Thinking Critically Activity

- Think of a place, location, or piece of land that is meaningful to you. For example: your home, a beach, a park, a favourite vacation spot... etc.

- Now, imagine it is suddenly taken away and occupied by someone else - you are told that you can no longer visit and/or live in this place.

- How would you feel? Jot down a few thoughts/feelings and share with the class.
Now...

- Write from the perspective of the occupiers of your piece of land

Questions to think about:

- Why would they take over that particular piece of land? Is it the physical location? Access to food and water? Is it based on “ownership”? How do we define ownership?

- What are the potential issues? Is there such thing as a right to land? What constitutes the right to land?
A Little Piece of Ground

Jessica, Georgia, Amy & Shirel
“What is it like to live under military occupation in Palestine? Laird explores the question through the viewpoint of Karim, 12, desperate to get out of his apartment in Ramallah, where yet another curfew has kept everyone locked up since a suicide bomber killed people in Israel. Even when the curfew is lifted, Karim remains bitter and angry; his grandfather's land has been confiscated, his father humiliated in a strip search, and his school has been trashed. Karim, his Christian friend, and a Muslim boy, whose brother is in a Jerusalem prison, band together and attempt to clear space for a soccer field. Then the tanks roll in again, and Karim barely escapes. Although this is largely a docu-novel, the heartbreaking personal drama visualizes the realistic challenges of wartime life at home, as well as the diversity of opinion about religion, class, and politics in the community”.

Booklist Review 2006
Aimed towards the **young teen** reader (grades 7-9)
The protagonist, Karim, and his band of unlikely friends, forge a relationship based on **loyalty and trust**
Offers an account from the perspective of youth experiencing the **effects of a military occupation** (regardless of what ‘side’ you choose)
Offers an alternative ‘face’ to **pre-conceived notions** of the Muslim community and stereotypical representations of the Arab community (example - Aladdin/Disney)
Carries **universal subject matter** that transcends class, race, and religion (love of soccer)
## Themes and Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle East Conflict:</th>
<th>The Brutality of War:</th>
<th>The Coming of Age:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● The ‘rightful’ ownership of land</td>
<td>● The stripping away of human dignity</td>
<td>● Bildungsroman concept</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Lack of freedom</td>
<td>● The ‘cost’ incurred</td>
<td>● Young love</td>
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<td>● Religious ideology</td>
<td>● The loss of innocence</td>
<td>● Friendship</td>
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### Issues:

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<tr>
<td>● Some educators can’t get past the perspective - hold on to personal opinions</td>
<td>● Graphic account - violent</td>
<td>● Trust</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Students may be unfamiliar with context of the narrative</td>
<td>● Resiliency</td>
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<td>● Independence from parental influence</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>● No female voice</td>
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Merits for Teaching the Novel

- Touches upon theme of freedom and what we understand it means to be free
- Touches on needs versus wants
- Opportunity for development of empathy, of moral sensibility, and of understanding.
- Orientalism
- Encourages critical thinking
Challenges for Teaching the Novel

- Aimed at a younger audience that might not be aware of the conflict
- The book gives a very one-sided account - must encourage critical thinking
- Requires the teacher to have a strong understanding of the political history
- Authorial Authenticity
Titles to Supplement the Class’ Learning

LET IT BE MORNING
Sayed Kashua

If You Could Be My Friend

Samir and Yonatan
Daniella Carmi

WHERE THE STREETS HAD A NAME
Randa Abdel-Fattah