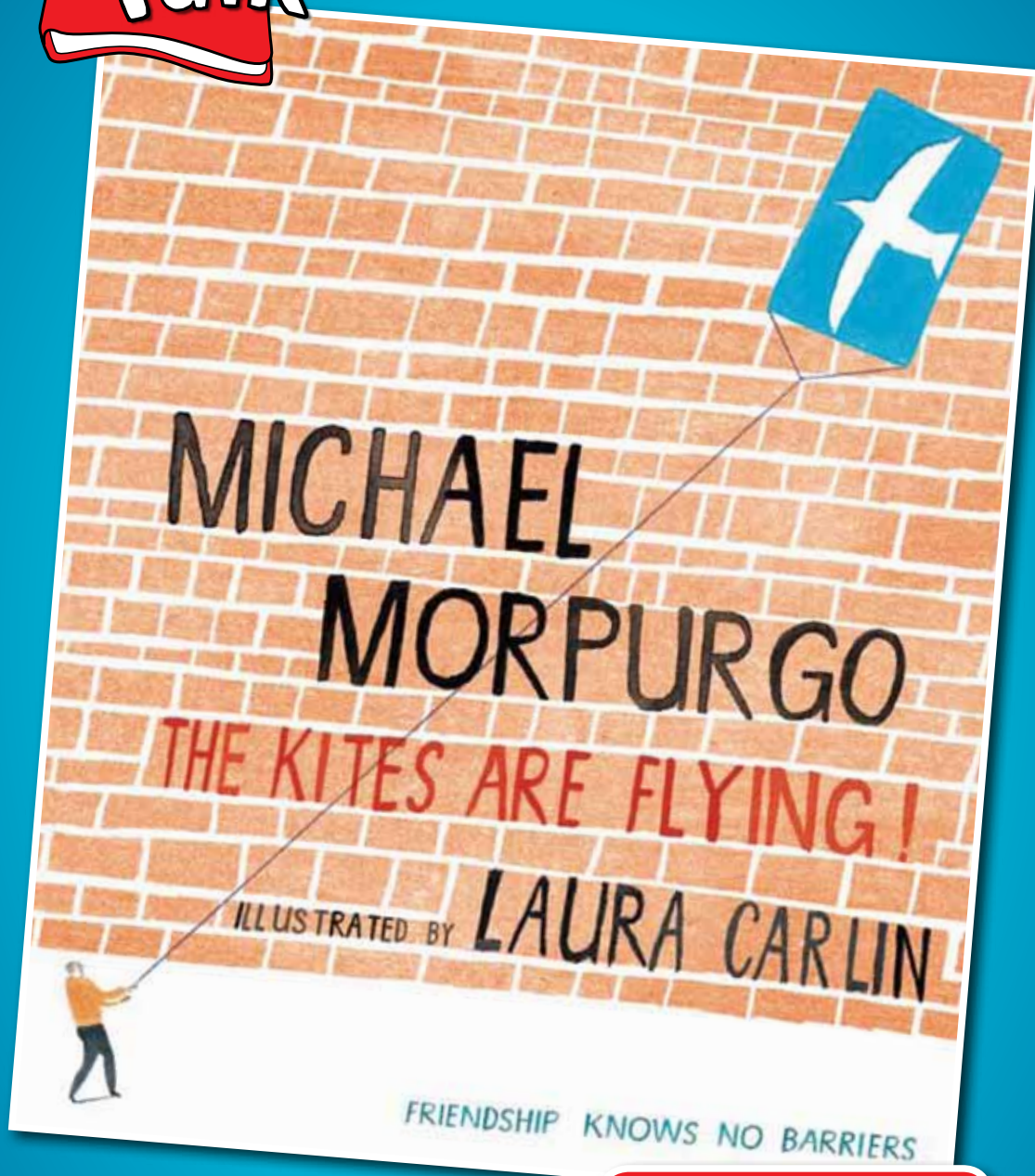


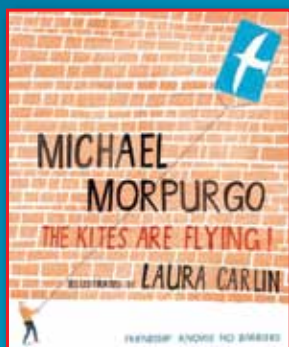
**Book
Talk**



AGES 8+

**Engage and inspire your
pupils with a Book Talk!**

AGES 8+



Look out for this book at your Fair!

Price	£4.99 / €6.00
Case	Read On
Author	Michael Morpurgo
Illustrator	Laura Carlin
Publisher	Walker Books

Using this book in your classroom

Themes

This uplifting story sheds a new light on the conflict in the **West Bank**. It includes themes of **love and loss, hope**, and the desire for **peace**.

Summary

Max is a journalist and film-maker who travels to the West Bank to make a film about the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Said is a Palestinian boy who has suffered a terrible tragedy – the death of his much-loved older brother, Mahmoud, who was killed in the conflict. In this powerful short novel, Michael Morpurgo brings Max and Said together and lets each tell the story of their meeting and the friendship and trust that develops between them.

Said has not spoken since his brother's death, but he expresses his sadness, and his enduring hope for peace, in the form of the kites he makes. Said's homemade kites each bear the Arabic word 'Salaam', or 'Peace'. He flies his kites and releases each one of them so that they land in the Jewish settlement on the other side of the wall which divides the two communities. In the settlement lives a girl with a blue headscarf, who uses a wheelchair. Quietly, the girl collects Said's kites, and then one day she releases them all and sends them back again – this time with the Hebrew word for peace, 'Shalom'. As the kites fill the sky, both adults and children on both sides of the religious and political divide are filled with joy, and for a moment the hope of peace unites them.

Did you know?

- Michael Morpurgo's book *War Horse* has been turned into a play which was a sell-out success, becoming the most successful play in the National Theatre's history.
- Michael comes from a long line of actors – both his parents were actors, and his great-grandmother sang on stage for Queen Victoria. He recently made his own acting debut with a walk-on part in the last night of *War Horse* at the National Theatre.



The Story Session

1. Introducing the story

Explain that this story is set in the West Bank, a part of the Middle East where there is conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. If any of the children have knowledge or experience of the conflict, you may wish to share this. (Children will still be able to understand and appreciate the story even if they have no prior knowledge of the conflict.) You could set the scene for the story by asking children what they think life might be like for children who are living in a war zone.

2. Reading the story

- Read the first section, which is Max's diary for 1st May 2008 (pages 5-9). Briefly pause to check that children understand who Max is (a journalist/film-maker), where he is and how he is feeling. Then move on to read the second section, told by Said (pages 10-24). Say: "What do we find out about Said's life? How do you think he feels? What do you think will happen next for Said and Max?" Encourage the children to respond as fully as they can, and to ask their own questions about the story and discuss it as you read.
- If you have time, read the rest of the book together (or encourage the children to read it independently). If possible, build in time for the children to pause and discuss the book as they read, and to pick up the clues that we get about what happened to Said's brother Mahmoud.
- At the end of the book, talk about what the kites meant, both for Said and for the Jewish girl. Say: "Why do you think Michael Morpurgo chose to end the book with the image of the kites flying and the laughter of the children?" Talk about the message of hope in the book. Look at the dedication at the start of the book: "For the children who live on both sides of the wall, who will one day bring it tumbling down. No guns or trumpets needed." Do the children think this might be possible? Think together about the sorts of changes that might be needed to bring about the end of a long conflict like the one between Israelis and Palestinians.

3. Follow-up

- Encourage the children to make a wall display in the form of kites with messages on them. What message would the children like to send to Said, or to the girl in the Jewish settlement? Encourage them to express their message in a few words and write it on a kite shape.
- If the children would like to write a longer response to the book, they could write a poem or a short descriptive piece inspired by Said's story.
- Encourage the children to do some research into the conflict in the Middle East. *Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak* by Deborah Ellis (published by Frances Lincoln) is a useful and balanced book which includes first-hand accounts from children on both sides of the conflict.

YOU TELL US

- Did you use these notes to have a Book Talk in class?
- Were they helpful?
- Are there any changes you'd like to see to make them more useful?

We're always happy to hear your comments, so please email us!
For the UK, email: bookfairs@scholastic.co.uk
For Ireland, please email: bookfairs@scholastic.ie