



The Translator

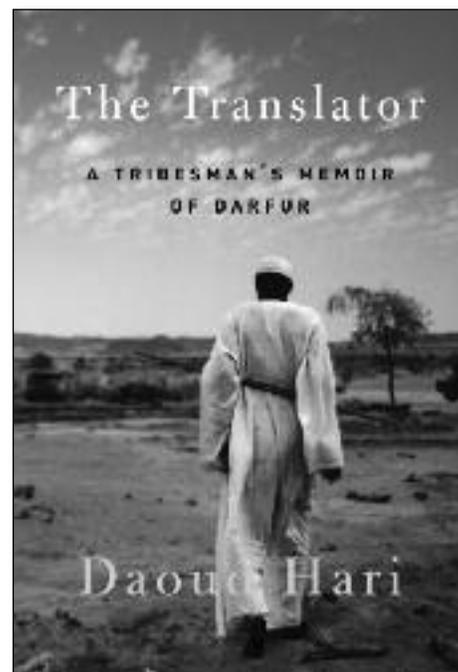
A Tribesman's Memoir of Darfur

Written by Daoud Hari

Random House | Hardcover
978-1-4000-6744-2 | 224 pp | \$23.00

READING LEVEL: 9th Grade

Visit www.thetranslator-book.com for a curriculum guide, an interview with Daoud Hari, photos, and more.



• note to teachers •

In *The Translator: A Tribesman's Memoir of Darfur*, Daoud Hari narrates the events of his life, from his childhood in a small village in the Darfur region of Sudan, to his travels seeking work as a young adult, to his devastating return to a ravaged homeland. Emotionally powerful and ethically galvanizing, this is a text that will bring recent events in Darfur to vivid life for students. Daoud's courageous, compassionate voice is unforgettable, whether he is describing moments of simple joy or terrible conflict, and his explanations of the events he has lived through are clear and nuanced. *The Translator* presents issues of global importance—human rights, international justice, peace and conflict—through the lens of one remarkable individual's experiences, bringing questions of individual ethics and international accountability into dialogue with one another and challenging every reader to consider what role he or she can play in shaping a just and peaceful future.

• about this book •

The Translator begins at a moment of crisis: Daoud Hari and the British news filmmaker and driver with whom he is travelling are stopped by rebel troops and forced to exit their Land Cruiser. As the troop commander accuses Daoud of being a spy condemned to execution, the translator's death seems imminent—he is only saved by a near-miraculous intervention. Although Daoud Hari grew up in Darfur, immigration violations from his younger life have made returning to Sudan a life-threatening risk by the time this opening scene occurs. Yet as his family and hundreds of thousands of others are attacked, massacred, and driven from their homes, Daoud dares to return again and again, working as a translator for journalists and reporters from around the world and helping a team of United Nations investigators as they try to determine whether the tragedy unfolding in the region should be classified as a genocide. *The Translator* is an account of these journeys. Visiting refugee camps, burying the dead, suffering capture and imprisonment, Daoud is grief-stricken and forever altered, yet he retains his courage and his belief that change is possible. His conviction that the stories of Darfur need to be heard and the eloquent simplicity of his calls for peace render his memoir both persuasive and powerful.

• about the author

DAOUD HARI was born in the Darfur region of Sudan. After escaping an attack on his village, he entered the refugee camps in Chad and began serving as a translator for major new organizations including *The New York Times*, NBC, and the BBC, as well as the UN and other aid groups. He recently has participated in the Voices of Darfur tour for SaveDarfur.org. He now lives in Asbury Park, New Jersey.

• teaching ideas

The Translator is a clear and compelling account of terrible events occurring in the world today. As such, it will be an invaluable addition to Social Studies courses concerned with social justice, international affairs, and the role of the United Nations in global peacekeeping. The author contextualizes his moving story with the historical and political background of the conflict in Sudan, providing a framework for productive and insightful classroom discussions. Although the topicality of *The Translator's* subject matter makes it particularly well-suited for courses with a political focus, Daoud's story will provide challenging material for courses in literature as well, particularly in courses focusing on first-person narrative or the genre of memoir.

• discussion and writing

1. Why do you think Daoud begins his memoir with the sentence, "I am sure you know how important it can be to get a good phone signal"? (3) Does this beginning tell you anything about the story to come?
2. On page 4, Daoud says that "the government of Sudan [...] would kill me if they caught me bringing in a reporter." Why might the Sudanese government not want reporters to come into the country?
3. Who are the rebel groups in Sudan, according to Daoud? What factors does he say "[make] the rise of rebel groups very easy"? (6)
4. How does Daoud explain the changing relationship between the Zaghawa and the government on pages 13 and 14?
5. On page 18, Daoud explains that "A camel [...] can be away from its human family or camel family for twenty years and still know them very well when somehow it comes back. Camels are completely loyal and full of love and courage." Why do you think he includes this information in this passage?
6. According to Daoud, what do travelers need to know to survive in the Sahara? Why is travel in the desert so risky? (19-20)
7. Why is Daoud imprisoned in Egypt? How does he eventually regain his freedom? (22-26)
8. What effect does looking at his country from the air have on Daoud's thinking? (27-30)
9. Why does Daoud say that "Everyone knows the family of everyone else among the Zaghawa?" (32)
10. When Daoud sees his sister Halima again, what joke does she make about his name? (38)
11. What does Daoud mean when he says, "All the bright color of the village [...] was now gone"? (41)
12. How do the people of Daoud's village remember their dead? Why does Daoud say that it is necessary to remove reminders of the person who has died after a time? (48)
13. What is the purpose of a war drum? (50)

14. Why do the wounded village defenders stay behind the women and children as they flee their village? (58)
15. What are “internally displaced persons”? (62). Why do you think Daoud says that “my mother and sister became *what the world calls* IDPs”? (emphasis added)
16. According to Daoud, why do people in Darfur not usually give their babies a name “until several days or even weeks after they are born”? (64)
17. Why does Daoud greet Dr. John with the phrase, “Dr. John, I presume?” (69)
18. Of the refugee camp, Daoud writes, “the world’s charity seemed almost invisible here.” What one thing does Daoud specifically say would be helpful to people without homes? (72-73)
19. Why does Daoud know it will be difficult to find his family members in a refugee camp? (77)
20. What are the differences between camels and donkeys? (77-78) Why are they so important to families who must travel in the desert?
21. What does the team of genocide investigators conclude about the occurrences in Sudan? Is their decision important? Why? (85)
22. Why does Daoud say he went to buy beer for Lori and Megan one evening? (89)
23. How does Daoud describe Nicholas Kristof and Ann Curry? (91)
24. How do Daoud, Nick Kristof and their companions get their vehicle out when it is stuck in the jungle? (97)
25. Why does Daoud laugh when Philip trips and falls onto the unexploded bomb? (104)
26. What do you think Daoud means when he says, “Reporters are so very human, wonderfully so”? (112)
27. How do people in Land Cruisers drive through deep water? (115)
28. What do the refugees think of the new peace agreement between “the government of Sudan and one of the rebel groups”? (120) Why do they feel as they do?
29. Why does Daoud refuse the rebel commander’s offer to be driven back to Chad? (126)
30. Why don’t the young rebel soldiers shoot Ali and Daoud? (135-136)
31. Why does Daoud agree to speak truthfully to the government commanders if there are African Union troops as witnesses? (145-6)
32. Why does one of the commanders ask Daoud during the helicopter ride if he and his fellow prisoners have been fed lately? (151)
33. Why does Daoud lie to Paul by telling him that if he agrees to eat, the commanders will let him call his wife back in the U.S.? (158) Do you think his lie is justifiable?
34. How does Daoud feel when he sees the four U.S. soldiers in the courtroom? (166)
35. What is the misunderstanding between Paul and Daoud in the civilian prison? How is it resolved? (168-170)
36. Why do you think this book ends with “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights”?

• suggested activities

1. Re-read the first chapter of the book. In light of the events of the chapter, how would you characterize the rhetorical device used in the novel's first sentence? In a brief essay, describe the function and effect of that sentence. You might wish to consider its tone or its cultural or geographical significances, as well as its relevance to the things that happen in the chapter.
2. When Daoud writes of discovering money in a forgotten pocket while in prison, he says, "What happened next was not the first miracle in my life, but it was one of the best" (25). Why do you think he describes the discovery as a miracle? Write an essay in which you either question or defend this description of events. Don't forget that you'll need to define what you mean by "miracle"; you may also wish to support your argument by using examples from your own life or from other books you have read.
3. As he flies home from Egypt, Daoud finds that seeing familiar lands from above is a transformative experience. He writes, "Altitude itself is a powerful thing. When travelers are in space, looking at our small planet from a distance where borders and flags cannot be seen or imagined, this also, I am told, bends one toward a peaceful view" (30). Using Daoud's observations or your own, consider why this might be so. Does this description work metaphorically, as well as literally?
4. On page 32, Daoud explains, "Everyone knows the family of everyone else among the Zaghawa. [...] If your town had no television or other things to take you away from visiting all the time, your town could be very large and you would still know something about everyone" (32). What things do you and your family do in your everyday life that keep you from "visiting all the time"? Do you agree with Daoud that television plays an important role in preventing people from knowing each other? Write a short story in which you imagine a day in the life of your family without these distractions. You may write about a day without television specifically, but feel free to consider what your life would be like without other kinds of technology as well, such as computers, telephones, or even electricity.
5. As the quote from question 4 above suggests, family and community relationships are an important theme in *The Translator*. Choose a chapter or scene from the book in which family and/or community play a central role, and write an essay in which you explain its significance. Possible topics include: Daoud's relationship with a member or members of his own family; the effects of violence or relocation on a particular family; conflict within families caused by divided loyalties or political pressures; and the impact of political strife on children and young adults in Darfur.
6. Although it is forbidden by the government, Daoud writes that, while in the refugee camps in Chad, it was "morally necessary" for him to say that he was from Chad, in order to work as a translator (67). Re-read the passages in which he discusses this decision. Do you agree with his choice? In a short persuasive essay, explain your position, taking care to support your argument with appropriate evidence.

7. In the Appendix that follows *The Translator*, Daoud writes, “even though some people think Darfur is a simple genocide, it is important to know that it is not. It is a complicated genocide” (188). What does he mean by this statement? Re-read the Appendix, as well as the section in Chapter Two (11-14) in which Daoud gives a brief explanation of the conflict between the non-Arab Africans and the Sudanese government, and write an essay which addresses Daoud’s claim. You will need to discuss factors such as history, ethnicity, geography and religion in your response, but you may also wish to focus more extensively on one aspect of the conflict that you find particularly important, in order to explain how it relates to the situation as a whole. Use examples from the book or other sources to support your argument.
8. Daoud writes that “Almost every person, at least in the north half of Sudan and in most of Darfur, is Muslim, so there are no religious differences [between Arabs and indigenous Africans]” (185). Yet, Daoud explains on pages 180-184, religion has been an important factor in the development of the situation in Darfur. In a brief essay, explain the role religion has played in Sudan’s recent history, using appropriate research to strengthen your position.

• vocabulary

Acacia, n – any of numerous leguminous trees or shrubs with round white or yellow flower clusters and often fernlike leaves

Convoy, n. – a group of moving vehicles

Genocide, n. – the deliberate and systematic destruction of a racial, political, or cultural group

Indigenous, adj. – produced, growing, or living naturally in a particular region

NGO, n. – acronym for “non-governmental organization”

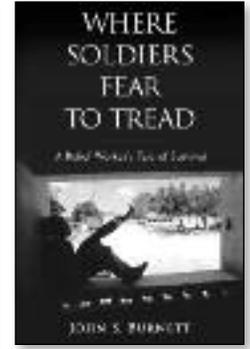
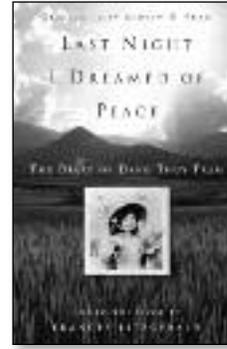
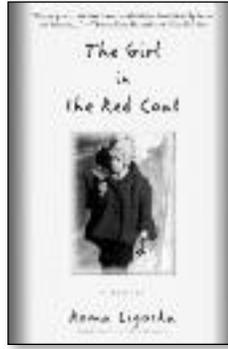
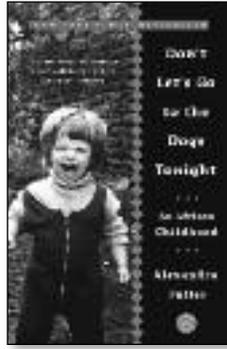
RPG, n. – acronym for “rocket-propelled grenade”

* Definitions above (excepting those for “NGO” and “RPG”) are taken from The Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 1997 edition

• beyond the book

1. Daoud Hari prefaces his memoir by briefly describing the location and geography of the Darfur region (ix). With your class, locate the region on a world map. What information does this map supply? Are there important features of the region that are not shown? Now, have each student create their own map of Sudan, using materials of their choice. You may wish to distribute printed outlines of the country or have students draw their own. It may be helpful for students to refer to an encyclopedia or other maps of various kinds as they choose which aspects of Darfur their own maps will represent.
2. In the Appendix, Daoud writes that “Arabs and indigenous Africans have gotten along for thousands of years in Sudan. [...] But the drumbeat of Arab superiority began separating the hearts of the Arabs from their indigenous African neighbors” (185). Ask your students, individually or in small groups, to find and research another twentieth-century conflict in which peaceful coexistence gave way to violence or war. What were/are the factors in the change? Are the problems economic, religious, cultural? With the class, discuss each conflict. Are there similarities between them? What are the important differences?
3. Re-read the section on pages 18-20 in which Daoud describes the Sahara desert. What facts about the desert do your students find most striking? Most surprising? Divide students into small groups and ask them to create short reports for the class describing various aspects of the region—geographic, cultural, and historical—according to their interests. Students should research their topic(s) and present their findings to the class. They may wish to create visual aids such as posters or charts to assist them in their presentations.
4. In the Appendix, the first fact Daoud provides about Darfur has to do with Sudan’s status as a former colony of the British Empire: “When the British left Sudan in 1956 they set it up with a small Arab minority government ruling over a mostly non-Arab African population” (181). Ask your class to consider why he begins with this piece of information. What were the repercussions of this arrangement? Was this situation unique to Sudan? Discuss the history of colonial expansion in Africa with the class. How have the histories of nations other than Sudan been shaped by the end of colonial rule?
5. Over the course of the narrative, Daoud works as a translator for many journalists and reporters who are working to bring stories from Darfur to people around the world. What other stories need to be told? With your class, look at a variety of newspaper clippings and television programs. How is the news presented in each format? Ask students to choose a topic of importance to your school, community or the world at large, and write their own news story to explain the issue to others. They may choose to write a newspaper article or editorial, or create a script for a television broadcast or documentary. Each student should present his or her story to the class; the students may wish to compile their stories into a newsletter or multimedia presentation to share with other classes.

• for further reading



Ake: The Years of Childhood,
by Wole Soyinka

The Bone Woman: A Forensic Anthropologist's Search for Truth in the Mass Graves of Rwanda, Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo,
by Clea Koff

A Continent For The Taking: The Tragedy and Hope of Africa,
by Howard W. French

The Country Under My Skin
A Memoir of Love and War,
by Gioconda Belli

The Diary Of A Young Girl,
by Anne Frank

Don't Let's Go To The Dogs Tonight:
An African Childhood,
by Alexandra Fuller

The Girl In The Red Coat,
by Roma Ligocka and Iris Von Finckenstein

God Grew Tired Of Us: A Memoir,
by John Bul Dau and Michael S. Sweeney

In My Hands,
by Irene Opdyke

Last Night I Dreamed Of Peace:
The Diary Of Dang Thuy Tram,
by Dang Thuy Tram

Life Laid Bare:
The Survivors In Rwanda Speak,
by Jean Hatzfeld

Madness Visible: A Memoir Of War,
by Janine Di Giovanni

Mandela, Mobutu & Me:
A Newswoman's African Journey,
by Lynne Duke

My Detachment: A Memoir,
by Tracy Kidder

The Nuremberg Interviews,
by Leon Goldensohn

Where Soldiers Fear To Tread:
A Relief Worker's Tale Of Survival,
by John Burnett

You Must Set Forth At Dawn: A Memoir,
by Wole Soyinka

• about this guide's writer

HANNAH DOHERTY is a PhD student in English Literature at Stanford University, where she teaches as a graduate teaching assistant and, currently, as an instructor in Stanford's Program in Writing and Rhetoric. She is an avid reader and has worked with children and young adults of many ages as a tutor and camp counselor.

• other available guides

We have developed teacher's guides to help educators by providing questions that explore reading themes, test reading skills and evaluate reading comprehension. These guides have been written by teachers like you and other experts in the fields of writing and education. Each book is appropriate for high school readers. Reading ability, subject matter and interest level have been considered in each teacher's guide.

To obtain these free teacher's guides, please visit our website:

www.randomhouse.com/highschool

Fiction:

Achebe, Chinua. **Things Fall Apart**
Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. **Purple Hibiscus**
Asimov, Isaac. **I, Robot**
Bradbury, Ray. **Fahrenheit 451**
Brooks, Terry. **The Shannara Trilogy**
Butler, William. **The Butterfly Revolution**
Cather, Willa. **My Antonia**
Cisneros, Sandra. **La Casa en Mango Street**
Cisneros, Sandra. **The House on Mango Street**
Clark, William van Tilburg. **The Ox-Bow Incident**
Clarke, Arthur C. **Childhood's End**
Cook, Karin. **What Girls Learn**
Crichton, Michael. **Jurassic Park**
Doctorow, E.L. **Ragtime**
Drew, Alan. **Gardens of Water**
Dunn, Mark. **Ella Minnow Pea**
Ellis, Ella Throp. **Swimming with the Whales**
Ellison, Ralph. **Invisible Man**
Gaines, Ernest. **A Lesson Before Dying**
García Márquez, Gabriel. **Chronicle of a Death Foretold**
Gibbons, Kaye. **Ellen Foster**
Guterson, David. **Snow Falling on Cedars**
Hansberry, Lorraine. **A Raisin in the Sun**
Hayes, Daniel. **Eye of the Beholder**
Hayes, Daniel. **The Trouble with Lemons**
Homer. Fitzgerald, Robert, trans. **The Odyssey**
Jones, Lloyd. **Mister Pip**
Kafka, Franz. **The Trial**
Khedairi, Betool. **Absent**
L'Amour, Louis. **Hondo**
Le Guin, Ursula K. **A Wizard of Earthsea**
Matar, Hisham. **In the Country of Men**
Maxwell, William. **So Long, See You Tomorrow**
McCarthy, Cormac. **All The Pretty Horses**
Miéville, China. **Un Lun Dun**
Mitchell, David. **Black Swan Green**
Mori, Kyoko. **Shizuko's Daughter**
Mullen, Thomas. **The Last Town on Earth**
Naylor, Gloria. **Mama Day**
Otsuka, Julie. **When the Emperor Was Divine**
Potok, Chaim. **The Chosen**
Pullman, Philip. **The Amber Spyglass**
Pullman, Philip. **The Golden Compass**
Pullman, Philip. **The Subtle Knife**
Rawles, Nancy. **My Jim**
Remarque, Erich Maria. **All Quiet on the Western Front**
Richter, Conrad. **The Light in the Forest**
Shaara, Jeff. **Gods and Generals**
Shaara, Jeff. **The Last Full Measure**

Shaara, Michael. **The Killer Angels**
Shute, Neil. **On the Beach**
Sinclair, Upton. **The Jungle**
Smith, Alexander McCall. **The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency**
Sparks, Christine. **The Elephant Man**
Spiegelman, Art. **Maus I**
Tan, Amy. **The Joy Luck Club**
Tolkien, J.R.R. **Lord of the Rings Trilogy**
Tolkien, J.R.R. **The Hobbit**
Twain, Mark. **Adventures of Huckleberry Finn**
Voigt, Cynthia. **Dacey's Song**
Voigt, Cynthia. **Homecoming**
Vonnegut, Kurt. **Cat's Cradle**
Vonnegut, Kurt. **Slaughterhouse-Five**
Wartski, Maureen. **Candle in the Wind**
Wolff, Tobias. **Old School**

Nonfiction:

Armstrong, Karen. **Islam**
Baldwin, James. **Nobody Knows My Name**
Baldwin, James. **The Fire Next Time**
Bible. **The Five Books of Moses**
Cary, Lorene. **Black Ice**
Chen, Da. **Colors of the Mountain**
Collins, Billy. **Poetry 180/180 More**
Conway, Jill Ker. **The Road from Coorain**
Farrow, Anne, et. al. **Complicity**
Frank, Anne. **Diary of a Young Girl**
Haley, Alex. **The Autobiography of Malcolm X**
Heath, Chip and Dan Heath. **Made to Stick**
Hickam, Homer. **October Sky**
Hunter, Latoya. **The Diary of Latoya Hunter**
Hunter-Gault, Charlayne. **In My Place**
Katz, Jon. **Geeks**
Kennedy, Randall. **Nigger**
Kidder, Tracy. **Mountains Beyond Mountains**
Lewis, Anthony. **Gideon's Trumpet**
McCarthy, Susan Carol. **Lat That Trumpet in Our Hands**
Miller, Jennifer. **Inheriting the Holy Land**
Nafisi, Azar. **Reading Lolita in Tehran**
Nazario, Sonia. **Enrique's Journey**
Opdyke, Irene Gut. **In My Hands**
Pollan, Michael. **The Botany of Desire**
Santiago, Esmeralda. **Almost a Woman**
Santiago, Esmeralda. **Cuando era puertorriqueña**
Santiago, Esmeralda. **When I Was Puerto Rican**
Suskind, Ron. **A Hope in the Unseen**
Taylor, Nick. **American-Made**
Thomas, Piri. **Down These Mean Streets**
Whiteley, Opal. **Opal: The Journey of an Understanding Heart**