



Small Wonders

Notes for Teachers and Parents

Welcome to the *Small Wonders* website. This website is designed to support the *Small Wonders* series of graded Arabic readers. There is a wealth of additional material on the site, as well as samples and audio for the individual readers.

Why use graded readers?

Research shows that students who read in a foreign language progress faster in all aspects of their learning of the target language. For most learners, however, reading a book in Arabic would be a daunting task. There are too many unknown words and the structure of the language is complicated, creating a barrier to understanding. Graded readers motivate students with interesting reading material in simplified language, bridging the gap between textbooks and authentic material.

The *Small Wonders* Series

Small Wonders is not a translated work. It has been specifically developed for learners of Arabic. The text is all originally composed in simplified Modern Standard Arabic.

The *Small Wonders* series consists of readers at three levels of increasing difficulty. The beautiful, carefully chosen photographs are not only pleasing to the eye, but also provide important clues as to the meaning of the text. Both adult and younger learners will absorb vocabulary and concepts more easily through the medium of stimulating visuals and interesting information.

Our Approach to the Language

One of the most important features of the *Small Wonders* series is the close attention paid to the progression of language, and vocabulary. Vocabulary is restricted and constantly recycled; grammar and structure are controlled in a clear progression through the levels.

The Arabic used in the text is simplified Modern Standard Arabic. Each of the three levels has its own defined topics, grammar and vocabulary. The *Scope and Sequence* (www.arabicsmallwonders.com/SmallWondersscopeandsequence.pdf) shows a detailed breakdown of coverage by level, while the *Word Banks* (www.arabicsmallwonders.com/onlineresources.html) list the core vocabulary with English translations for each of the three levels.

Vowel Marks

Vowel marks on the Arabic script are important to beginning readers for correct pronunciation. On the other hand, equally important is familiarization at an early stage with unvowelled text to prepare for reading authentic materials. Fully-vowelled Arabic text can look cluttered and off-putting, masking the important basic shape of the whole word.

The *Small Wonders* series includes only the vowel marks necessary for correct pronunciation and understanding, following these general principles:

- The *sukūn* (◌) is not generally marked since it is a negative rather than a positive mark (i.e., it signals that there is *not* a vowel). Including all *sukūn* marks reduces the visual clarity of the text.
- Higher-level grammatical endings (*tanwīn*) are also omitted to allow learners to grasp basic reading skills and pronunciation without interference from these more specialized, changeable endings.
- Vowel marks are dropped after a word appears more than two or three times in the same book. In this way, even beginning readers will start to recognize familiar words without the marks.

Using *Small Wonders* with a Class

Graded readers can be used both within the classroom and for independent learning. They are particularly good for differentiation when students of different reading abilities are in the same class. Here are some possible strategies:

- If your students are at approximately the same reading level, choose a **class reader** from the *Small Wonders* series. Each student should have their own copy. Using the reader in class can add variety to the structure of a course and change the dynamics of the classroom. The books are flexible enough to be used in a whole-class setting, in small groups, or individually. However you approach the reading, try to check comprehension of overall meaning and individual vocabulary. You will then have a common set of vocabulary and structures to use as a basis for further class activities.
- Present a **class library** of the *Small Wonders* readers and ask students to choose a book according to their preferences and abilities. They can use the audio available on this website to help them if they need it. They can read the books in class or at home. In the following class, each student can take the activity worksheet for the book they chose. While they are completing the worksheets, bring the students one by one to read some of their chosen reader out loud to you. You can correct pronunciation and check understanding.
- Put students into pairs/small groups of similar reading ability. Assign each pair a level and ask them to choose a book from that level. The pair can then read the book together (with or without audio), and answer the comprehension questions at the back of the book. You can also ask the pairs to report two or three of the facts they found most interesting in Arabic to the class. They could do this in the form of a news broadcast or TV interview.

Additional Resources on the *Small Wonders* Website

Series Overview and Samples

Details of the individual titles available and sample pages can be found here:

www.arabicsmallwonders.com/usingtheseries.html

Audio Downloads

Complete audio for each book in the series. This an invaluable resource for beginning learners and for teachers of Arabic.

www.arabicsmallwonders.com/audidownloads.html

Activity Worksheets

Additional printable activities complementary to the *Small Wonders* series, suitable for classroom or home use. The activities concentrate on vocabulary review.

www.arabicsmallwonders.com/onlineresources.html

Useful Websites

Carefully selected websites to support Arabic language learning and to extend students' interest in the topics. Many of the sites also list additional materials and resources for use in the classroom.

www.arabicsmallwonders.com/onlineresources.html

We hope you find the *Small Wonders* series and website an inspiring resource.

We welcome feedback and suggestions for future additions to the series.