

**Exodus**  
by  
**Leon Uris****Book Information**

Leon Uris, Exodus  
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599 Pages  
Book Level: 6.7  
Interest Level: UG

An American nurse and an Israeli freedom fighter are caught in the twentieth-century's most dramatic event, the rebirth of Israel.

**Topics:** Careers, Nurse; Continents, Europe; Countries/Regions, Israel; Countries/Regions, United States; People, Jewish; Popular Groupings, College Bound

**Main Characters**

Akiva formerly known as Yakov Rabinsky, a leader among the radical Maccabee freedom-fighters

Ari Ben Caanan a leader who was instrumental in the Jews' successful establishment of a homeland

Barak Ben Canaan formerly Jossi Rabinsky who, with his brother Yakov, walked from Russia to Palestine to escape the oppression in his country

David Ben Ami Ari's sensitive friend

Dov Landau a Polish boy who survived the horrors of Auschwitz and is saved by Karen's love

Karen Hansen Clement a German girl sent to live out the war years in Denmark, and makes her way to Palestine

Kitty Fremont an American nurse who, although sympathetic to the Jews, feels like an outsider

Mark Parker an American journalist who assists in telling the world the plight of the Jews in the Middle East

**Vocabulary**

**aliyah** the immigration of Jews to Palestine

**effendi** an Arab title of respect

**fellaheen** Arab peasants

**gentile** a non-Jewish person

**Haganah** the secret Army of Self-Defense, made up of men, women, boys, and girls fighting for a Jewish homeland

**Hasidic** a Jew who belongs to a particular sect

**kibbutz** a communal settlement in Palestine (Israel)

**moshav** an offshoot of a kibbutz with slightly less communalism

**sabra** a term used in Palestine for the native born, they are "hard on the outside but tender and sweet on the inside"

**the Maccabees** an offshoot of the Haganah whose members took a more activist approach

**Torah** the Jewish holy book, the first five books of the Old Testament; a scroll of the first five books that is used in a synagogue

**Yishuv** the Jewish community

**Synopsis**

The fight for a Jewish homeland lasted many years and cost many lives. This book tells the story of the Jews' long and arduous journey to liberate Palestine and create a land where they would never again be persecuted. The story begins after World War II as Jews await Britain's decision regarding their repatriation. While the Brits debate and discuss, the Mossad Aliyah Bet take action. They begin by smuggling boatloads of Jews into Palestine and end up liberating a detention camp of three hundred Jewish children in Cyprus. Once in Palestine, they begin to establish kibbutzim, communal settlements, and train the children to become soldiers. They keep fighting, battle by battle, until the majority of the United Nations, including the U.S. and the Soviet Union, agree to a partition of Palestine to form the new nation of Israel. After that decision, Arabs protest, and war breaks out. The Israelis are victorious in the War of Liberation, a true homeland is established, and Jews from all over the world are welcomed to live in peace and without fear of oppression.

Woven throughout the story are the stories and histories of such remarkable individuals as Ari Ben Canaan, a tireless leader whose father walked from Russia to Palestine to escape pogroms, and Dov

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Landau who, as a boy, escaped the gas chambers at Auschwitz because of his excellent forgery skills. Kitty Fremont is an American nurse who won't admit she is in love with Ari until it is almost too late. As a gentile, she doesn't quite understand the fervor of the people with whom she works. Kitty remains in Palestine to watch over Karen, a young girl she feels the need to protect. Karen had been smuggled out of Germany before the Nazis took the rest of her family. She lived for a time in Denmark with a Christian family, where she was loved and cherished, but she soon felt the need to discover her Jewish background. These people and many others finally find the happiness that had long eluded them, though it is mixed with a heavy dose of sorrow from the loss of many friends who died along the way to freedom.

### Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

#### Initial Understanding

In the Bible story of Exodus, the Israelites left Egypt because of their oppression by the Egyptians. God selected Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. Why did the author entitle his book *Exodus*?

*Many parallels exist between the Bible story and the settlement of modern day Israel. The Jews left many parts of the world because of religious persecution. Ari Ben Canaan led the children (literally) into Palestine. The word "exodus" also means a mass departure.*

#### Literary Analysis

Several people changed throughout the story, most notably Dov Landau and Kitty Fremont. How did each change, and why?

*It took Dov a very long time to deal with his grief and the horror of the time he spent in the concentration camp. He didn't want to trust anyone, or get close to anyone. His main reason for agreeing to go to Palestine was so he could kill someone. With patience and compassion, Karen finally got through to him. When Karen died, he said he didn't even hate her killers because she wouldn't have. Karen also had an effect on Kitty. Kitty resisted taking a stand in Palestine, but it was very difficult for her to remain neutral. After meeting Karen, Kitty was reminded of her daughter who died in infancy. She felt protective of Karen, and because she sought to take care of the girl, she began to take care of the other children. Over the years, Kitty began to understand the passion the Jews felt for Palestine/Israel.*

#### Inferential Comprehension

Why was it fitting that the last shots of the War of Liberation were fired against the British?

*The British had all but closed Palestine to the Jews after World War II. They put Jews who were caught attempting to enter Palestine into internment camps in Europe and Cyprus. They said they would help the Jews begin anew in the Middle East, but went back on their word.*

#### Constructing Meaning

What might have happened to European Jews if a settlement was not developed in the Middle East?

*If history repeated itself, the Jews who stayed would again be persecuted in some way. Many probably would have emigrated to the U.S. or South America and, as a result, their culture would quite probably be diluted.*

### Teachable Skills

**Recognizing Setting** The setting is the most

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important part of this story. The Middle East has a rich and ancient history. Israel is a relatively new country; it became an independent state in 1948. Empires, borders, and the names of countries have frequently changed in that area of the world. Draw a map indicating the way the area looked in Biblical times, in 1900, 1940, 1950, 1970, and today. Read about the Six-Day War of 1967, and write about how the borders in the Middle East have changed since *Exodus* was written.

**Understanding Literary Features** This book was a work of fiction, yet some of the people in it were real, and some of the events actually took place. Choose one of the following events and write a different ending: the escape from Acre Prison, the refusal to let the "Exodus" leave Cyprus, the attack on Abu Yesha, or the United Nations vote.

**Understanding Characterization** Kitty and Ari spend many years denying the feelings they have for each other because they don't understand each others' worlds. Write about two people who share many of the same qualities, but who have one major issue that keeps them from forming a deeper relationship. The cause of their conflict could stem from religion, race, politics, social class, economic status, or age. Describe how the characters are alike and different. Decide whether they will work through their conflict, or if it will keep them apart.

**Understanding the Author's Craft** The author recounts the history of each character while telling the larger story. Their individual stories are unique, and they come from diverse backgrounds. With a common goal, the characters come together and easily form a community in a new land. Write short biographies of several characters who work together for a common goal. It could be contemporary, with a group trying to change a local law, or it could be a group of immigrants coming to America.