

## Madrasa

Director: Guri Alfi

Created By: Sayed Kashua

Release Date: 2023

Content Warnings: Mentions of racism, depiction of racist graffiti, depiction of characters experiencing racism, mentions of events in Jerusalem similar to May 2021.



## Accessing the Movie

*Madrasa* has not yet been distributed on major streaming platforms in the United States. If you are interested in bringing this program to your community, please reach out to Miranda Hellmold Stone, Task Force Programs and Operations Associate ([mirandahe@jdc.org](mailto:mirandahe@jdc.org)) to learn how.

## About the Program

*Madrasa* is a comedy drama TV series following Jewish and Arab/Palestinian students and teachers at a bilingual school in Jerusalem, with many similarities to the [Hand in Hand school](#) in Jerusalem. Students and teachers alike tackle existential questions and adolescent angst with humor, honesty, and hope. Each member of the ensemble cast has their own episode to shine while the romance between Khaled and Shira—an Arab/Palestinian boy and Jewish girl—develops in the background. Learners will gain greater insight into the daily experiences of Jewish and Arab/Palestinian high schoolers as characters shift between languages, their lives at school, and experiences in the outside world.

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## Learning Outcomes

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- Foundational understanding of Arab citizens of Israel and the complexities of Jewish-Arab relations within Israel.
- Greater understanding of shared society and Jewish-Arab relations in Israel through the lens of relatable high school students and humor.
- Curiosity regarding Arab citizens of Israel and a desire to learn more!

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## Suggested Structures

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The following recommendations are general suggestions that can be adapted to fits the needs of your audiences, goals, and constraints. They can be adapted for an in-person, hybrid, or remote program.

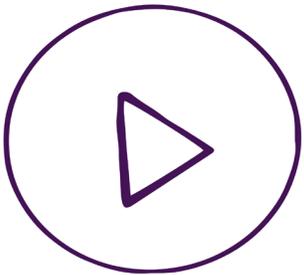
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## Recommended Episodes

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There are 20, 30-minute episodes in the series, with plotlines among the ensemble cast building throughout. These two episodes are particularly relevant to the learning goals stated above. *Visit the [series guide](#) for general and episode-specific discussion questions.*

**Episode 10:** The class discusses the United Nations Partition Plan of 1947 and historical memory for Jews and Palestinians. They are split into two groups for a classroom debate—the Arab/Palestinian students represent the Jewish and Zionist perspective, while the Jewish students represent the Arab and Palestinian perspective. It ends with the students having faced one of the most divisive issues head-on, their bonds strengthened. This episode explores historical memory and its effect on daily life.

**Episode 16:** The Jewish students start receiving their draft cards, eliciting a class-wide conversation about IDF service, National Service, and how their paths will diverge after high school. This episode explores how the structures of Israeli society shape identity and how Jewish and Arab/Palestinian citizens navigate its impact on shared society.

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## Israel's School System

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In Israel, [there are 4 public educational streams](#): Secular, religious and ultra-Orthodox schools serving the Jewish sector and Arab schools. Students at schools in the Jewish sector study in Hebrew and can learn Arabic. Students at Arab schools study in Arabic and Hebrew is taught as a second language.



Madrasa takes place at the fictional “Peace School for Bilingual Education” in Jerusalem, where classes are taught in Hebrew and Arabic. The fictional school contains many similarities with the real-life [Hand in Hand school](#) in Jerusalem.



Hand in Hand schools are public schools. Philanthropy and parents' fees supplement government funding. Only a small number of students attend bilingual schools. The Hand in Hand network has 6 schools, serving over 2,000 students nationally.



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# What is “Shared Society?”

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The bilingual school in *Madrassa* is an example of a “shared society” program.



Shared society refers to a cohesive and inclusive society where communities with different ethnic, national, and religious backgrounds have equitable access to resources, power, and work in partnership.



It requires long-term engagement to promote social and economic inclusion and political participation. In a shared society framework, diversity is a source of strength for a country and community.

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## Resources on Shared Society

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We recommend the following resources to supplement a program introducing shared society, or to share with participants who want to know more:



- » Podcast: [The Educational Divide - Groundwork - Sally Abed and Noam Shuster - 8.28.2024](#)
- » Read: [At These Schools, Arab and Jewish Students Share Their Feelings, With Each Other - The New York Times - Talya Minsberg - 12.31.2023](#)
- » Podcast: [Envisioning Shared Society - Identity/Crisis - Yehuda Kurtzer and Rana Fahoum - 1.10.2023](#)

**Bonus:** Hand in Hand released a 5-part web series of current students and alums reacting to Madrasa on their [YouTube](#).

## Hybrid and Remote Format:

1. Distribute the Movie Guide and [Exploring the Topics of Arab Citizens and Jewish-Arab Relations in Israel](#) before participants watch the film. Ensure participants watch the film ahead of the discussion, independently or in small groups.
2. Schedule a time for an in-person, remote, or hybrid film discussion.
3. When starting the program, remind the group of important information about the program and guidelines for constructive conversations (see below).
4. Ask the first question in the Movie Guide to the full group to begin generating ideas.
5. If size allows, split participants into small groups to continue the discussion. They can use the Movie Guide's discussion questions to steer their conversations. Each group should designate a "recorder" to take notes and a "reporter" to summarize the recorder's notes after the small group discussion.
6. Conclusion: If participants were split into small groups, have each "reporter" briefly summarize their discussion using the "recorder's" notes. If you remained as one group, ask participants to share their takeaways to wrap up the program.

## Tips for Hybrid or Virtual Engagement:

- At the end of the program, utilize an interactive whiteboard program (like [Padlet](#)) to encourage participation among all virtual participants. Possible prompts include:
  - » Share something another participant said that stuck with you.
  - » What questions do you have about the film or topics explored by the film?
- Use an online polling resource (like [Mentimeter](#)) to gauge participant's feelings, opinions, and knowledge levels in real-time.

# In-Person Format: Film Viewing & Group Discussion

1. Distribute the Movie Guide and [Exploring the Topics of Arab Citizens and Jewish-Arab Relations in Israel](#) to students.
2. Screen the film to your group, briefly reviewing the background information before the film starts, and reminding participants of the content warnings.
3. After the film, take a short break before gathering as a group for a discussion.
4. Remind the group of guidelines for constructive conversations (see below).
5. Ask the first question in the Movie Guide to the full group to begin generating ideas.
6. If size allows, split students into small groups to continue the discussion using the Movie Guide's discussion questions. Each group should designate a "recorder" to take notes and a "reporter" to summarize the recorder's notes after small group discussions.
7. Conclusion: If participants were split into small groups, have each "reporter" briefly summarize what their group talked about. If you remained as one group, ask participants to share their takeaways to wrap up the program.



# Suggested Guidelines for Constructive Conversations

1. Our purpose today is to explore more a facet of Israeli society that may be less familiar to us and to learn from and with each other. This is a discussion, not a debate.
2. This film presented one snapshot relating to Arab citizens of Israel. As we saw in the film, Arab society is diverse and this isn't representative of all stories and experiences.
3. Listening doesn't necessarily mean agreeing. Have an open mind to ideas that may be less familiar or comfortable. Consider how you might experience the film and this discussion differently if you had different identities (Palestinian, Israeli, gender etc.)
4. Remember to make space for different voices in your conversation.



**Note for facilitators:** *It's okay not to have all the answers! Don't try to make something up if you don't know. Instead, work with learners to find out more together.*

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## Work With Us

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[The Task Force on Arab Citizens of Israel](#) was created by a coalition of major American Jewish organizations to serve as a non-partisan educational resource on Arab citizens and Jewish-Arab relations in Israel. We would be happy to plan a more-depth in program with you and bring leading speakers on Arab society in Israel to your programs. Reach out to Miranda Hellmold Stone, Task Force Programs and Operations Associate, for more information ([mirandahe@jdc.org](mailto:mirandahe@jdc.org)).