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The Kites Are Flying!

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

books

BfK Rating:

4

This story is told in the form of alternating extracts from two sources: the diary of a journalist visiting the West Bank, and the nightly, silent, anguished monologue that a Palestinian boy has with his older brother who has been shot by Israeli soldiers. Max, the journalist, meets Said, the child, when the latter is making a kite while tending sheep. An accident brings Max into Said's community, where he learns that Said has not spoken since losing his brother, but has been making kites obsessively before freeing them to drift over to the settlement on the other side of the Israeli Apartheid Wall. Given that the intention of the book is to present a vision of friendship transcending hatred, you can probably guess the general direction of the rest of the story.

Morpurgo wrote this book in response to a series of events: a Jordanian teenager asking him to present the Palestinian side of the conflict; a kite-flying memorial to its victims on Hampstead Heath; a news story about a child being killed while flying a kite. Eventually, I found the story very moving. There were times when its attempts at 'balance' made me want to hurl it aside, and its glorious climax at first appeared to me to be an over-optimistic evasion of the atrocities happening right now. However, children's literature is not the same as campaigning journalism, and it is at least arguable that one of the purposes of the former is to present young readers with versions of the world as it just might become.

Running Order:

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