

INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION: HOW JEWISH-ARAB RELATIONS ARE
REFLECTED IN LITERARY TEXTS IN THE HEBREW MATRICULATION
CURRICULUM IN THE ARAB SECTOR?

**Intercultural education: how jewish – arab relations are reflected in literary
texts in the Hebrew matriculation curriculum in the arab sector?**

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INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION: HOW JEWISH-ARAB RELATIONS ARE REFLECTED IN LITERARY TEXTS IN THE HEBREW MATRICULATION CURRICULUM IN THE ARAB SECTOR?**Abstract**

The high school curriculum for Hebrew literature in the Arab sector (studies and matriculation exams) was approved by the Minister of Education and Culture in March 1975. It was published in a special Director General's bulletin in 1976 and is pertinent and obligatory to this very day. Along with declared aims connected to the discipline itself, such as the usefulness of the Hebrew language and the beauty of its literature, the curriculum also includes specific ideological social and civic aims. These include acquiring knowledge about the cultural traditions of the Jewish people and developing consideration for their social and cultural sensitivities.

The fundamental axiom of this research, which relies on an extensive foundation of theoretical work, maintains that the literary curriculum does have the ability to achieve these social aims. The aim of the research was to check how the corpus of Hebrew literature in the curriculum reflects the relationship between Arabs and Jews in Israel, as individuals and as representatives of different cultures and traditions. The research made use of combined qualitative content analysis tools.

Key words: curriculum, relationship, tradition, culture

Zusammenfassung

Der Universitäre Lehrplan für hebräische Literatur in der arabischen Sektor (Studien und Immatrikulation Prüfungen) wurde von der Bundesministerin für Bildung und Kultur März 1975 genehmigt. Es war in einem speziellen Generaldirektors Bulletin in 1976 veröffentlicht und ist relevant und verbindlich bis zum heutigen Tag.

Die fundamentale Axiom dieser Forschung, die auf einer umfassenden Basis der theoretischen Arbeit stützt, diese behauptet, dass die literarische Lehrplan hat die Fähigkeit, diese sozialen Ziele zu erreichen gilt. Dazu gehören den Erwerb von Kenntnissen über die kulturellen Traditionen des jüdischen Volkes und die Entwicklung Rücksicht auf ihre sozialen und kulturellen Empfindlichkeiten. Das Ziel der Untersuchung war zu prüfen, wie der Korpus der hebräischen Literatur in den Lehrplan der Beziehung zwischen Juden und Arabern in Israel widerspiegelt, als Individuen und als Vertreter der unterschiedlichen Kulturen und Traditionen.

Schlüsselworte: Lehrplan, Beziehung, Tradition, Kultur

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In its Declaration of Independence, Israel called upon the Arab residents of Israel to preserve the peace and to take part in the building of the state on the basis of full and equal citizenship and appropriate representation in all the interim and permanent institutions of the State.

The State of Israel, which was created as a Jewish state, also recognized the rights of the Arab minority to religious autonomy. The rights of those Arabs living in Israel at the time of the creation of the State and status of citizenship were anchored officially in the Citizenship Law of 1952. Israeli Arabs are formally recognized as citizens in every way and have the right to elect and be elected to all local and national governmental institutions.

However, the existence of a military regime to which the Israeli Arabs were subordinate until 1966, the issue of appropriating Arab property according to the law of absentee property as legislated in 1950, the sense of discrimination, everything connected to the development of infrastructure in general and the expansion of existing settlements in particular and unequal educational achievement, precipitated widespread feelings of bitterness within the Israeli Arab community.

Teaching Hebrew language & literature in the Arab sector from the establishment of the State to the present day

English was the language of instruction in Arab high schools during the period of the British Mandate in most subjects (in some subjects it was Arabic). During this period, the Arabs did not learn Hebrew at all. Already during Israel's War of Liberation in 1948, the provisional Jewish government decided to impose a military government on the Galilee, the "Triangle", the Negev, and the cities Ramla, Lod, Jaffa, Acco and Migdal, which were inhabited by a decisive majority of Arabs. The legal framework of this Israeli action was based on adopting and integrating the emergency defense regulations of the British Mandatory Government of 1945 within

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the legal system of the new state. This military framework imposed on Israel's Arab population special laws, regulations and procedures.

As a consequence, beginning with 1948 until the gradual cessation of the enforcement of these laws and regulations in 1966, the Military Government was the primary Israeli institution that interacted with Israel's Arab minority, which during this period numbered 12% of the population of the country.

The Military Government was a unit within the Israeli army attached to the Central Command, but whose day-to-day activities were subordinate to all three Army Commands: North, Central and South. Despite the name 'Military Government', it was clear that its central mission was civilian: special administration of Israel's Arab minority. This administration was presented as security supervision over a hostile population which was also defined as a fifth column that might join with external enemies of the state. It manifested itself in many ways including limiting freedom of movement, freedom of assembly, and freedom of activity in general as well as supervision over education (Boimel, 2002). In accordance with this supervision, the first inspectors of teaching Hebrew to Arabs, during this period, were Jews (Shohamy, E. et al, 1996).

The teaching of Hebrew to Arab citizens began immediately after the establishment of the State. This was a compulsory subject in every Arab-speaking elementary school (from fourth grade and up) as well as in high schools, for 4 -5 hours a week, and needless to say, in teacher seminaries. The teaching of Hebrew in the Arab sector was not easily received either by the Jews or by the Arabs, and was accompanied by many disputes in the newspapers of the time. Over time, two opposing approaches to this issue developed, as demonstrated by Shohamy& Spolsky (1999; 2002).

Opponents were against the teaching of Hebrew to Arabs for political and religious reasons while supporters supported it for the following reasons (*The Encyclopedia of Education*, part B, page 663): practical reasons-integrating the Arabs in the life of the country and ideological reasons-strengthening their loyalty to the laws and institutions of the country. Both of these reasons, practical and ideological, had clear and immediate implications for the molding of the identity of pupils in Israel's Arab sector.

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Between 1948 and 1958, three different study plans were written for Arab elementary schools (Shohamy & Spolsky, 1999). In every one of these, the teaching of Hebrew was designed to achieve three major goals: as a key to study the Hebrew nation and its culture; as a means for unmediated written and oral communication with the Jewish sector; and as an instrument to cultivate Israeli citizenship. Examining these three aims shows that they focused on becoming acquainted with the Jewish people and its culture. In 1959, a study plan for elementary schools was published. The aims mentioned above served as its basis, although wider aims were added such as bridging the divide and bring the two peoples closer together.

In addition it contained discussions about general didactic issues. In comparison, the teaching of Hebrew in the high schools remained devoid of any study plan. At the beginning of the 1960s, the Ministry of Education published a study plan for the teaching of Hebrew in Arab high schools. Its title was *Study Plan for the Teaching of Hebrew and Hebrew Literature in Arabic High Schools* in grades 9-12. The authors of this plan had two principal goals for the teaching of Hebrew language and literature:

- a. To provide the Arab pupil with fundamental accurate and comprehensive knowledge of the Hebrew language. The ability to understand all the reading material as well as practical written and spoken instructions in the language for both practical and cultural needs.
- b. To open a gateway for Arab students to Israeli culture and its values, past and present, enabling them to understand the social and cultural life of the Jewish community in the State of Israel.

In 1972, the Ministry of Education and Culture in cooperation with the Department of Curricula in the University of Haifa formed a committee whose task it was to prepare study plans in Hebrew for Arab students. But it wasn't until 24 March 1975 that a study plan for high schools was finally approved by the Minister of Education and Culture. In 1976, the new curriculum for high school (relating to both studies and matriculation) was published in a special General Director's Bulletin.

It was determined that within the framework of the curriculum, high schools would study Hebrew language and literature for a period of three years for a minimum of four study units and a maximum of six study units, and that each study unit would be budgeted 90 hours.

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Despite the contexts of command and control of the period in question during which the plan was prepared (1976), still affected by the prior period of Military Government, an Arab inspector was appointed to supervise Hebrew teaching in the Arab sector. This constituted a half time position until 1995. The inspector's job included overseeing the absorption of new teachers into the system, visiting schools (fieldwork), preparing curricula and overseeing their implementation, preparing teachers to teach according to these curricula and above all preparation and evaluation of matriculation exams. (Shohamy, E. et al, 1996).

Examining the aims of the Hebrew literature curriculum for pupils studying in Arab schools stated in its preface shows that it was designed to:

- enable competent communication with Jewish citizens
- facilitate the integration of the pupils into the life of the country
- prepare graduates of Arab high schools to be absorbed into institutions of higher learning in Israel
- enable the pupil to become acquainted with the main areas of the cultural and literary heritage of the Jewish people throughout the ages and to appreciate Hebrew culture
- nurture esthetic sensibility through familiarity with the functions of linguistic structure in both poetry and prose, expression of different contents and recognizing the degree of matching between content and form (1976 curriculum, pp.4-5).

Apart from the last aim which relates only to literature for literature's sake, all the other aims see literature as a means to achieve civic and cultural goals.

Three other introductory observations regarding the 1976 curriculum which are important for us to consider are that: a) the selection of works chosen for the curriculum was intended to address a variety of issues of interest suited to the age of the pupils; b) the selection was directed to the heterogeneous nature of the target population; and c) the selection was meant to "stimulate discussion regarding authentic issues while at the same time taking into consideration the social and cultural sensitivities of the pupils and avoiding those that expressed positions and opinions that might have aroused extreme reactions in one direction or another".

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From this we may learn that the declared aims of the curriculum related to the communication and literacy needs of the students along with the need to become integrated into the cultural discourse of Israeli society by becoming acquainted with its culture and tradition while avoiding conflicts and texts that might arouse "extreme reactions". In this connection, we may ask if we are dealing with demands that can be implemented or do these demands contain something of a structural contradiction?

Our present research focuses on a curriculum that has existed for 30 years in Arab schools in Israel. The new curriculum, the general outlines of which were published in 2004, is meant to gradually replace the existing one.

The kinds of texts included in the 1976 literature curriculum were: folktales, short stories, poetry and theoretical articles. The authors and poets whose works were studied in the program were connected to the classics of Hebrew literature, beginning with the creative period of Hebrew literature in Spain up until today. In contrast, in the new program of 2004, units dealing with the novel were added (*Trumpet in the Valley*, by Sami Michael) as well as present day Israeli literary works and works in Hebrew written by Israeli Arabs: Naim Ariedi (from the Druze Community) and Salem Jubran. Some of the works added are characterized, in one way or another, by dilemmas pertaining to identity conflicts.

The advent of the 21st century, during which the new program was formulated, is characterized by three parallel trends within the Arab education system:

- 1- Equalization of budgets between the Jewish education system and the Arab education system according to the website of the Arab Education Department).
- 2- Reduction of the gaps in educational achievement between the Jewish educational system and the Arab educational system (Hirshfeld, 2001)
- 3- Elimination of the involvement of the Shin Bet (Israel's Internal Security Agency – analogous to the FBI) in the Arab educational system (Shatil website)

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There is no doubt that these trends, which attest to the integration of the Arab sector within the Jewish state, constituted the foundations of the development of this new 2004 curriculum.

The literature curriculum as a factor in socialization

Curricula in every discipline, especially in the humanities, are based on two types of considerations: on the one hand, pedagogical considerations stemming from the knowledge-base of the discipline itself and the need to tailor it to the needs of the pupils to whom it is directed; and on the other, ideological considerations reflected in the general goals related to the teaching of the discipline which are based to a large degree on the philosophy of life and character of society, its identity and values at any given time.

We should look at curricula as a tangible expression of changes and social trends since they themselves consolidate skills and beliefs society finds worthy of passing on to the next generation (Iram, 1991)

This is the face of things in regards to curricula for Hebrew literature in Israel's schools, in the various demographic sectors: on the one hand a literature curriculum that reflect developments in literature itself, that is to say changes that have taken place as a consequence of long-term and dynamic processes in the philosophy of art as well as developments in literary research; and on the other hand, a literature curriculum that reflects changes in ideology and concepts of identity.

Inasmuch as this research will deal with the way of thinking of 'the other' (the Jew) by way of the literary works included in the curriculum, we were obligated to discuss the following questions: what is the degree of literature's influence? What are the values that literature might educate for? How does literature presume to educate according to these values? Is this in any way its task? According to Cohen (1985), we have no empirical data to indicate the degree of influence literature has on children as they grow up, and thus it is difficult to measure or isolate the influence of literature from other environmental influences that impact on the child. However there are indications that literature is a force that acts upon and influences the child's emotional environment.

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In proof of this, Cohen presents his research regarding children's reactions to the image of the Arab. In his research, clear traces in support of this thesis were found in the children's books read by the respondents.

Cohen claims that in the area of creating identification and imitation, the power of literature is greater than any other school discipline: "The emotional experience subsumed in the book comes to life in the soul of the reader and from this we could deduce its direct and significant influence on the reader. The book penetrates the readers imagined reality. The reader imagines and lives it, identifies with the characters, their adventures and experiences, and their values may become his own personal property" (ibid. p. 8). There is reason to assume that children growing up who come into contact with literary stories for the first time are impressed by them much more than an adult who is used to reading, and for whom all additional reading is diluted within previous reading material and thus loses some of its power. The first confrontation a pupil has with literary themes, characters and plots can influence his character his values and his worldviews (ibid. p. 89).

There are three major approaches within the school of thought that claims that literature inculcates values and the structure of identity: the historical-documentary approach, the ideational-moral approach, and the national-social approach (Feingold 1977).

According to the historical-documentary approach literature is an important source of knowledge about human cultures and historical periods. This approach believes that investigating "from whence we have come" will help the reader to answer the question "where we are going".

"Remembering", according to this approach, is not simply an intellectual activity, but has the ability to generate activity in the present and in the future.

In accordance with this view, literature has an important place in inculcating national education. It does this by reading works that contain representations of life in periods of the nation's history, their characteristics and special way of life. Students thereby learn how to understand themselves as members of a particular nation, and their identification with their people and society deepens (Cohen 1985).

According to the moral-ideational approach, literature is a means to inculcate universal human values. According to this approach, literature enables the nurturing

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of important universal values and how to deal with the negative influence of alien ideals. This approach stresses the content of literature that supports values and claims that "language is the means and literature is the form. But neither form nor means are important in and of themselves. They are important only if they support human values" (Fisher, 1972).

According to A. B. Yehoshua, (pp. 11-28) any discourse regarding social and moral values is not foreign to literature and is not "imposed" upon it, rather the opposite, it is an immanent part of literary creativity. Zvi Adar, a representative of this view, (Adar, 1959) claims that literature does instill values and as such we should teach primarily that literature and those works from which the pupils may learn about human beings who manifest sublime values that include "justice, hope, truth, compassion and peace".

In his opinion, it is only by way of empathy and critical thinking that the reader can "awaken to a real appreciation of human life" (ibid. p. 906). Livingston (1976) also endorses the education of character by way of literature and claims: "that today you have a student before you, and tomorrow a citizen of the great wide world" (ibid. p. 73).

The national-social approach sees literature as a means to instill love and loyalty of the students to their people, land, and country. One of the characteristics of the national-social approach is its increased impact during times of national crisis or spiritual malaise. During these periods, there is a desire to view the teaching of literature as a means to renew or restore values. The clearest expression of this approach is to be found in the articles of Iram and Yeozy (1981). They complain about the phenomenon of literature education distancing itself from reflection and debate about values and issues and fixating on the literary text and its poetic characteristics only as part of a constant effort to create "instruments for literary criticism". In their opinion, the escape from any obligation to ideals in the areas of nationhood, religion and country will change the pupils' image of themselves and of their world for the worse.

In addition, teaching literature within the framework of learning a second language has an added value in regards to the "other". A literary work in another language offers the student the possibility of examining how his own image and

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narrative is pictured in the eyes of the "other". Moreover, a literary work, in another language, is comprehended as an authentic source by which to understand the other culture according to its own narrative and characteristics, and as such is a source of comparison and contrast.

The aim of the research

The aim of this research has been to demonstrate the Jewish-Arab relationship as represented in the literary texts included in the current curriculum for preparing Arab high school students for the Hebrew matriculation exam. The hypothesis of this research is that literature itself, especially as represented in textbooks, can be an instrument of socialization in general and a directed instrument for understanding the social 'other' in particular. The research questions are thus: How are the relations between them perceived – as coexistence or alternatively, as tension and hostility?

The literary corpus chosen for this research included literary works (hereinafter texts) included in the curriculum and approved by the Minister of Education and Culture in March 1975 and published in the special Director General's Bulletin in 1976.

These works can be found in readers entitled "Ofek", "For the student" (3 volumes) and three teacher's guides edited in 2003, by Subahi Adwi ad published by A-Nahatha Publications. In aggregate 105 works in the three text books. The choice of pieces on which the "Ofek: anthologies were based was made by a committee of inspectors and academics from both the Jewish and Arab sectors, and was finally approved by the Ministry of Education, the Chief Inspector for the teaching of Hebrew in Arab schools

Methodology

Content analysis is defined as a methodology in which a series of procedures is performed on the text with the intent to formulate a diagnosis of and significant generalizations from the text (Weber, 1985). The integrated content analysis methodology combines qualitative and quantitative techniques. In other words, the systematic production of valid deductions from within the given text, based upon the understanding and interpretation of the researcher (naturalistic generalization). At the

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same time, this would include the recognition of prominent elements that repeat themselves within the text itself. This method requires a detailed framework of criteria in order to classify statements and ideas into indisputable and independent categories. In order to balance out the weaknesses of the qualitative method, we have relied on a great many detailed quotations from the textbooks in order to preserve the maximum amount of accuracy when presenting the content (Weber, 1990).

Findings

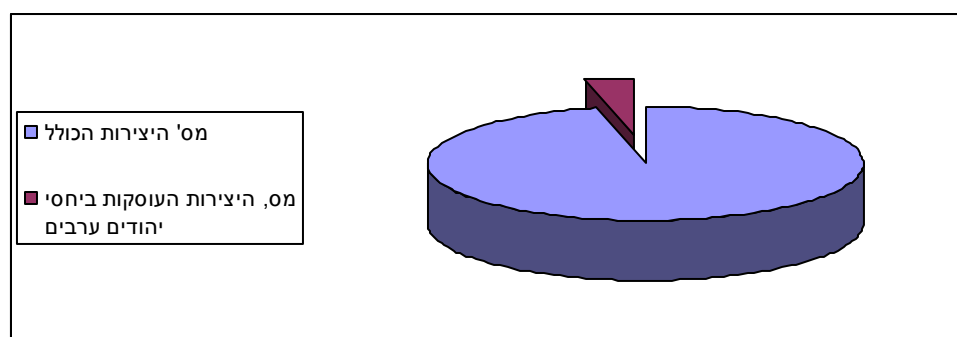


Diagram 1: Total number of works dealing with Jewish-Arab relations out of the total of works with the readers

The readers contain 105 items, of these only 4 present Jewish-Arab relations.

Discussion

There are only four pieces dealing with the essence of the relationships between Arabs and Jews. These relationships are not discussed in Anthology 1 directly and are only derived from two pieces. The primary interest of these two pieces is completely different: one depicts hostile relations and the other human relations and the offer to help: In the story *The Cake* (Itzhak Kronzon, Ofek 1, p. 102), the narrator is forced to eat stale cake because of his admiring friends and because of his father who was thinking about the wasted money spent on actually buying the expensive cake: "I swallowed the whole cake.... while praying that suddenly something would happen - that infiltrators would toss a bomb, that there would be a earthquake...".

The Arabs in this story are depicted in an offhand manner as infiltrators, an expression used to describe the infiltration of Arab refugees into the territory of the

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State of Israel which had become common right after the cease-fire had been signed in 1949 and up until the Sinai campaign in 1956. The word *infiltrators* is translated as another word the meaning of which is *to sneak into* which of course has no connection to any security implications. In contrast, in the piece *The village of dreams far from the moon*, (Yigael Lev, Ofek 1, p. 136) youths who are not identified by nationality at all escape from an institution for juvenile delinquents, risk getting caught and go back to the scene of an accident in a car driven by an Arab in order to help someone injured in the accident and get him to hospital. In Anthology 2, the story "Muhammad" by Smilansky (p. 109) gives us a glimpse of the neighborly relations between Jews, Arabs and Druze. A certain degree of symbiotic relationship is formed between the Jews and the Bedouin. This symbiotic relationship is one of give-and-take based on the cheap labor of the Bedouins: the Bedouins were permitted to use the water of the Jews. They were also allowed to graze their livestock on Jewish fields. In return "the moshavniks (Jewish farmers) acquired cheap labor" (ibid. p. 112). In one instance, the Bedouin came to help the Jewish farmers and beat Arab peasants from a neighboring Arab village that had come to attack the Jewish settlement (ibid. p. 112).

In questions to the student there are many references to relationships between the Jew and the Arab (13, 19, 20) as well as an emphasis on the image of the Arab in the Hebrew literature (assignment 27 page 124). On the other hand, there is no reference to the distinctive image of the Jews and the problems of the Jewish community relative to Arab hostility (as presented in the story). Likewise there is no comparison between the attitudes of the Arabs towards the Bedouin in contrast to the attitudes of the Jews toward them. Assignment (page 123) raises this issue but in a very indirect manner. It stresses the "mixed feelings" of the Jews towards the Bedouin without referring to the fact that in the end a formally correct symbiotic relationship developed between them.

In Anthology 3, the conflict between the Arabs and the Jews appears explicitly and in full force in the story *The Swimming Contest* (Binyamin Tammuz, page 92). The story expresses the distress of both peoples, the conflict between them regarding their rights to the land of Israel and the inability of war to relieve their existential distress. The final sentence of the story articulates the message that in the ongoing

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war between the two peoples there are no victors:"... we were all defeated" (ibid. page 106). The fact that there are very few works dealing with the relationship between Jews and Arabs (3.8% of the works included) is apt to create a false impression regarding the degree of the centrality and importance of this relationship in the fabric of everyday life in Israel.

Summary and Conclusions

Literary creativity in a second language is seen to be an authentic source through which to understand the culture of the "other" for three main reasons: it offers the reader the opportunity to learn about the personality of the other, it helps the reader to introduce himself to the narrative of the "other", and even enables him to experience a shred of contact with the "other", whether by way of the reading experience (Gordon, 1983) or by way of the story that contains overlapping lines of identification between the protagonists that represent the reader and those that represent the "other".

The few narratives in the curriculum that deal with the relationship between Jews and Arabs compel discussion in and of themselves. Derrida (1997) claims "there is absolutely nothing outside the text". That is to say that the phenomenon of absence from the text has a presence in itself from which questions naturally derive regarding that very omission. The tiny number of narratives in the reading program dealing with Jewish-Arab relations seems to reflect great caution which is also expressed on the initial objectives of the curriculum: "to stimulate discussion regarding authentic issues while at the same time taking into consideration the social and cultural sensitivities of the pupils and avoiding those that expressed positions and opinions that might have aroused extreme reactions in one direction or another"

The points of contact between Arabs and Jews in pre-state Israel do not constitute a source of much optimism: in Anthology 2, the story "Mohammed" by Smilanski, provides us with a peak into the "neighborly" relations existing between Jews, Arabs, and Bedouin. Between the Jews and the Bedouin symbiotic relationships are formed based on "give and take" within the framework of exploitation of the cheap labor of the Bedouin worker.

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Even the relationships between the two peoples in the first decade of the existence of the State of Israel reflect a great deal of hostility. In the story entitled "The Cake" (Itzhak Kronzon, Ofek 1, p. 10) the infiltrators who constituted a security burden on the young country are only mentioned in passing. In Anthology C, the conflict between Arabs and Jews appears openly for the only time. The story expresses the distress of both peoples, the conflict between them regarding their rights to the land of Israel and the inability of war to settle their existential distress.

Compared to this, the proposed new program is characterized by significant development in the level of its transparency regarding the relationships between Jews and Arabs. An example of this development is the work *The Trumpet in the Wadi* by Sami Michael. The entire novel is dedicated to demonstrating important and central aspects of the question of relationships between Jews and Arabs in Israel in peace time and in war by focusing on two lovers.

The novel invites, as it were, both young Jews and Arabs to discuss the cultural, historical, geographic, and political aspects that impact on both peoples and on the similarities and differences between them, as well as to envision and make analogies between Jewish and Arab protagonists and to inquire more deeply into the questions of coexistence, inherent in every section, segment and protagonist of the novel. As the scene of the narrative, Wadi Nisnas symbolizes a separating wedge, but at the same time suggests the possibility of coexistence.

It seems that it is precisely literary works of this kind, that deal with the identity conflict of the Israeli Arab within the Israeli framework that can constitute an authentic expression of a complex relationship and even stimulate significant educational discussion

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