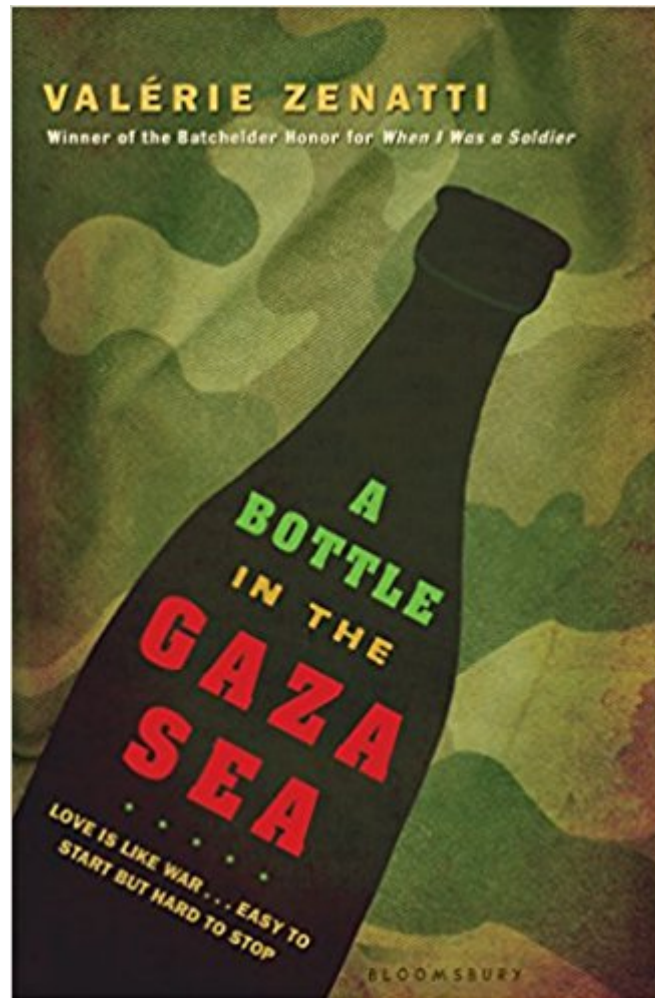




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# A Bottle In The Gaza Sea



## Synopsis

A seventeen-year-old from Jerusalem, Tal Levine comes from a family that always believed peace would come to the Middle East. She cried tears of joy when President Clinton and Yitzhak Rabin shook hands with Yasser Arafat in 1993-a moment of hope that would stay with her forever. But when a terrorist explosion kills a young woman at a café in Jerusalem, something changes for Tal. One day she writes a letter, puts it in a bottle, and sends it to Gaza-to the other side-beginning a correspondence with a young Palestinian man that will ultimately open their eyes to each other's lives and hearts.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 160 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 18 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #72,542 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #11 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Tolerance #291 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Friendship

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Grade 6-8 • Told primarily through emails, this is the story of two young people on opposite sides of a political chasm: Naïm is Palestinian and lives in Gaza, and Tal is Israeli and lives in Jerusalem. Brought up in a family committed to Israeli-Palestinian peace, 17-year-old Tal writes a note, puts it in a bottle, and asks her brother, who is serving in the Israeli army, to throw the bottle into the sea in Gaza. Instead, he places it in the sand on the beach, and it is picked up by Naïm. Thus begins the email correspondence between "Gazaman" and "Bakbouk." As they slowly feel each other out, the teens begin to develop trust, friendship, and perhaps even something more. Their thoughts about their lives and about the political situation are carefully presented, and their musings and growing relationship constitute the central action of the novel. This smooth and

unobtrusive translation starts out slowly and takes nearly one hundred pages to reach out and grab readers. The second half is compelling, but the ending is abrupt and feels unfinished. The book's appeal is likely to lie in the fact that these two characters are regular kids, yet are unusual in their sense of themselves as different from the people around them. They are caught in a situation not of their own making, they are not understood by the world, and they show, as young people often do, the simple and direct humanity of people of good will.

—Sue Giffard, Ethical Culture Fieldston School, New York City Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Zenatti's Batchelder Honor Book, *When I Was a Soldier* (2005), is a memoir about her conflicts while serving in the Israeli army. This docu-novel is more messagey. It begins when 17-year-old Tal, in Tel Aviv, sends out a bottle with a peace message that includes her e-mail address. Naim, 20, finds it on the beach in Gaza, and replies. Contrived setup aside, readers will be caught by the immediate personal and political drama, as the two young people speak in instant messages, e-mails, and first-person narratives with anger, sympathy, humor, and sorrow about their history and their daily lives—what separates them (they live just 40 miles apart, but it feels like 6,000), and what connects them, including their shared opposition to fundamentalists and their longing for peace. They also worry about each other, especially when Tal witnesses a bombing in her neighborhood. The Romeo-and-Juliet scenario, translated from the French, will draw teens, as will the urgent headline issues. Grades 7-12. --Hazel Rochman

I saw the movie & wanted to have a bit more depth to the story line. As usual, the movie & the book are different. I actually like them both & totally understand why film & the written word have to change it up a bit & sometimes a lot. I didn't know that it was written for teens. That probably explains why it wasn't filled with blood & guts. The struggle between any warring countries is horrid & heartbreaking, but this story shows the perseverance in TRYING to understand the heart of the people suffering through it, that are on the opposing side. I wish all my friends would read it, and their families.....I will read it again...

This story about the relationship between an Israeli girl, Tal, and a Palestinian boy, Naim, via e-mail and instant messaging, is honest but hopeful. Well-written and compelling, the tale of their relationship conveys the confusion, anger, exhaustion, and depression felt by many young people

during the 2003 intifada. Tal sees what's hiding behind Naim's cynicism and sarcasm, and she and her family are definitely on the liberal side of the political spectrum, but she won't put up with his victim mentality and asks him, "...where exactly are your advocates for peace? Why are there never a hundred thousand Palestinians gathered together calling for peace with us, without hatred in their eyes? Why did the intifada break out ... when we ... were prepared to give you a state? How can you accept the fact that terrorists kill women, children, babies?" Naim protests collective punishment by the Israelis, among other perceived oppressions, but he also criticizes the Palestinians and especially resents the Islamic fundamentalists. He yearns for freedom and eventually finds a way to study in Canada. Bottle in the Gaza Sea is more nuanced, and is particularly strong in portraying a non-stereotyped Gaza, including Internet, restaurants, etc.- REVIEWED BY SUSAN BERSON - DENVER, COLORADO

The honesty of the online relationship seems true to life. Though sometimes negative and unfriendly, the relationship develops into a respectful bond one would hope for in human contacts.

Engaging, interesting, surprise ending!

I was not sure what to expect, but this book really made me think about what it is like to live during these times in Gaza. The images are intense at times, but that is the reality for many. Well written story and an enjoyable read.

This book is tremendous. One of the best books I have ever read. It can even be compared with the Hunger Games Trilogy. I really liked how the book ended by Naim saying he was going to study in Canada.

Simplistic story of life of teenagers in Jerusalem and Gaza.

As the author of *The Last Moderate Muslim*, a peace activist, and one who lived inside West Beirut during the Lebanese civil war, I ask you to not consume yourselves with taking inventory of sound bites and chapter length to reconcile even-handedness. You will miss the powerful themes embedded in the storyline(s). In my mind, the story points a finger at planet Peace. Some might busy themselves looking at the finger. They will question the intent or narrative. They will miss taking the journey of humanity to reach that planet. The story satisfies the need for expressing the

Palestinians' way of life more so than has been done in rhetoric (words) and violence (actions) to-date. It addresses the fears that Israelis are experiencing as well. I found myself in the story, since I experienced similar and parallel living conditions and encounters. At times, I was on the brink of tears. Both Naim and Tai lived in a world circumscribed to them differently. Tai's world was defined by fear while living in the open. She feared bus rides. She avoided a café, where once others were killed. She didn't know when her turn will be up, and didn't accept it as a way of life. She grew paranoid. She became lonely among family and friends. On the other hand, her friend was indifferent; Like most, her friend marched where blood was spilled before. Not her! She was sensitive, but not weak. She resisted getting habituated on those terms. Tai demanded privacy at her computer, when Naim sought one in the bathroom. She didn't see right or wrong; us or them; kill or be killed. At first, Naim did. She saw her world diminishing with every act of violence on both sides. She unsubscribed to the wisdom of her parents, but didn't approve or sympathize with Naim or the Palestinians. She confronted her brother in the restaurant by asking, "Did you kill ...". She rejected her brother's responses directly and Naim's without severing the connection that she valued. Like her parents, she accepted sudden loss of her brother and people around her as a condition of humanity. Naim's world was defined geographically. He accepted the lesser world, in which he lived, as normal. He knew something was out there, but like his friends and adults around him, they talked big but had little plans and no access. When he first met Tai, his humor was odd--it is accurately depicted. He was cynical. He called Tai naive when she talked about peace. Those entrenched in the daily struggles for survival are prone to do so. Not Tai! Not Naim later! Naim's beating and inhumane interrogation is regrettably accurate. His expectations of a female connecting with him in Gaza was unimaginable. To experience romance and intimacy, his cousin had to get married. His feelings for Tai breathed life into his ambitions. He began to see color. His hopes for meeting her and experiencing a bond with a soft voice, he once called naïve, motivated him to seek a better life. It stiffened his spine. He confronted his uncle, sought higher education, and pursued civility, after he was deadened by living in confined space with mounds of filthy garbage around corners. Tai's presence in his life, that ounce of romance gave his life took a new meaning. Thoughts of peace entered his mind because they injected hope for being with Tali. Thematically speaking, love flourishes in peace.

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