

Teaching Against What's Expected: Arab-American Women's Poetry in the Middle East

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Assumptions of easy cultural connections between native Arabic speakers of the Middle East and Arab-Americans are questioned in a recent, two part comparative study. As perceived by both Bahraini and Omani readers, gaps between expected versus re-examined meaning in the poetry of Arab-American women writers Mohja Kahf, Pauline Khaldas, Lisa Suhair Majaj, and Naomi Shihab-Nye are cases in point. Asked to analyze, compare, and respond to selected poems, American literature students from Bahrain and Oman dissected what they saw as projected meaning with an American cultural bias, offering both personal and regional perspectives that must be understood in their often confrontative international contexts to improve teaching practices.