

"You Have Your Lebanon": Poetry in exile

Whilst many Palestinians live away from their original homeland, many Lebanese people also live in exile.

The poet, Kahlil Gibran left Lebanon in 1895 to live in Boston, USA. He was only 12 years old at the time. In his poem, "**You have your Lebanon**" he presents conflicting images of Lebanon:

*You have your Lebanon and I have mine.
 You have your Lebanon with her problems,
 and I have my Lebanon with her beauty.
 You have your Lebanon with all her prejudices and struggles,
 and I have my Lebanon with all her dreams and securities.
 Your Lebanon is a political knot, a national dilemma, a place of conflict and deception. My
 Lebanon, is a place of beauty and dreams of enchanting valleys and splendid mountains.
 Your Lebanon is inhabited by functionaries, officers, politicians, committees, and factions.
 My Lebanon is for peasants, shepherds, young boys and girls, parents and poets.
 Your Lebanon is empty and fleeting,
 whereas My Lebanon will endure forever.*

Kahlil Gibran 1920

1. Draw up two columns headed **My Lebanon** and **Your Lebanon** and list the ideas and images associated with each:

<i>My Lebanon</i>	<i>Your Lebanon</i>

2. In your own words, summarise the two versions of Lebanon presented in the poem.
3. Who do you think the 'you' in the poem could be? Why do you think this?
4. Visit the links below to find out what it is like for Palestinians living as refugees in Lebanon. Write your own poem about their lives.

Abu Nadr's story www.refugees.org/article.aspx?id=1112

One Family's Perspective www.refugees.org/article.aspx?id=1153

At the Beauty Salon www.refugees.org/article.aspx?id=1152

At the Hospital www.refugees.org/article.aspx?id=1154

Save the Children's Eye to Eye site www.savethechildren.org.uk/eyetoeye/

