



# EBBY NEWSLETTER

Newsletter No. 1 | March 2015

## What is EBBY?

The Egyptian Board on Books for Young People (EBBY) aims to promote a culture of reading and writing for children in Egypt. Founded in 1987 as the Egyptian Section of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), EBBY serves as a dynamic hub for children, parents, librarians, scholars, writers, illustrators, publishers, and others who are interested and invested in the field of children's and young adult literature.

## What is IBBY?

The International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) was founded in Zurich 1953, as a network of people committed to bringing books and children together. IBBY is a non-profit NGO with an official status in UNESCO and UNICEF. It has a policy-making role as an advocate of children's books and has 72 National Sections all over the world.

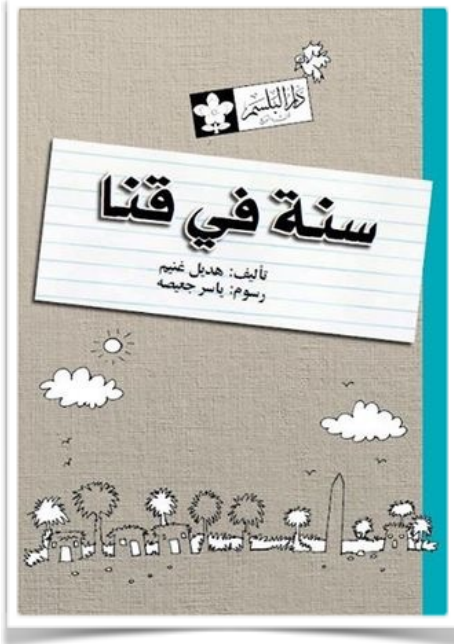


## EBBY Turns a New Leaf

Welcome to the first issue of EBBY's newsletter! EBBY, the Egyptian section of IBBY, found a new home in 2014, as a project under the wing of SHOURA Foundation for Development, a leading non-profit, human resource development and assistance organization. In the last few months, EBBY has launched a new website and social media presence, as well as hosting a number of events, and is planning to establish itself as both a nexus and advocate for all things related to children's and young adult literature in Egypt.

### *EBBY's New Website and Social Media Presence*

EBBY's new website, [ebby-egypt.com](http://ebby-egypt.com), was launched in October 2014 and it includes an overview of EBBY, as well as blogs for EBBY's events and activities, and for books reviews of Egyptian children's and young adult literature. EBBY has also established a social media presence on both Facebook and Twitter and aims to reach the widest audience possible to share its vision and plans.



### EBBY Recommends: *Sana fi Qena* (2014)

Shortlisted for the 2014 Etisalat Award for Arabic Children's Literature, *Sana Fi Qena* (A Year in Qena), by Hadil Ghoneim, is an intelligent, humorous, and delightful journey into a world ruled by the seasons and the mindset of an agricultural society. It's about a 13-year-old boy who joins his family for a year in Qena to care for his aging grandmother, fully equipped with an anti-boredom kit that he relies on to avoid engaging with his surroundings. From awkward collision to happy collusion, the boy learns to find ways to engage with the agricultural, social, culinary and cultural life of this Upper Egyptian village as he tries to make friends, prove his worth to his family, stay connected with Cairo and ultimately grow up.

This charming story, wonderfully illustrated by Yasser Gueissa, is a crossover book to be experienced across the spectrum of ages.

Reviewed by Yasmine Motawy

## EBBY Hosts A Day in Qena

EBBY organized a reading and workshop of an EBBY recommended book, *Sana Fi Qena* (A Year in Qena) at Al-Balsam Bookstore on Saturday, 15th November. *Sana Fi Qena*, by Hadil Ghoneim, was shortlisted for this year's Etisalat Prize for Arabic Children's Literature in the Young Adult Category.

The multi-age audience interacted with reader Dr. Yasmine Motawy of EBBY and storyteller Samiha Fares who spun a web of wonder and had audience members lingering in the bookstore for hours after the event talking books. Al-Balsam's very own 'Amm Imbaby turned out to be from Qena and dramatically took the floor to take questions from the audience and tell how Qenawys celebrate (they go down to Aswan) and the intricacies of growing 'fuul.' All-in-all, a highly recommended book and a wonderful EBBY book event.



## An EBBY Seminar on the Role of EBBY

On Saturday, November 15, 2014, Al-Balsam Bookstore hosted an inspiring talk on Egyptian children's literature, titled "EBBY: A Home for Everyone Working on Children's Culture in Egypt."

The speakers were: Dr. Yasmine Motawy, faculty member at the American University in Cairo (AUC) and children's literature scholar, Dr. Shahira Khalil, editor-in-chief of *Samir Magazine* for children, and Rania Hussein Amin, well-known children's author and illustrator.



## Book Review: *Oud El Sanabel* (2013)

Winner of the 2013 Etisalat Award for Best Children's Book of the Year, *Oud El Sanabel* is a modern folktale that starts with a king with three daughters he wishes to marry off, and the rapidly unfolding story transports readers into a parallel dimension. Wonderfully written by Tobbala, an expert and gifted writer, the story engages your imagination as well as all your senses. You breathe with the characters the heavy air of the city, you hear the racket of carriages speeding off, you taste the salty tears, and you experience the happiness of young love. The story still evokes reality and is filled with layers of meaning. It will be experienced differently by different age brackets - from the innocence of good beating evil for the very young to the complexity of self-sacrifice and pressures of social conformity of the more mature readers.

Illustrations by Dr. Hanady Sleit are an elegant rendering of this fantasy world. Her oil paintings are at once novel and familiar, blending fiction and reality. They work harmoniously with the text and brings the integrated work to full bloom. In short, *Oud El Sanabel* is a must read for all ages!

Reviewed by Lobna Reda



Dr. Yasmine Motawy, Dr. Shahira Khalil, and Rania Hussein Amin

Amin began the talk by sharing her experience in writing children's literature in Egypt, providing insights into the converging and diverging expectations of writers and publishers. Two age groups were identified as missing from the Egyptian/Arabic children's literature market: books for very young children and for teenagers. Young adults cited books for mature audiences, such as Essam Youssef's *¼ Gram*, and Ahmed Mourad's *Blue Elephant*—both rife with social taboos—as favorites. A likely reason is their appetite for more adult topics, albeit through inappropriate sources, in the absence of young-adult niched fictional fare. The inevitable discussion of “which Arabic to use when writing for children” came up as well, and the differences between what children want to read, what parents want to teach, and what the Ministry of Education propagates were explored.

Khalil spoke about the importance of children's magazines to their readers and their function as an organic communal space for children. She sees this happening at the *Samir* workshops in Dar Al-Helal in Sayeda Zeinab, where the children contribute comic strips, illustrations and even storylines to the magazine, and she has witnessed the trust fostered between the material and the child reader.

Motawy introduced the newly reborn EBBY and opened the floor to questions about how EBBY can serve as both a hub for



## Book Review: *Kamal wa Shukri* (2014)

*Kamal wa Shukri* (Kamal and Shukri), written and illustrated by Walid Taher, is a hilariously clever text about a spider and a small bird with delusions of grandeur that are soon put in perspective. Once again, Taher does not shy from describing imperfect children prone to posturing and exaggeration, and offers them a safe face-saving way back out of the situations they have created. The digitally generated images in bold primary colors are beautiful and the cheeky language that is perfect for early readers and their older and younger siblings makes this a winning text that parents will enjoy reading out loud and rereading—if they can get through it without several fits of delighted giggles! Two enthusiastic thumbs up.

Reviewed by Yasmine Motawy

## Do you want to review books for EBBY?

The guidelines and [submission form](#) can be found on our website: [www.ebby-egypt.com](http://www.ebby-egypt.com)

Egyptian children's literature and a much needed resource for the various stakeholders in the market.

The talk continued for several hours with writers, publishers, and other audience members, from various governorates, contributing to the discussion. A successful seminar overall, highlighting the urgent need for EBBY and the many challenges it faces in the future.

## EBBY Board Member Wins Award

EBBY Board Member Dina Elabd made us proud by winning the top award in the university category of the Rowayat Second Student Fiction Competition for her story, "The Palm's Poem," published in *Rowayat* (Issue no. 2)—a literary journal with original literature and artwork from Egypt. "The Palm's Poem is a modern day folktale and coming-of-age story about a boy growing up on a date farm with his family.



Dina Elabd with her award

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