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IRAQ

IN FRAGMENTS

Based on the film by James Longley



 SCHOLASTIC



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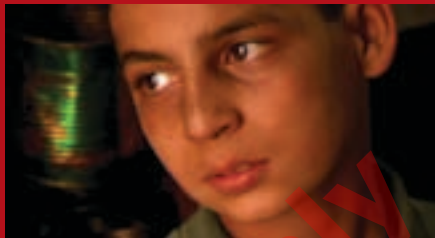
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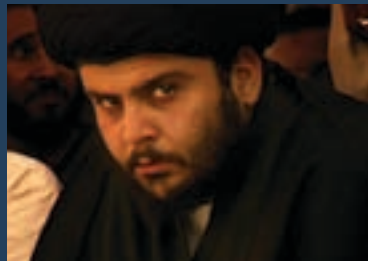
PEOPLE

MOHAMMED is twelve years old. He lives with his grandmother in a Sunni area of Baghdad. He works in a garage, but his boss is often unkind to him.



MOHAMMED'S BOSS is unhappy about life in Baghdad since the American occupation. He thinks the US attacked Iraq for its oil. He dislikes the new Iraqi government because he thinks it is unfair to Sunni people like himself.

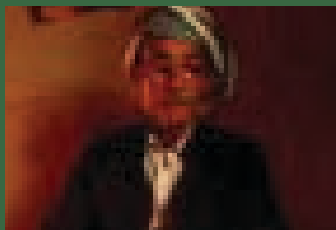
MOQTADA AL-SADR is the religious leader of a special group of Shias. He thinks the US should leave Iraq and the country's people should follow the exact rules of Islam. His followers have their own newspaper and their own army.



SHEIKH AWS is the leader of Moqtada's followers in the city of Naseriyah. He is an intelligent man and a very good speaker.



SULEIMAN is a Kurdish boy from Koretan, in northern Iraq. He wants to do well at school. This is difficult because his father is getting old and Suleiman has to look after the family's sheep.



MAHMOUD is Suleiman's father. He is happy that Saddam Hussein has gone. He hopes this will bring his people more power. He wanted Suleiman to study and work in the Islamic religion. He feels sad because this probably won't happen again.

PLACES



BAGHDAD is the capital city of Iraq. It used to be beautiful but a lot of buildings were destroyed during the war. Both the new Iraqi government and the US Army have their main offices here.

NASERiyAH is Iraq's fourth largest city and an important centre for Moqtada al-Sadr Shia followers. Sheikh Aws is their leader in the city.

SUNNIS AND SHIAS

Islam was founded by Mohammed in the seventh century AD. The Sunnis and Shias are both Islamic religious groups, but they believe in different things. Over the years, this has led to disagreements and fighting.



KORETAN is a Kurdish village in the north of Iraq. The people here make a living from farming and making bricks.

Arbil

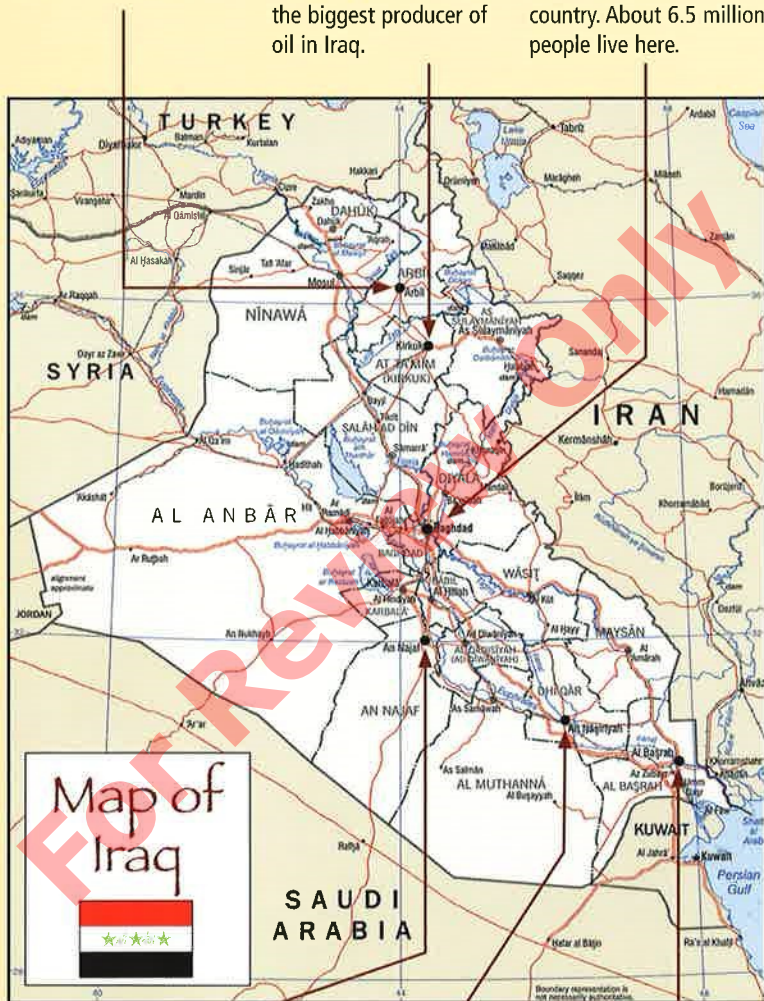
The capital city of the Kurdish area of Iraq.

Kirkuk

An important city in the Kurdish area. This city is the biggest producer of oil in Iraq.

Baghdad

The capital city of Iraq and the largest city in the country. About 6.5 million people live here.



Najaf

This city is the centre of Shia political power in the south of Iraq.

Naseriyah

The fourth largest city in Iraq. Another important centre for Shias.

Basra

Iraq's main port is here. This city also produces a lot of oil.

IRAQ

IN FRAGMENTS

Introduction

1st May 2003. It is the end of the war in Iraq. The Americans occupy Baghdad and Saddam Hussein has gone. Some people thought the change to democracy would follow smoothly. They were wrong. Saddam's rule was over, but the war between different groups of people inside the country was just starting.

Iraq's two main religious Islamic groups – the Sunnis and the Shias – were fighting because they wanted their own leaders to run the country. Then there were the Kurdish people in the north of the country. They didn't want to be part of Iraq at all and were fighting for their own state. Finally, there were the continued attacks on American soldiers. Many Iraqis didn't believe the reasons the United States gave for starting the war. Now it was over, they saw their soldiers as enemies and wanted them to leave as soon as possible. Iraq was a country in fragments.

American film director, James Longley, and his small team spent two years filming in different parts of Iraq. *Iraq in Fragments* is a story in three parts, and gives a picture of the lives of ordinary people touched by war. This is their story.

PART 1

MOHAMMED OF BAGHDAD

CHAPTER 1

Remembering the city



‘I remember Baghdad before the war,’ said Mohammed. He talked like an old man remembering his life, but he was only eleven. ‘It was beautiful,’ Mohammed continued. ‘I remember the river. I remember the bridges. The river was full of fish. Now there’s nothing. But then it was beautiful. It was so beautiful.’

We met Mohammed soon after we moved into the Sheikh Omar area of Baghdad. It is an area of small shops, cafés and garages. Although he was very young, Mohammed worked in one of the garages. He used to go to school, but now he worked instead. He told us he had no choice. His family needed the money.

‘What about your father?’ we asked.

‘His name was Haithem,’ Mohammed replied. ‘But he

abandoned us.'

He told us that he now lived with his grandmother. They lived in the next street. Sometimes his mother and other relatives visited. But his grandmother was the one who looked after him.

The beautiful city Mohammed remembered wasn't beautiful any more. He had described it to us in the back of a car. We were sitting beside him. A man he worked with was driving us through the centre of Baghdad. We passed destroyed buildings and army checkpoints. Half a kilometre away, thick smoke was rising into the air. People hurried away from it. Was it from a bomb? We couldn't see. But we knew that these things were happening in Baghdad all the time.



We stopped at some traffic lights. An American soldier was standing at the side of the road with a gun in his hand. Nearby, some children were climbing over a pile of bricks. They stopped at the top and gave the soldier questioning looks. He looked back and made funny faces. He was trying to be friendly, but no one was laughing.

We drove on. In other parts of the city things seemed

almost normal. An Iraqi policeman stood in the middle of the road waving his hands at the traffic; people shopped in the markets; food-sellers cooked at the side of the road. But something was different. The fear was different. It was there with Saddam. But with Saddam, people knew what to expect. This was easier for the Sunnis than the Shias. Saddam was a Sunni and he hated the Shias. He hadn't allowed them to practise their religion freely. The parts of Baghdad where they lived had the worst time. For the Sunni areas, where Mohammed came from, life was easier. But then the war came.

Mohammed remembered it well. 'During the war it was so scary. Our house shook as the bombs fell. The war was above us. I was very afraid in the night. Then, one day, some people told us, "Baghdad has fallen. The Americans have taken the city." And now, they are still here. Their soldiers pass by. Their cars pass by. Their planes fly overhead. The world is so scary now.'



We arrived back at the garage. Mohammed's boss hardly noticed him return. He was sitting in the street

with a group of men. They were playing a board game and talking angrily about the Americans. 'They only attacked us for the oil,' Mohammed's boss was saying. 'So why don't they take it and leave us alone? We don't care about the oil. Only the rich made money from it. We got nothing. For thirty-five years, Saddam took everything. The Americans will be even worse.'

'The Americans say they are not here for the oil,' said another man. 'That's what I read in the newspaper, anyway.'

A third man laughed. 'So why are they guarding Basra and Kirkuk? I'll tell you why. Because that's where the oil comes from.'

'And what about all the help they promised?' asked the second man. 'All the new jobs, food, and money.' He looked across at his friend. 'Have you had any yet?' he asked. Then he turned to Mohammed's boss. 'Have you?'

Both men shook their heads.

'Things are getting worse every day,' said the boss. 'Enjoy today, my friends, because tomorrow will be worse. If you don't believe me, look in the streets.'

'And George Bush* wants us to welcome him with flowers,' said the second man. 'Can you believe it?'

Mohammed stood in the garage doorway, listening. Suddenly, his boss turned and made a sign with his hand. The boss had an injury to his leg and couldn't move around easily. He didn't have to. Mohammed understood the sign. It was time for the boss's morning tea. Mohammed usually fetched it from a café in the next street. He picked up an empty glass and made his way there.

* George Bush was the President of the USA at the time of the Iraq war and occupation.

SUNNIS, SHIAS

In Iraq, there are two main Islamic groups, the Sunnis and the Shias. What are the differences between them, and who are the Kurds?

THE SUNNIS: PEOPLE OF THE PROPHET

Most of the world's Muslims are Sunnis. However, in Iraq, there are far fewer Sunnis than Shias. The Sunnis are close followers of the prophet, Mohammed. They believe that Mohammed was God's last, and most important, prophet on earth.



THE SHIAS: FOLLOWERS OF IMAM ALI

The word 'Shia' or 'Shiite' means 'a follower of Imam Ali'. Ali was the prophet Mohammed's cousin. After Mohammed died, Ali tried to lead the Muslim world. But most Muslims refused to accept him and the Shia group was formed. Imam Ali is buried in the city of Najaf.

Both Sunnis and Shias agree on one thing: the Koran is the word of God spoken through Mohammed. Both groups of believers follow its message closely.



What do these words mean?

You can use a dictionary.

**prophet bury
ethnic persecute
haven**

AND KURDS

THE KURDS: A PEOPLE WITHOUT A COUNTRY



The Kurds live in an area of mountains covering parts of Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Iran. They call it Kurdistan but it is not a country. They are the largest ethnic group in the world without their own country.

The history of Kurdistan is violent. For hundreds of years, their people have been persecuted by their neighbours. The worst attack happened in 1988 when Saddam's cousin, Ali Hasan al-Majid, destroyed around 1,200 Kurdish villages. During Saddam's rule around 300,000 Kurds were killed.

In the 1990s, things got better. The Kurdish area was protected by the USA and Britain, and called a 'safe haven'.

The safe haven meant that the Kurds were allowed to rule themselves. Later,

after Saddam had gone, they held their own elections.

Today, most Kurds in Iraq realise that having their own country is not yet possible. They would like to see Iraq as a set of states, similar to the USA. Their state would be the largest. It would still be part of Iraq, but would manage the lives of its people on its own. Kurdish politicians would still be part of the government. Their dream of self-rule is also closer today than ever.

**What
do you know
about other world
religions? Talk to a
partner.**

