultural activities that prompt him/her to gather some information, do a little research, prepare a recipe, ask some questions and submit the findings to AlefB through email. Correct submissions amount to a certain number of points per activity, and when the learner collects a total of 20 points, he/she will receive a surprise.

Arabic, Arabic and more Arabic: We want this story to be an opportunity for the learner to immerse themselves in the Arabic language both written and verbal, while providing navigational tools and tips to help make the process smoother, more fun and less daunting. We have purposefully stayed away from transcribing Arabic texts phonetically. While we are aware that the learner may not possess considerable Arabic reading skills, we do want him/her to be fully immersed within the language and to not resort to reading phonetically transcribed words. We have provided other tools to facilitate comprehension. The animations, sounds, recap vocabulary pages and English tool tips translation all provide additional hints and aid the learner in staying engaged without resorting to the excessive use of English.

شكراً! Thank you!