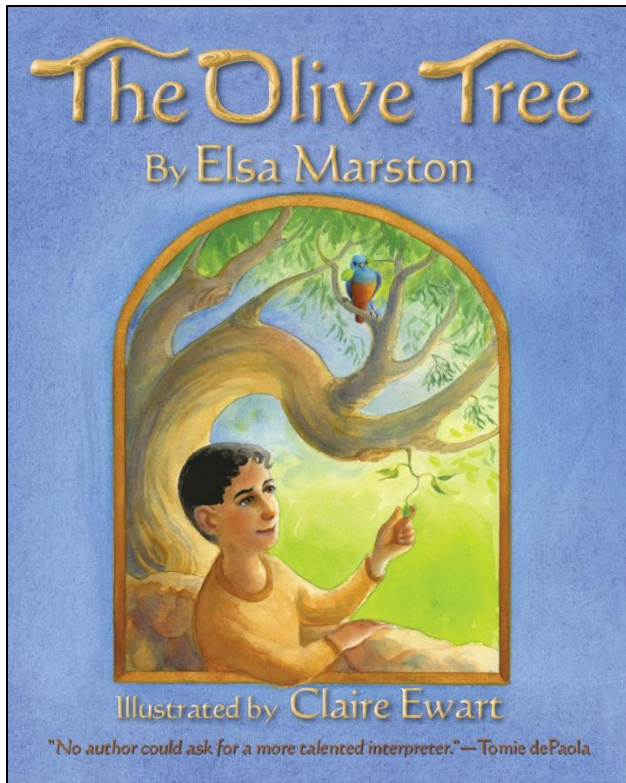


The Olive Tree

By Elsa Marston

Illustrated by Claire Ewart



When Muna and her family returned after the war, Sameer thought that he would finally have someone to play with. Together they could climb and eat from the big olive tree that overlooked both their gardens. But Muna didn't want to play or share the olives. And then, one night lightning struck and everything changed! In this poignant story, can these two children learn to put their differences aside in order to share and work together?

This Book Contains

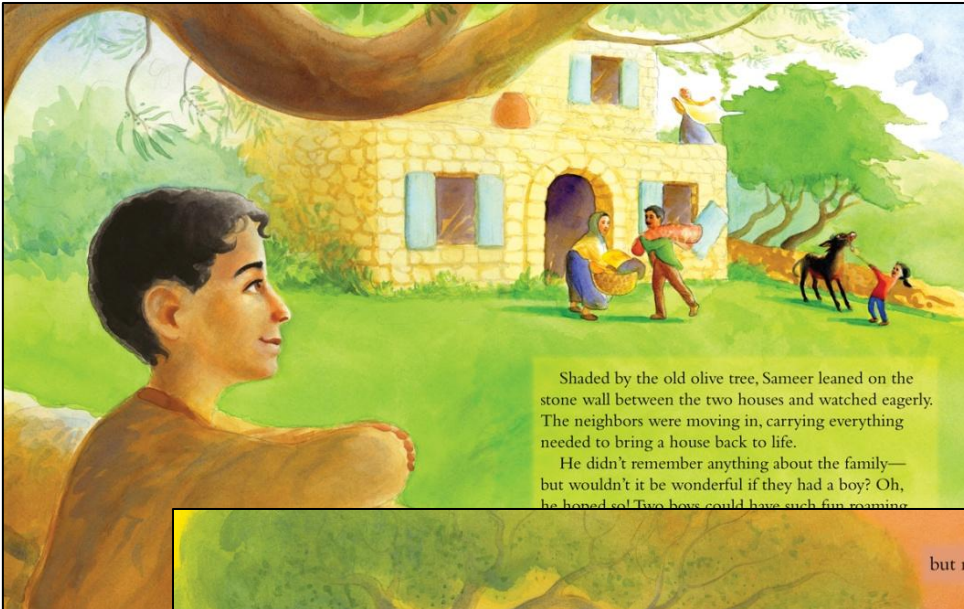
- ❖ A poignant look at issues of forgiveness and reconciliation
 - ❖ An example of two children learning to share and work together by looking past their differences
- ❖ A lesson about how compassion and understanding lie at the heart of all friendships

Publication Details

- ❖ ISBN: 978-1-937786-29-8
- ❖ Pub Date: November 2014
- ❖ Price: \$16.95
- ❖ Trim Size: 8x10
- ❖ Page Count: 32 hardcover
- ❖ Ages: 5 and up

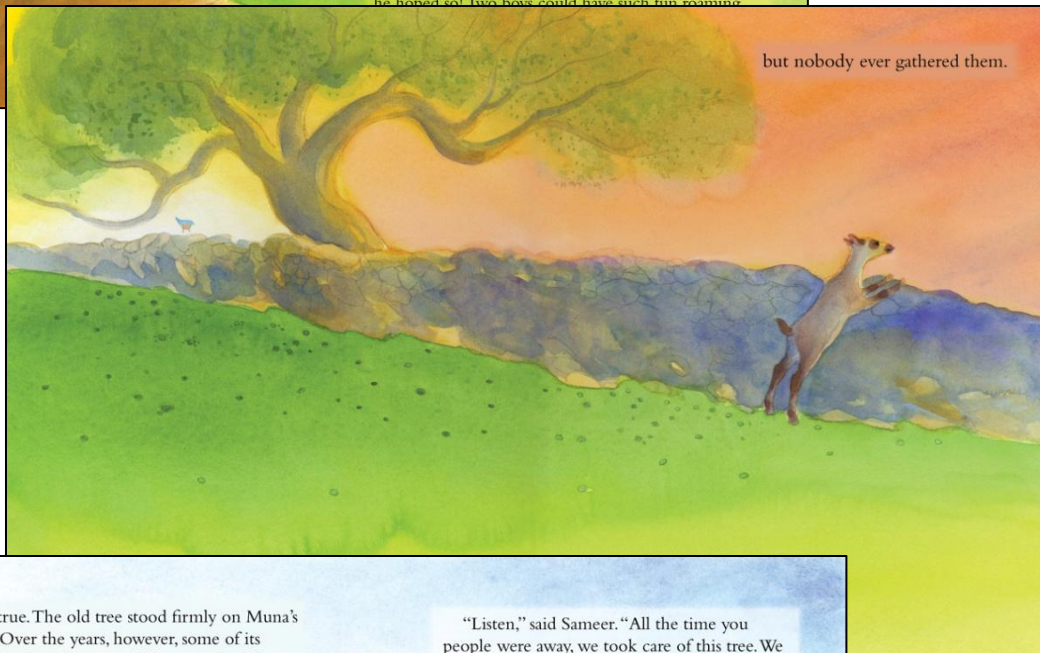


Sample Pages of *The Olive Tree*



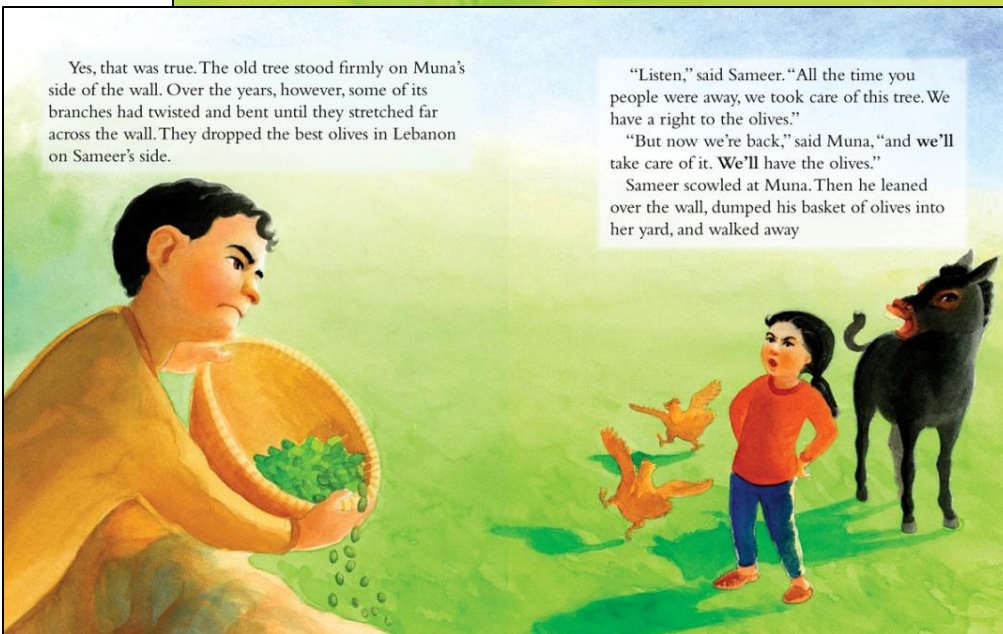
Shaded by the old olive tree, Sameer leaned on the stone wall between the two houses and watched eagerly. The neighbors were moving in, carrying everything needed to bring a house back to life.

He didn't remember anything about the family—but wouldn't it be wonderful if they had a boy? Oh, he hoped so! Two boys could have such fun roaming



but nobody ever gathered them.

Sample Pages



Yes, that was true. The old tree stood firmly on Muna's side of the wall. Over the years, however, some of its branches had twisted and bent until they stretched far across the wall. They dropped the best olives in Lebanon on Sameer's side.

"Listen," said Sameer. "All the time you people were away, we took care of this tree. We have a right to the olives."

"But now we're back," said Muna, "and we'll take care of it. We'll have the olives."

Sameer scowled at Muna. Then he leaned over the wall, dumped his basket of olives into her yard, and walked away.

Praise for *The Olive Tree*

“Ewart’s (*One Cold Night*) watercolor illustrations deftly employ color to signal the story’s emotional developments. For example, warm hues of gold and green permeate the opening pages; in a center spread, a billowing blue storm washes over the small green village, with jagged lightning striking and killing the olive tree. In the final pages, a dusky purple backdrop and broken golden boughs convey a somber yet promising mood. Marston (*The Compassionate Warrior: Abd el-Kader of Algeria*) subtly transforms the story’s sadness into hope as the children surprise each other with acts of quiet generosity.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“This story, set in the contemporary Middle East, is about two neighbors and the ancient olive tree that stands between them. One family had “gone away during the troubles” but has now returned. In the meantime, Sameer and his family have enjoyed the best olives in Lebanon. Claiming ownership of the tree and its fruits, young Muna refuses to share, until a majestic storm, gloriously illustrated in swirling blues, destroys the troublesome tree. While the adults drift sadly back to their own houses, the two children work together to clean up the broken branches and stack them for firewood, each at the other’s house. The style of writing is simple, direct, and accessible. Large watercolor paintings vary in viewpoint from one family’s side of the wall to the other, until the tree is gone and Sameer and Muna cross over to each other’s houses. Both mothers wear hijab, an authentic cultural detail for a country in which 54 percent of the population is Muslim. . . . Pair this title with Florence Parry Heide and Judith Heide Gilliland’s *Sami and the Time of the Troubles* (Clarion, 1992) to provide background on family life during the 1975 Lebanese Civil War.”

—*School Library Journal*

“Sameer, a young boy in Lebanon, awaits the return of his neighbors who fled during the war. Sameer doesn’t remember the family, but maybe there will be a boy his age. A boy he can play with—especially someone who can climb the olive tree that grows between the two homes. The conflict is unexplained, just touched upon briefly: “The family who had lived there had gone away during the troubles, because they were different from most of the people in the village.” Unfortunately, there is not a boy playmate but a girl named Muna who does not like Sameer very much. She sees him picking the olives that have fallen on his side of the wall and declares he is stealing. The tree, after all, belongs to her family. One fateful night, lightning strikes the tree, and it crashes to the ground, bringing part of the wall down as well (symbolically and literally). An apt peace offering if ever there was one, the broken olive branches bring Sameer and Muna together. Marston’s understated text aptly captures the children’s feelings and their uneasy relationship. . . . A valid story that shows how perceived prejudice can be just as destructive as actual hatred.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

Praise for the Illustrator

“No author could ask for a more talented interpreter.”

—*Tomie dePaola*

About the Author



Elsa Marston is the author of 30 books of fiction and non-fiction for children and young adults, plus numerous stories and articles in children's magazines and in YA collections. Her most recent book, *The Compassionate Warrior: Abd el-Kader of Algeria*, has been the winner of several awards including the 2013 Middle East Book Award. She grew up in Boston, and from a young age was fascinated with the stories of ancient Egypt and the Middle East. Elsa attended several different universities and received her BA in American Civilization at the University of Iowa and went on to earn an MA in International Affairs at Harvard and another MA in Art Education at Indiana University. She also studied Middle Eastern history at the American University of Beirut where Elsa met her late husband, Iliya Harik, from Lebanon, who later came to work as a professor of political science at Indiana University. Because of Iliya's work and his family connections, he and Elsa would often travel to the Middle East. Inspired by her travels, Elsa says the motivation for her writing is "to

share with young readers my own interest in those lands and peoples, and equally important, help contribute to better understanding of the Arab/Muslim world. In that way I hope to continue Iliya's life's work, along with my own." Elsa has three grown-up sons, and lives in Bloomington, Indiana.

About the Illustrator

Claire Ewart is an award-winning author and illustrator of seven children's books. In addition to illustrating books by such well-known authors as Tomie dePaola and Paul Fleischman, she has also written and illustrated several of her own books, including *One Cold Night*, *The Giant*, and *Fossil*. Her work has received praise and awards from many reviewers and organizations, including the Celebrate Literacy Award from the International Reading Association. In addition, Ewart's work as an illustrator has been included on Best Book lists from *School Library Journal* and *Parent's Magazine*. It has also appeared on the PBS television shows *Reading Rainbow* and *Storytime*. Claire Ewart's illustrations have been featured in museums and galleries, and were included in the Society of Illustrators show "Original Art." Her portfolio was also featured in the 1992 edition of *Children's Writer's & Illustrator's Market*. She lives in Fort Wayne, IN.



The original version of this story won a fiction contest sponsored by *Highlights for Children* in 1992, was published in the October 1993 issue of *Highlights*, and in 1994 received the Paul A. Witty Short Story Award from the International Reading Association. This is the first time it appears in picture book format, with permission from *Highlights for Children*.