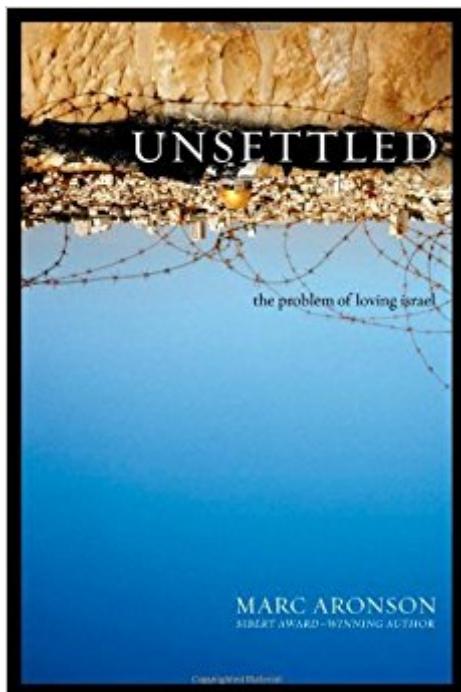


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Unsettled: The Problem Of Loving Israel



Synopsis

Book by Aronson, Marc

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Grade 9 Up  This slender volume asks more questions than it answers, but that is its goal. Aronson wants to know why people and nations hate Israel. While exploring this question, he looks at history and how Israel came to be; he covers its wars and examines the nation today. He asks how Israel can be both a democracy and a religious state. He compares the lives and attitudes of Jews in America to Jews in Israel  both groups came to their countries from other places, yet they have different attitudes about what a homeland is. Right from the start, Aronson makes it known that he is Jewish and has relatives living in Israel. He writes that he loves the country, but could never live there. He tries to maintain objectivity, and admits his close ties make that hard, but he says that Israeli citizens question their state and are not certain of their own feelings, so he is comfortable questioning them as well. Although the author writes clearly about Israel's history and states his questions and concerns plainly, the issues he raises are complex and potentially confusing. Still, his writing is lively and he includes many interviews and personal stories. For someone who knows almost nothing about Israel, this title gives a lot of information and forces readers to think deeply about morality, bigotry, politics, and religion. It is a fascinating look at a complicated country.  Geri Diorio, The Ridgefield Library, CT Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Aronson matches the thorny revelations of *Race: A History beyond Black and White* (2007) by explaining how Israel's past and present actions/reactions have created paradoxes that trouble even the most strident of scholars. "I love Israel" is the stark statement with which Aronson begins his book, but he earns his bona fides through dissecting and interpreting the power struggles that have defined and redefined the nation. It is difficult material for most adults; teenagers will find it similarly challenging, but the rewards awaiting careful readers are many: with the assistance of personal anecdotes, Aronson unlocks the puzzles of Israel's political and military catch-22s by drawing parallels to American history, including the conquering of the Indians, the Mexican War, and the freeing of slaves. For teens, the most vivid and valuable lessons may be in seeing the Holocaust from a Zionist point of view and gaining an appreciation for the "long-distance marriage" of Israel and America. Straightforward chapter and section titles such as "Why Did the Palestinians Lose Their Land?" and "How Can Americans Help Israel?" and back matter heavy with Web sites will help direct researchers to the information they need. Grades 9-12. --Daniel Kraus

So, you want to catch up on current events? Except, to do that, you have to know the history behind every single current event. It's no easy task to be current. Israel is one of those "issues" that seems to be impossible to understand. Just who hates whom? And why? Enter this book. In simple terms, Marc Aronson explains the history behind the state of Israel, and the hows and whys it was created. Not only that, but he gives the background to Palestine and offers an objective explanation as to why there is so much tension in the area. Neither Israel nor Palestine gets off scot-free in his discussion of the wars, diplomatic measures, or attacks in the Jewish state's history. Each side has contributed to the bloodshed. Aronson also sheds light on other groups of people living in Israel, reminding readers that Jews are not its only citizens. The United States has a clear "separation of church and state" clause. Israel, on the other hand, was created as a Jewish state; however, as it has only just passed its 60th birthday, there were other groups of people already residing in the area when it was formed, adding to the unique composition of the nation. What makes *UNSETTLED* so interesting is Aronson's unique perspective. He is Jewish, has been to Israel, and has studied the issue. But he writes about how not all Jews have the same opinion on Israel or the way the tensions with Palestine are handled. Aronson's descriptions of Israel are so well written, you'll feel as if you're on a tour bus checking out the country for yourself. Learn what a kibbutz is and what Israel's

political leaders have done, and see the significant religious landmarks. To understand Israel, you have to know something about Judaism, and Aronson describes that when necessary. He also makes issues easy to comprehend by relating them to historical events you've likely studied in a U.S. History class. *UNSETTLED* never becomes a textbook, though. Because Aronson has such a personal connection to Israel, he includes anecdotes about his family, his friends and his experiences visiting there. He describes why groups of immigrants have chosen to settle there over the years, from Zionists to Holocaust refugees. This is an excellent book for anyone to read, especially if you enjoy history or are just looking for a clear way to understand (or at least begin to understand) the delicate nature of the state of Israel.--- Reviewed by Sarah Hannah Gomez (hannahgomez@gmail.com)

Aronson is writing for high school students, but his clear explanations of this complex issue should also be read by adults frustrated by long, boring rants on the Middle East. This is not a scholarly expose, but a quick introduction to the issue. Aronson makes sure you know his perspective is from a liberal American Jew. He admits that is what colors his views. His analogies are clever (and adults with any sense of humor should even laugh at some of them). This is a GREAT non-fiction book to get young adults and adults started on exploring the issue of the Middle East. It's a quick read and should spark great discussions.

Marc Aronson has written a book to unburden himself of his hostile feelings toward Israel. His book reveals prejudice (he informs that he can barely stand being among devout Israeli Jews) and misinformation about Israel and about Zionism--the movement that created an independent Jewish state. I'll mention just two examples: He perpetuates the false propaganda charges that Jews carried out atrocities in 1948 at an Arab village called Deir Yassin, and that Ariel Sharon "oversaw" a massacre of Palestinians in Lebanon in 1982. Aronson should know that Lebanese Arab militiamen perpetrated the killings of 1982, and that a U.S. Federal Court found Time magazine's story accusing Sharon of complicity in the massacre to be both defamatory and false. As for Deir Yassin, it was the site of a battle during Israel's War of Independence, and residents fabricated atrocity stories for their own purposes. One prominent Palestinian Arab, Hazem Nusseibeh, told the BBC that fabricating the atrocity stories was a big mistake, because it led to so many Arabs fleeing the country. The Arabs who stayed became full citizens of Israel--sadly, this is more than they are offered by the Arab countries. But Aronson's book is more than sad; it perpetuates vile falsehoods and reveals a tragic self-hatred, a kind of Stockholm Syndrome where, to win acceptance, a person

identifies with those who threaten him, and believes the lies they tell about him. Aronson uses for sources writers who feel as he does, but even these are beginning to have epiphanies. In the Jerusalem Post (April 10, 2008), we learn that one such revisionist historian, Benny Morris, now realizes that from the start, Israelis "failed...to appreciate the depth of [Arab] abhorrence anchored in centuries of Islamic Judeophobia, " and that Arab rejection of "infidel" Israel was always a jihad, a religious war. Morris writes that neither Israelis nor their leaders have understood this. Nor, he could add, have Americans like Marc Aronson.

Despite beginning his book with the statement "I love Israel," the author's rambling first person account actually describes all the reasons why he doesn't love it. No one is obligated to love Israel but the reasons Aronson gives are so specious and uninformed that one wonders if he ever actually listened to the legions of relatives he seems to have living there or ever studied any of the issues that he cites to find fault. Another flaw of the book is its self-absorbed and overly personal tone. Why should anyone care about these superficial opinions from an assimilated American Jew who is obviously alienated from the sources of his ancestral religion and uncomfortable with his Jewish identity? While Aronson wrestles with his Israeli-demons in print, readers are misled.

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