

The Children of Ibdaa

Today's focus is on one place that Palestinian refugees now live: the Occupied Territories. Give students the *Palestinians* booklet.

Show *The Children of Ibda'a* DVD (2002) (29 min.) about Palestinian refugees in the Occupied Territories who belong to a dance troupe and talk about their lives under occupation. They also return to their ancestral villages destroyed in 1947-49. The rappers in *Slingshot Hip Hop* visited Ibda'a's refugee camp (Dheisheh). Warn students that the children speak in Arabic most of the time, so your students should watch and read subtitles during the movie. Tell your students that at the end of the movie, you will ask them some questions about:

- 1. Economic situation: What did you see? what did the countryside look like? what did the refugee camp look like?**
- 2. Political situation: What problems did the refugees face?**
- 3. Culture: Why do the children dance? how do you think their economic and political situation affects their dance?**

After watching the DVD, discuss the questions. Here are some ideas for the teacher:

- 1. Economic situation: What did you see? what did the countryside look like? what did the refugee camp look like?** olive trees, stony hillsides, dirty streets, graffiti, piled up garbage, barbed wire fences, no soccer fields or playgrounds or gardens, small shops, turkeys, poor schools -- no technology.
- 2. Political situation: What problems did the refugees face?** checkpoints, can't get to Jerusalem, overcrowded schools and clinics, few doctors or teachers, little access to water, settlements/settlers, unable to return to village of origin, refugees since 1948, driven out and kept out by Israelis.
- 3. Culture: Why do the children dance? how do you think their economic and political situation affects their dance?** They seem to dance to feel free and to tell their family story. Help the students extrapolate: The fact that they are political refugees who live in economic poverty with political limitations makes them keep an old village dance alive and imbues it with more political meaning (remember that they wave the flag in the dance) than if they had never become refugees. The culture is tied to politics and economics. Hard to separate.

Some notes to the teacher about the movie:

The children use "Jew" and "Israeli" interchangeably. This is unfortunate, but does not indicate a religious prejudice; several children say that they would be happy to live side by side with Jews as long as they were living in equality with the same political and economic rights.

The filmmakers took a risk in taking the children secretly back to their villages inside Israel; if discovered, the international filmmakers could have been fined or deported from Israel and the Occupied Territories. The children could have been imprisoned (less likely if they are girls and young) or their families punished in some way (fine, imprisonment, house demolition). The grandfather indicates that he had returned to his village inside Israel. This would have been possible before the 1990s if he had gotten a work permit to work inside Israel. But he would not have been allowed to live there.

Some scenes in the *Ibda'a* dance imply torture. It is well-documented that a high percentage (80-90%) of Palestinians have been tortured in Israeli jails. The United Nations found Israel in violation of the Convention Against Torture for this reason. It is likely that most of the children in the movie know at least one person who has been imprisoned and tortured in Israeli jails.

Handout: Give students the handout **CULTURE, POLITICS, ECONOMY OF PALESTINIANS OCCUPIED TERRITORIES: POST-1967**. Ask students to add details to this handout whenever they can. For instance, right now they can fill in some details about Language (Arabic), Arts (Dabke dance), and Economy (poor, refugee camps).

Optional: Have students write a reaction to the DVD. You could use any question from the discussion that seems fruitful.

Optional: Have students read *Ibda'a* and *Dabke Dancing* on p. 14-15 of the magazine *Palestinians*. Students can answer questions from the handout below.

There are two statements in the article about *Ibda'a* that need explanation:

First, in paragraph 2, the author says that most Palestinians “relocated to camps because they expected to win the war and drive out the Jews.” Actually, Benny Morris, an Israeli historian who wrote *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem 1947-1949*, has documented that the majority of Palestinian villagers fled due to violence or threats of violence from Zionist Jewish forces. (Because Israel had not been created yet, it is inaccurate to call these “Israeli” forces.) Students should be reminded that Palestinians did not take issue with the Jewish religion but with some Zionist Jews who wanted to create a nation-state for Jews on the land where Palestinians lived.

Second, in 1993, Israel agreed to a limited autonomy for some areas of the West Bank. It did not end its occupation. In para. 3, “Israeli’s [sic] withdrawal in 1995” means that the Israeli soldiers no longer patrolled Dheisheh on a daily basis, though the army still did enter whenever it wanted to.

After the students have read the article and answered the questions, discuss: how does this culture of dance reflect both the original, pre-1948 culture but also the experience of moving and living under occupation? Fill out more of the Culture

Organizer/Occupied Territories: Post-1967. This is the model for how students will do their own research about Palestinian society in another region, so be sure the students understand how to fill out the chart.

There is a teaching guide from the publishers of this magazine. You can choose to use this to focus on some of the articles. In particular, if your students would like to explore how kids are reacting to the occupation, read about Seeds of Peace. You can also show the DVD called *Promises*.

IBDA'A QUESTIONS

Name: _____

1. Economic situation: What did you see? what did the countryside look like? what did the refugee camp look like?

2. Political situation: What problems did the refugees face?

3. Culture: Why do the children dance? how do you think their economic and political situation affects their dance?

Ibda'a: The Creation of Something New & Dabke Dancing from the magazine
Palestinians

Name: _____

Directions: Read the two articles on pages 14-15 and answer the questions:

Comprehension

1. What is Dheisheh?
2. Where is it?
3. Who lives there?
4. When did Ibda'a start?
5. What does Ibda'a mean?
6. What does the cultural center do?
7. Describe the dance troupe:
8. What is the dabkeh?
9. What is a derbeke? a nay?

Interpretation

10. Why was Ibda'a formed?

Analysis

11. Why and when did Palestinians move to Dheisheh?
12. How did the dabke dance originate?
13. What does the dabke symbolize?

Evaluation

14. If you lived in the refugee camp, would you want to join the dance troupe? Why or why not?

**CULTURE, POLITICS, ECONOMY OF PALESTINIANS
OCCUPIED TERRITORIES: POST-1967**

Language	Food	Clothing	Arts	Customs & Religions	Political organization	Economy

