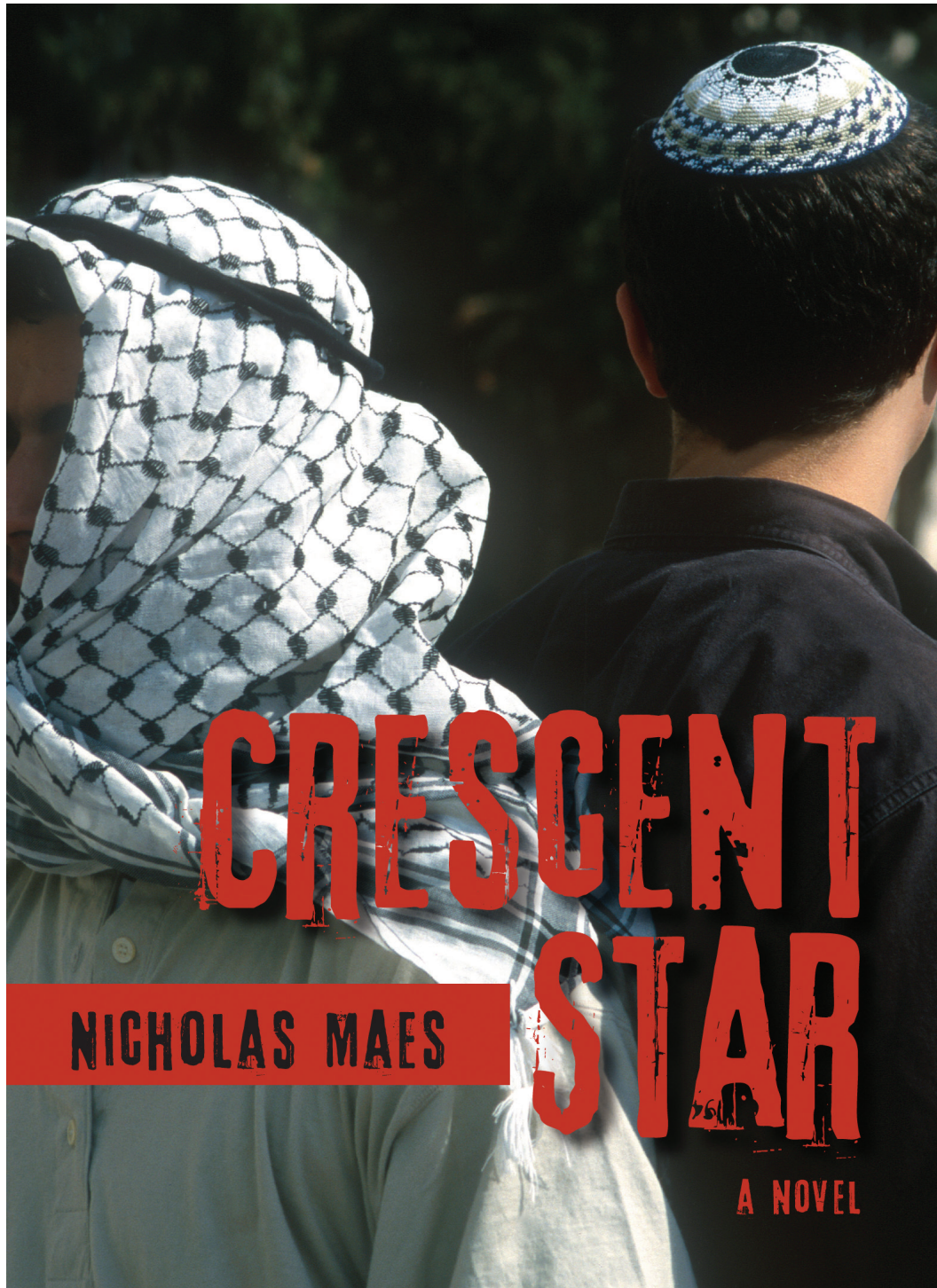


TEACHER'S GUIDE

Grade 9 or Grade 10 English



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Teacher Resource Guide developed by
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I INTRODUCTION

Book Summary

Two boys share a love of family, soccer and their city, yet they can never be friends. Avi and Moussa live parallel lives, defined by expectations they fear they cannot meet. Avi is Jewish, living in West Jerusalem, and Moussa is a Palestinian Arab, living in East Jerusalem. Told in alternating points of view, the novel explores the challenges of daily life in Jerusalem along with the possibility of understanding and the far greater threat of entrenchment. The conflict the novel explores is complex, but the story Maes creates around it is straightforward; students will be exposed to a contemporary issue in a non-biased context.

"Maes helps readers decipher some of the puzzle that is the Arab-Israeli conflict by introducing them to Hamas and Hezbollah, familiarizing them with places such as Gaza and Lebanon, and providing a glossary of both Arabic and Hebrew words which are used throughout the book. He has a gift for vivid description which places readers in a world which is foreign both politically and geographically and yet which illustrates both the best and the worst of the human condition."

— CM Materials

"Crescent Star paints a vivid portrait of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and does so in a fair and sympathetic way. At the same time, both Avid and Moussa are depicted as typical questioning teens, unsure if the path their parents have laid out is right for them. The only difference is, instead of fighting their parents for more personal freedom at home, they're preparing to wage war in the streets."

— Quill and Quire

About the Author

Nicholas Maes is a high school history teacher and also teaches classics at the University of Waterloo. His two previous novels for young people are *Locksmith* and *Laughing Wolf*, which was **nominated for the Snow Willow Award**. Maes is also the author of *Robertson Davies: Magician of Words*. He lives in Toronto.

II CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

While many other curriculum expectations are met through this novel unit, these are the key expectations developed through the unit.

Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 & 10

Reading

- 1.3 Demonstrating understanding of content
- 1.4 Making inferences
- 1.5 Extending understanding of texts
- 1.6 Analysing texts
- 1.8 Critical literacy
- 3.3 Developing vocabulary

Writing

- 1.2 Generating and developing ideas
- 1.3 Research
- 2.1 Form
- 2.5 Point of view

Understanding media texts

- 1.5 Critical literacy

III EXAMINING THE INTRODUCTION

Note to teachers: You might choose to skip the preface and examine it with students after having read and discussed the novel. Furthermore, there are benefits to addressing it at the end of your novel study *and* at the beginning.

1. How does the first paragraph of the Introduction establish the scope of the Israeli-Arab conflict?
2. Note that Maes alternates between identifying the conflict as the *Arab*-Israeli conflict and the *Israeli*-Arab conflict. Why?
3. Author Nicholas Maes clearly defines his intention in writing this novel. In your own words define his purpose in writing *Crescent Star*.
4. Maes uses some strong, persuasive language to establish his purpose. Define the words in the following list in the context in which they are used in the introduction:
 - a. Platitudes
 - b. Antidote
 - c. Apartheid
 - d. Abomination
 - e. Contentious
 - f. Shtick
 - g. Autonomous
 - h. Inalienable
 - i. Arduous
5. What is a “moral relativist”?
6. Maes states that both sides have engaged in “shameful,” “morally indefensible” and “barbaric” acts and yet he doesn’t condemn either side. Why not?
7. Above all, what does Maes want his readers to “consider” when they reflect on the conflict explored in *Crescent Star*?
8. Where does the phrase “Beat their weapons into ploughshares...” come from?

If you examine the Introduction *after* working with the novel, consider the following:

9. To what extent does the novel succeed in capturing “both sides of the equation”? Is it free from bias?
10. Prior to reading *Crescent Star* did you have an opinion on the conflict? Has reading the novel had an impact on your opinion? Explain.
11. Does the novel, in your opinion, “do justice” to the complications that plague daily life in Israel” (p8)?

IV PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

1. Have an open discussion about the Arab-Israeli conflict. Record what students know about the conflict on the board. Ask students what they didn't know about the conflict. Make a list of what they would like to learn about it. Alternatively, teachers might ask students to complete a KWL chart prior to the class discussion.
2. Examine a map of Israel noting its size, its geography, neighbouring countries etc. Ask students to predict the content of the novel based on their examination of the map.
3. Have students deconstruct the cover of the novel. Ask them to consider what they can infer about the themes, tone and conflict in the novel from the cover. Consider: the image of the two young men, the colours, the words etc.
4. Brainstorm associations with the two symbols that comprise the title of the novel. You might choose to spend some time examining the complex history of these symbols and how interconnected they are. Taken together they have become very political; taken individually they relate directly to religion. Why did the designer choose *not* to include the visual depiction of the symbols?
5. Introduce the terms "Salaam" (Arabic) and "Shalom" (Hebrew) and the concept of peace. Have a discussion about the possibility of peace.
6. Consider the concept of point of view. Ask students to consider the importance of point of view in understanding any situation. Is objectivity possible? Are all story tellers in some way subjective?
7. Ask students to consider the possibility that they can learn about contemporary issues through literature. If a reader is aware he or she is *learning something* does that change the way a novel is read or the reader's response to the novel?
8. View the CBC News in Review DVD from December 2003 on the creation of the "security parameter". Even if you do not have access to the DVD there are some excellent resources available online from this DVD which can be used. This segment may be found at:

<http://newsinreview.cbclearning.ca/west-bank-wall-barrier-to-peace/>

V QUESTIONS DURING READING

Chunk 1: Chapters 1-3

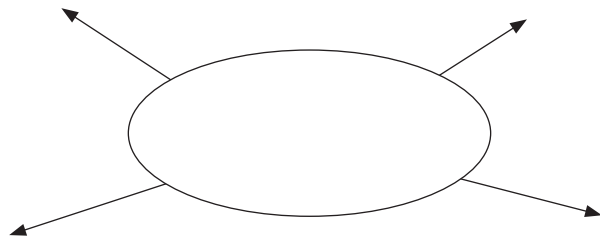
1. How does the author establish the mood in chapter 1?
2. Identify the six members of the (extended) Greenbaum family.
3. Avi knows that at 18 he will be conscripted into the Israeli army. What are some of his concerns?
4. The word “incident” is used on p18 twice. It is a “loaded” word (packed with meaning). What might “incident” mean as it is used here?
5. The gender roles in the Greenbaum family are carefully drawn. Provide one example that illustrates the different expectations for men and women.
6. Provide four quotations that demonstrate Avi’s growing awareness that he is no longer a child.
7. Why do you think the transition to manhood is so frightening for Avi?
8. Moussa’s family is introduced in Chapter 2. Identify the seven members of the (extended) Shakir family.
9. Through Moussa’s interest in math we learn some concrete fact about Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel.
 - a. How many Arabs live in Jerusalem?
 - b. How large is Jerusalem?
10. What are some of the expectations of a man in an Arab family:
 - a. What is expected within the family
 - b. What is expected politically?
11. Summarize the argument / debate between Alisha and Ahmed. How is it similar to the discussion held in the Greenbaum home on p18-19?
12. What purpose is served in repeating the same two paragraphs in both Avi and Moussa’s chapters?
13. What contact do the Jewish boys have with the Palestinians?
14. In what way is Yossi’s soccer team “making history”?
15. On p40 Moussa comments on the “axiom of choice”.
 - a. What is an analogy?
 - b. What is an axiom?
 - c. Explain this analogy to math in the context of the novel.
16. Yossi says of the Israelis: “We have problems and they have problems”. To what extent do you agree with his statement?
17. Each team believed the other tem “robbed” them. How can they both be right?

Chunk 2: Chapters 4-6

1. Draw a spider diagram with "Israel" in the center. Add the items as "legs" on the spider; you may wish to connect some to each other. Briefly define

Or explain the items listed to create the spider diagram. You may need to google the terms if you find there isn't enough information for you in the text.

- a. Gaza
- b. Zionists
- c. Ma'alot 1974
- d. Shoah
- e. Tzahal
- f. Final Solution
- g. Hitler
- h. West Bank
- i. B'Tselem
- j. Auschwitz
- k. 1948



2. Avi's class gets involved in a huge debate about the actions of their own country. Briefly explain the point of view of each of the following students:
 - a. Zohara
 - b. Illan
 - c. Aryeh
 - d. The Teacher
3. Later, in Moussa's class, we observe a discussion in which the teacher says: "Shall we discuss their tragedy"? Briefly explain the point of view of each of the following students:
 - a. Suleiman
 - b. Mahmoud
 - c. Ali
4. Why do you think it is so difficult for one group to empathize with the other?
5. In Chapter 5 a bomb unit dismantles a suspected bomb in view of Avi's school. In Chapter 6, two Israeli soldiers visit the Shakir's stall in the shuk (market).
 - a. What is similar about the two incidents?
 - b. What sets the two incidents apart?
 - c. Are Moussa and Ali's reactions to the incidents similar or dissimilar? Explain your answer.
6. Ahmed gives his brother a lesson on anger. How would you explain, in your own words, the two sorts of anger he describes in the passage on p66-67 "There are two sorts of anger..."
7. Avi defines his parents' connection to Israel in terms of "fortitude" and "wariness" (p74-75). What do you think he means by these terms?
8. Moussa's father tells his family: "Don't think I'm trapped here like a dog in a kennel, but see me as a knife whose blade is being sharpened for a day of inevitable reckoning". How do you interpret this warning?

9. Tariq exhorts his son to “be a man!” Why does Moussa try to avoid understanding his father? What does he fear he must do to become a man?
10. Both Moussa and Avi are encouraged to “step up”, to become adults.
 - a. What does it mean for a young adult in Canada to be an adult? What are the expectations?
 - b. In what ways is it different for Avi and Moussa to be “an adult” than it might be for a typical Canadian?

Chunk 3: Chapters 7-10

1. The conclusion of Chapter 8 presents two very similar scenes. Would you define the conclusion to this chapter as ironic or tragic? What is the difference between the two terms in your opinion?
2. During Avi’s interview with the CBC reporter he realizes that he never mixes with Arabs and remembers something his mother once said about Canada. Re-read her impression of Toronto (p104). Do you agree with her or not? Support your answer with specific examples from your own experience.
3. About Canada Avi says he misses road trips and the “freedom from politics” (p106). To what extent do you live free from politics in Canada? Do you consider this a positive or negative?
4. As you did earlier for Israeli history, create a spider diagram of the details we learn in this chapter about Palestinian history. Put Palestine at the center and add the items to create the “legs” of the spider. Briefly define or explain the items listed to create the spider diagram. You may need to google the terms if you find there isn’t enough information for you in the text.
 - a. Expulsion of Arabs
 - b. Deir Yassin April 9, 1948
 - c. Partition
 - d. Nakba Day
 - e. Zionists
 - f. Hamas
 - g. Al-Quds
 - h. Palestinian Diaspora
 - i. Palestinian right of return

Chunk 4: Chapters 11-13

1. Air Canada’s Flight 846 carries both Avi’s father and Moussa’s older brother back to Jerusalem. What does each man experience at Israeli customs and why?
2. In chapter 12 we read about Moussa’s interview with the CBC reporter. The interpreter is “Daffawiyya” (check out its meaning in the glossary), whereas Moussa is from Jerusalem. What specific differences do these result in for Moussa and the interpreter’s daily life?
3. Moussa loves *The Lord of the Rings* because “it describes a situation that is black and white. And good ends up defeating evil.” (p136). To what extent is reality clearly black and white? Provide two specific examples from your experience or understanding to support your answer.

4. Moussa wrestles with the idea of freedom. How does his understanding of freedom differ from a more western view of freedom? Provide examples from the text to support your answer.
5. In this chapter Moussa reflects on the concept of “irdh” (honour). To what extent does the concept of honour play a role in your own daily life?
6. The solution to peace is “simple but impossible” as far as Moussa understands it. Because he loves math, he uses a mathematical theory to explain his understanding. Using a different analogy, explain why you think the solution to Palestinian-Israeli differences is both simple and impossible.
7. Consider the nature of the conflict described in this novel:
 - a. Is there a situation in Canada that comes close to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict? Describe it.
 - b. Is there a situation somewhere else in the world that is similar to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict? Describe it.
8. In Chapter 13 both Avi and Moussa are forced to confront their weaknesses: Avi confronts his fear and Moussa confronts his lack of anger.
 - a. Identify two similarities between the two boys as they confront their weaknesses.
 - b. Identify two differences in their experiences.
9. Avi’s fear is described using a simile on (p145). Record the simile and explain its connection to Avi.
10. The “fire” in Moussa’s friends is described using a simile on (p151). Record the simile and explain its connection to Moussa.

Chunk 5: Chapters 14-16

1. Moussa, after learning why his brother, Douad, would never again call Jerusalem home, kisses his brother “in an effort to compensate him for the future he’d been robbed of.” Exactly what future has Douad been robbed of? Explain.
2. In Chapter 15 Avi and his band mates are verbally attacked by a man in Heathrow airport, England. Summarize the encounter by defining both the man’s interpretation of the situation in Israel and Avi’s classmates’ interpretation of the situation.
3. At the end of Chapter 16, “Each side put its flag away, possibly out of respect for the other.” (p181). Briefly outline the incident that leads both sides to such a positive place.

Chunk 6: Chapters 17-20

1. As tensions creep up on both sides, Avi and Moussa conclude that “this violence, this insanity, was what men imagined they had to do.” (p185, p187). What is implied by the use of the word “imagined”?
2. The chapter concludes with both boys enduring a nightmare. Although the circumstances of each nightmare differ, what links them together?

3. Moussa finally gains entrance to Wassim's mysterious building.
 - a. Once in, what does he discover about the place?
 - b. What effect does the mysterious place have on Moussa?
4. Moussa is transformed into a man in a symbolic act at the end of Chapter 19. Describe what Moussa does and the significance of this act.
5. Just as Moussa explores Wassim's building, to what place does Avi gain entrance?
 - a. Describe what Avi finds in this mysterious place.
 - b. What impact do the contents of this building have on Avi?
6. Describe the symbolic action that transforms Avi from a boy to a man.

Chunk 7: Chapters 21-24

1. On p228 Avi says, "If it were merely a matter of right and wrong, the situation wouldn't be nearly as crazy." What does he mean by this?
2. As an outsider, do you believe there is a clear right or wrong in the Palestine-Israel conflict? Explain your position.
3. To what extent are things always a "matter of perspective" as the reporter suggests (p227)?
4. Avi says he feels "abashed" after his interview is over. What does this word mean and why would Avi feel that way?
5. How is Moussa different from the members of Hamas? Use the glossary at the back to guide your answer.
6. If Moussa isn't as ultra-religious or pious as his father, he is still ruled by one thing: "Hamuleh" or family. How is he controlled by his family?
7. Moussa realizes (p 235) that his "allegiance had been shaped at birth....This order was permanent and could not be reversed." Explain what he means in this passage.
8. In Chapter 23 we learn that Avi's brother must return to his job in the army, which is entering Lebanon, a neighbouring county. Why might Israel be in conflict with Lebanon?
9. Mention is also made of the Hezbollah. Google this term to find out to what group it refers.
10. In their final meetings with the CBC, both Avi and Moussa appear different to reporter Phil Matthews. Define the differences you notice in the two boys.
11. Moussa and the interpreter consider the reporter to be a "deluded idealist". Explain why you agree or disagree with this statement.

VI EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Check out one or more of the following non-governmental organizations (NGOs). What is their mandate? What are some of their activities?
 - a. Seeds of Peace <http://www.seedsofpeace.org/>
 - b. American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam <http://oasisofpeace.org/>
 - c. Peace Players International <http://www.peaceplayersintl.org>
 - d. The Peres Centre for Peace <http://www.peres-center.org>
 - e. The Geneva Accord <http://www.geneva-accord.org/>
2. The novel *Crescent Star* is set in Jerusalem, a city which is significant to Christians, Arabs and Jews alike. Take a look at this interactive map of Jerusalem:
<http://www.sacred-destinations.com/israel/jerusalem-map>
Scroll over several of the key sites on the right tool bar to see just how much history there is that is important to these major religions. Identify four key sites that you think reflect the complexity of the Arab-Israeli conflict in Jerusalem.
3. Read this well known parable and discuss its meaning with a partner. How can you relate this parable to the novel *Crescent Star*? Be prepared to share your ideas:

The Real Meaning of Peace, author unknown

There once was a king who offered a prize to the artist who would paint the best picture of peace. Many artists tried. The king looked at all the pictures.

But there were only two he really liked, and he had to choose between them. One picture was of a calm lake. The lake was a perfect mirror for peaceful towering mountains all around it. Overhead was a blue sky with fluffy white clouds. All who saw this picture thought that it was a perfect picture of peace.

The other picture had mountains, too. But these were rugged and bare. Above was an angry sky, from which rain fell and in which lightning played. Down the side of the mountain tumbled a foaming waterfall. This did not look peaceful at all.

But when the king looked closely, he saw behind the waterfall a tiny bush growing in a crack in the rock. In the bush a mother bird had built her nest. There, in the midst of the rush of angry water, sat the mother bird on her nest—in perfect peace.

The king chose the second picture.

4. Read the poem “Jerusalem” by Naomi Shihab Nye. You might also watch her read it at:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mq-78ygjRLQ>
In your opinion, what are five of the most powerful poetic images in the poem? Record them and link them to the novel *Crescent Star*.

Jerusalem

*"Let's be the same wound if we must bleed.
Let's fight side by side, even if the enemy
is ourselves: I am yours, you are mine."
-Tommy Olofsson, Sweden*

I'm not interested in
Who suffered the most.
I'm interested in
People getting over it.

Once when my father was a boy
A stone hit him on the head.
Hair would never grow there.
Our fingers found the tender spot
and its riddle: the boy who has fallen
stands up. A bucket of pears
in his mother's doorway welcomes him home.
The pears are not crying.
Later his friend who threw the stone
says he was aiming at a bird.
And my father starts growing wings.

Each carries a tender spot:
something our lives forgot to give us.
A man builds a house and says,
"I am native now."
A woman speaks to a tree in place
of her son. And olives come.
A child's poem says,
"I don't like wars,
they end up with monuments."
He's painting a bird with wings
wide enough to cover two roofs at once.

Why are we so monumentally slow?
Soldiers stalk a pharmacy:
big guns, little pills.
If you tilt your head just slightly
it's ridiculous.

There's a place in my brain
Where hate won't grow.
I touch its riddle: wind, and seeds.
Something pokes us as we sleep.

It's late but everything comes next.

~ Naomi Shihab Nye ~

5. Ask students to write their own poem exploring conflict. Specifically you might ask them to make use of symbols from the text of the novel e.g. a hammer, an antennae, soccer, a sling shot, an AK47, a wall, a bird, a feather, a crescent, a star etc.

VII WRITING QUESTIONS

Short Answer – 3 Paragraphs

1. Reflect on a situation in which you have been powerless to change your circumstances. Did you feel angry? Resentful? Explain the situation and your response to it in three well-formed paragraphs.
2. Reflect on a situation in which you were forced to overcome a particular weakness. What did it take to push you past your weakness? What emotions did you experience? How did the experience change you? Examine your response to pushing yourself beyond your comfort zone in three well formed paragraphs.
3. Examine the impact of the framing device in the novel. What is the impact of beginning and ending the novel from the point of view of a cat? Defend your opinion with quotations from the text.
4. Although it is made clear in the novel that Avi and Moussa are destined never to meet each other in any meaningful way, imagine what might happen if they were to meet face to face. What would bring them together? What would they talk about? Would it be a positive meeting or a negative one? Write three expository paragraphs examining these possibilities OR write a dialogue between Moussa and Avi.
5. Write a newspaper report examining one of the events from the novel:
 - a. A soccer match between Palestinians and Israelis
 - b. The rescue of a child caught on barbed wire marking the border of two territories
 - c. The discovery of Wassim's shrine
 - d. The discovery of the secret hangar

VIII WRITING ACTIVITIES

Longer Answer – 5 Paragraphs

1. Both of the boys have absent fathers (though for different reasons). To what extent do you believe their journey to manhood is made more difficult because of the absence of their fathers? Defend your opinion with evidence from the text.
2. Nicholas Maes structures the novel using almost identical situations in both Avi and Moussa's lives. There is an anticipated back and forth between the two sides as we gain insight into the Arab-Israeli conflict. Is this structural device effective in deepening our understanding or is it too predictable? Use evidence from the text to support your point of view.
3. There are several Canadian connections in the novel *Crescent Star*. Examine the purpose and effectiveness of these connections and their impact on the novel. Provide specific examples from the text to support your answer.
4. In the preface Maes says about his novel that it: "is descriptive more than anything else, and might possibly serve as an antidote to those who recklessly pass judgment on the players involved." To what extent do you believe Maes has succeeded? Support your opinion with evidence from the text.

IX FURTHER READING

When I Was A Soldier, Valerie Zenatti

A memoir of an Israeli girl's life in the army.

Paelstine, Joe Sacco

A graphic novel which explores life in Palestine

Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak, Deborah Ellis
Interviews