

Middle East Resources

Novels

At the core of Middle Eastern literature, is the art of storytelling. Many stories have circulated through the Middle East and North Africa for hundreds of years and remain pertinent to understanding the region's historical context and cultural heritage. Middle Eastern literature is often characterized by its social and political commentary, comedy, poetic nature, and suspenseful plot lines.

- *The Thousand and One Nights* (also called *The Arabian Nights*) by *Anonymous*
- *Arabic Short Stories* translated by Denys Johnson-Davies
- *Silence for the Sake of Gaza* by Mahmoud Darwish
- *A River Dies of Thirst: Journals* by Mahmoud Darwish
- *The Harafish* by Naguib Mahfouz
- *The Cairo Trilogy: Palace Walk, Palace of Desire, Sugar Street* by Naguib Mahfouz
- *Miramar* by Naguib Mahfouz
- *Yacoubian Building* by Alaa Al Aswany
- *I Saw Ramallah* by Mourid Barghouti,
- *The Black Book* by Orhan Pamuk
- *My Name is Red* by Orhan Pamuk
- *The Map of Love* by Adhaf Soueif
- *My Michael* by Amos Oz
- *Pillars of Salt* by Fadia Faqir
- *Beirut Blues* by Hanan al-Shaykh
- *The Stone of Laughter* by Hoda Barakat
- *The Butterfly Mosque* by G. Willow Wilson
- *The Lemon Tree* by Sandy Tolan
- *Native: Dispatches from an Israeli-Palestinian Life* by Sayed Kashua
- *Once Upon a Country: A Palestinian Life* by Sari Nusseibeh
- *Once in a Promised Land: A Novel* by Laila Halaby
- *Taxi* by Khalid Al Khamisi
- *All the Rivers* by Dorit Rabinyan
- *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini
- *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini
- *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa
- *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* by Marjane Satrapi
- *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq* by Hassan Blasim
- *The Blind Owl* by Sadegh Hedayat
- *The Forty Rules of Love* by Elif Shafak
- *Gate of the Sun* by Elias Khoury
- *Yalo* by Elias Khoury
- *Revolution for Dummies: Laughing Through the Arab Spring* by Bassem Youssef

Poetry

Arabic poetry is the earliest form of Arabic literature. The Arabic language is a unifying symbol of cultural and historical identity in the Middle East. It is widely appreciated for its fluid, melodious sound and its ability to be transformed into calligraphic art. Many modern poets and novelists have used their art as an expression of love for their homeland and loved ones as well as a form of resistance and criticism in the face of repressive regimes. Below are poems of the most prolific, respected poets in the Arab world to this day. Their brilliance and artistry has influenced Western societies as well.

Mahmoud Darwish

- *Mural*
- "Who Am I, Without Exile?"
- "The Cypress Broke"
- "In Her Absence I Created Her Image"

Nizar Qabbani

- *The Jasmine Scent of Damascus*
- *Childhood of a Breast*
- "My Beloved"

Khalil Gibran

- *The Prophet*
- "Sand And Foam"
- "The Madman"

Film (1940s-1960s): The Egyptian Golden Age of Cinema

At its height, the film industry in Egypt rivaled French and Italian cinema in terms of number of films released annually and their timeless quality. To this day, the Egyptian Golden of Cinema has maintained its cultural and political relevance in the Arab World and beyond. During this period, major political transformations occurred resulting from World War II and the rise of Gamal Nasser's Arab Nationalist movement. Films reflected these changes and produced insightful, entertaining, and progressive pieces that were consistent in their quality. To provide common ground with other Arab countries in the wake of Pan-Arab nationalism, Egyptian musicals were produced and exported, leading them to become the most successful genre in the region. The most revered actors/musicians in these films are the legendary Abdul Halim Hafez, Muhamad Abdel Wahab, Asmahan, Umm Kolthum, and Farid al-Atrache. For more information and resources refer to Viola Shafik's *Popular Egyptian Cinema*.

- A Man In our House (1961)
- The Sin (1965)
- Wedad (1936)
- Fatma (1947)
- Passion and Revenge (1944)
- A Cigarette and a Drink (1955)
- Al Warda AL Bayda (The White Rose) (1933)
- Chased by the Dogs (1962)
- Sira' Fi Al-Wadi (The Blazing Sky) (1954)
- Bab El-Hadid (Cairo Station) (1958)
- Al-Nasser Salah Al-Din (Saladin the Victorious) (1963)
- Bint Al Haress (The Guard's Daughter) (1968)
- The Land (1969)
- The Last Night (1964)
- Le Petit Étranger (1962)

Film (1970s-Present)

Though a small percentage of contemporary Middle Eastern films have enjoyed international critical acclaim, the film industry is largely limited by governmental funding, a competitive satellite television industry, and the authoritative regimes and fundamentalist movements sweeping the region for the past two decades. Despite risks of conservative backlash and government censorship, many Middle Eastern films, some of which are included in this list, have pushed political boundaries and taboos. They are reflective of the ongoing struggle for political power between regimes, insurgent groups, and rising ideologies and their effect on the people.

- Kadosh (1999)
- Kippur (2000)
- Kedma (2002)
- The Band's Visit (2007)
- Meduzot (Jellyfish) (2007)
- Waltz with Bashir (2008)
- On the Edge (2011)
- Silences of the Palaces (1994)
- Omar (2013)
- Five Broken Cameras (2011)
- Canticle of the Stones (1991)
- Wedding in Galilee (1987)
- Chronicle of a Disappearance (1996)
- Jenin, Jenin (2002)
- Paradise Now (2005)
- Persepolis (2007)
- The Salesman (2016)
- A World Not Ours (2012)
- Rabia's Journey (2006)
- Until Things Get Better (2008)
- Heya Fawda (2007)
- Cairo as told by Chahine (1991)
- Alexandria? Why? (1979)
- Yol (1982)
- West Beirut (1998)
- The Yacoubian Building (2006)
- Caramel (2007)
- Baby Doll Night (2008)
- Hasan and Morqos (2008)
- The Kite (2003)
- Everyday Life in a Syrian Village (1974)
- A Flood in Baath Country (2003)
- Kilometre Zero (2005)
- A Revolution in Four Seasons (2016)
- Divine Intervention (2002)
- Out of Coverage (2007)

Music

The most integral aspects of classical Arabic music are its poetic lyrics and the orchestra. The orchestra consists of well-known Western instruments, including violins and various percussion instruments, coupled with local instruments. An 11-stringed instrument called the "oud" is commonly heard in classical music. Musical Icons have relied on the unique sound of the oud to bring their songs to life. The five cornerstones of Arab music are: Farid al-Atrache, Umm Kolthum, Fairouz, Abdel Halim Hafez, and Mohammad Abdel Wahab. Check out some of their iconic songs listed below as well as popular contemporary songs!

Classic

- Farid al-Atrache
 - "Enaya Btedhak"
 - "Gamil Gamal"
- Umm Kolthum
 - "Inta Omri"
 - "Amal Hayati"
 - *A Voice Like Egypt*, an excellent biographical documentary

- Fairouz
 - “Habbeytak Bessayf”
 - “Nassam Alayna el-Hawa”
- Abdel Halim Hafez
 - “Ahwak”
 - “Gana El Hawa”
- Mohammed Abdel Wahab
 - “Msafer”
 - “Ya Beladi”

Contemporary

- Ihab Tawfiq- “Titragga fiyya”
- Amr Diab- “Nour El Ein”
- Nawal Al Zoghbi- “El Layali”
- Saber Rebai- “Sidi Mansour Ya Baba”
- Fares Karam- “El Tanoura”
- Algerian Trio (Cheb Khaled, Faudel, Rachid Taha)- “Abdel Kader”
- Kazem al-Safer- “Shakk”
- Al Jassmi- “Bushrat khair”
- Nancy Ajram- “Ah W Noss”
- Elissa- “Mrayti”
- Ahmed Chawki- “Habibi”
- Cheb Khaled- “C`est la vie”
- Abadi Jawhar- “Zaman Awwal”
- Amel Mathlouthi- “Ma Iqit”
- Yasmine Hamdan- “Taala”

Sites

- Al-bab: An open door to the Arab world- www.al-bab.com
- Al Mashriq: The Levant- <http://almashriq.hiof.no>
- Albawaba: Your Gateway to the Middle East- www.albawaba.com
- Arab Film Distribution: www.arabfilm.com
- Arab Idol- <https://www.youtube.com/user/ArabIdol>
- Bassem Youssef’s “Albernameg” <https://www.youtube.com/user/albernameg>