

Dear Readers,

“Go on!” the children who read *The Turtle of Oman* pressed me. “You can’t stop there!” They wanted to know what happened when my main character, Aref, got to the United States. Did he like Michigan? Was he able to make friends? What was hard for him? Was he terribly homesick? What happened to Sidi, his grandfather, left alone back at home?

Some children at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School in Ann Arbor wrote me beautiful letters telling how they planned to welcome Aref upon his arrival, as if he were a real person. They would circle around him in the cafeteria. They would invite him to eat at their own tables. They would ask him lots of questions about his home country of Oman.

Still, I didn’t really consider writing about Aref again until I got to Hickory, North Carolina, in 2019, where *The Turtle of Oman* had happily been chosen for the marvelous Little Read program at Lenoir-Rhyne University. Then there were hundreds of beautiful third- and fourth-graders badgering me in chorus! Their teachers told me they wouldn’t stop talking about it. What happened next? A somewhat “open ending” was obviously more attractive to me than to them. Even the brilliant Jonathan Ray, who had turned *The Turtle of Oman* into a play that made me cry all seven times I saw it, thought a companion book would be a good idea.

So I promised them. I told the young readers of North Carolina I would do it, feeling flattered they cared about the characters so much. And here it is. This is what happened next after Aref finally packed his suitcase at the end of *The Turtle of Oman* and prepared to fly away. You don’t need to read that book to read this one, but I hope you will. Sidi was the character who gave me the biggest surprise.

Having never lived in Michigan, but having traveled there happily many times, I had some research to do. Where do people eat ice cream in Ann Arbor? I loved reading up about Michigan turtles.

Let’s hope we all have the chance to visit new places again soon!

—Naomi Shihab Nye