



STORIES THAT MATTER, CONVERSATIONS THAT LAST
CHILDREN'S AUTHOR, STORYTELLER, FILMMAKER, & SPEAKER

LINA ABDULKARIM

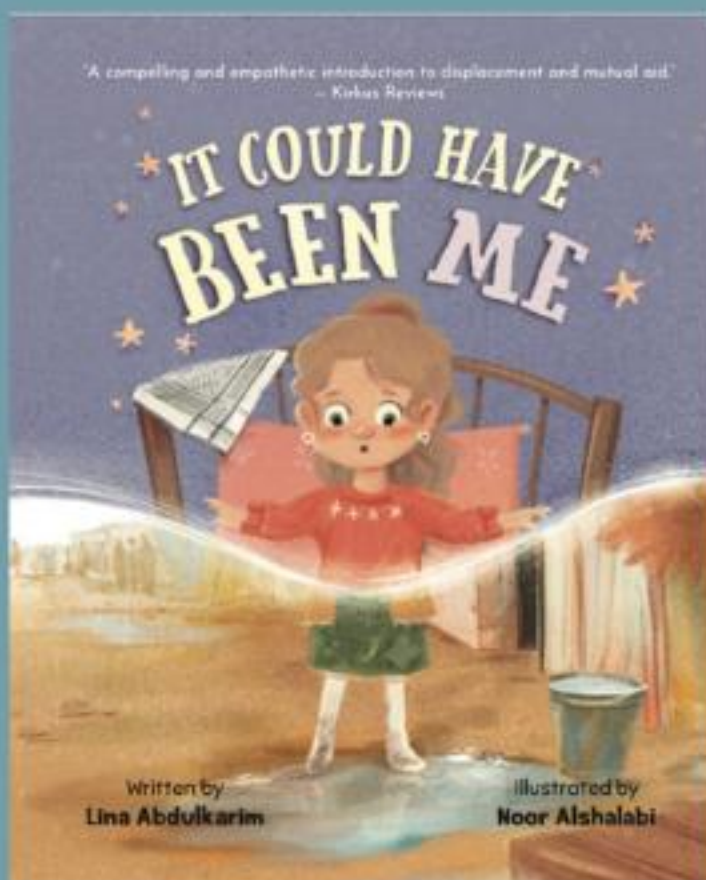
Bring empathy, imagination, and connection into your classrooms through stories that spark meaningful conversations and stay with children long after the last page is turned.

WHO IS LINA?

Lina Abdulkarim is a Palestinian-American Children's author and filmmaker, born in Jerusalem and raised in the United States. A former healthcare provider turned storyteller, she writes children's books that spark conversations- opening the door to topics many shy away from, told in a way that's honest, age-appropriate, and rooted in empathy. Her stories often draw from real life, blending truth and imagination to inspire resilience and dialogue across generations. Her debut book, *It Could Have Been Me*, was named as Editor's pick by Booklist, praised by Kirkus Reviews, and long listed for the Palestine Book Awards.

Lina also directed its animated adaptation, which won best animation at the Dubai Golden Dunes Film Festival (2025) and has screened at festivals worldwide. Her second book, coming later this year, helps young readers understand that not everything is as it first seems- and that there's good hidden in every hardship.





ABOUT THE BOOK



It Could Have Been Me follows Yasmeen, a 10-year-old Palestinian-American Girl who befriends Sumoud, a refugee her age, during a visit to her local mosque.

As their friendship grows, Yasmeen begins to imagine Sumoud's world and the challenges she faces. A vivid dream places her in Sumoud's shoes, opening her heart and eyes to what it truly means to see another person and imagine life in their place.

With themes of **empathy, belonging, and friendship**, *It Could Have Been Me* invites children to reflect on the importance of appreciating what they have while understanding others. It encourages thoughtful classroom conversations about kindness, compassion, and the power of connection.

Through gentle storytelling and reflection, the book invites children to imagine what life might be like for those living in more difficult circumstances, helping them realize that kindness begins with awareness.

What Critics Say:

"This beautiful book bridges a gap between cultures that has seen little attention from the publishing world despite the scale and immediacy of the conflict it addresses... A compelling and empathetic introduction to displacement and mutual aid."
— Kirkus Reviews

"Through the girls' friendship, Abdulkarim highlights the plight of refugee families juxtaposed with the privileges living in America can provide, giving younger readers touching insight into the importance of community, kindness, and helping others."
— Booklist, Editors' Choice

Meet the characters



Yasmeen is an outgoing 10-year old Palestinian-American girl who loves spending time with her friends. With her father's guidance and her new friendship with Sumoud, she learns to step into someone else's shoes and discovers the power of empathy and kindness.



Sumoud is a resilient 10-year old girl who recently came to America as a refugee from Palestine. Despite her hardships, she is warm, hopeful, and eager to make new friends. Her name means "resilience," and she truly lives up to it.



Baba is Yasmeen's caring father, who teaches her the values of empathy, generosity, and resilience. As an architect and community member, he shows Yasmeen the importance of staying connected to her roots.

WHY THIS STORY MATTERS

A read-aloud that builds empathy, one page at a time

Every activity works a different muscle: noticing, imagining, and doing.

Seeing Someone Else's Day

- Understand what empathy means and why it matters
- Practise imagining life from someone else's perspective
- Recognise that friendship can cross differences

A Bigger World Than Ours

- Understand children live in very different circumstances
- Explore displacement and what "home" means
- Recognise how communities welcome newcomers

Noticing What We Have

- Identify what we are grateful for
- Acknowledging hardship in others can deepen gratitude
- Imagination and storytelling can build compassion

The First Hello

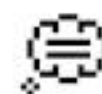
- Small acts of welcome can start a friendship
- Listening to someone's story is an act of kindness

BEFORE YOU READ

Cover Talk & Opening Questions



Look closely at the cover. What is the girl holding, and why might that matter later?



Just from the title, what do you predict this story is about?



Has a friend ever told you something that changed how you saw your own life?



In your own words, what does the word "refugee" mean?



What's one thing that makes you feel instantly at home somewhere new?



What do you think it means to imagine yourself in someone else's shoes?

Short Film Adaptation



- Based on the children's book *It Could Have Been Me*, this animated short brings the characters and stories to life on screen.
- Created with artists who share lived experiences, the film inspires empathy, gratitude, and meaningful conversations.
- Officially selected for international film festivals and growing global recognition
- A part of the Emirates Lit Fest 2026 Program



ACTIVITY ONE

Two Girls, One Morning

What We're Aiming For

- Compare Yasmeen's and Sumoud's daily lives
- Understand that circumstances, not character, separate one child's life from another's
- Record observations using a side-by-side chart

How It Unfolds

Warm-Up (5 min) — Ask: "Imagine two ten-year-olds the same age — one worries about which shoes to wear, the other about finding clean water. Are they different people, deep down?"

Setting the Scene (5 min) — Read up to the moment Yasmeen and Sumoud meet at the mosque.

Working It Out Together (15 min) — As a class, fill in the first row of the chart together, modelling a fair comparison.

Your Turn (15 min) — In pairs, complete the rest of the chart: school, family, worries, joys.

Bringing It Together (5 min) — Discuss: what's different, what's the same, what surprised you?

WORKSHEET — ACTIVITY ONE

Two Girls, One Morning: side-by-side chart

	Yasmeen	Sumoud
Home		
School		
Family		
A worry		
A joy		

Talk About It

- What surprised you most about Sumoud's life?
- What do Yasmeen and Sumoud have in common?
- Why do you think the author chose this title?

Take It Further

Write a short diary entry from Sumoud's point of view, describing one ordinary day.

WANT THE FULL PACK?

Three more activities, plus printables, are ready to go

This preview gives you a taste of what's inside. The full resource pack includes three classroom activities with worksheets, a postcard template, a few words of Arabic, and a closing reflection — everything you need to plan a read-aloud or a full visit around *It Could Have Been Me*.

Get the complete pack:

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