



[Home](#) > The Wall

The Wall

Books Reviewed:

[The Wall](#) [1]

Issue:

[200](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Andrea Reece](#) [3]

Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

The town where Joshua lives is divided by The Wall. Joshua knows there are people living on the other side, but he's never once been there, never even seen over The Wall. When he stumbles on a secret tunnel that dips under it, he can't resist the temptation to take a quick look.

The decision to go through the tunnel will change his life. Minutes after arriving in this other land, he is running for his life. A girl his own age saves him, leading to a second trip through the tunnel to repay that debt and the start of a friendship that will put Joshua in danger again.

Though it is never said outright, Joshua is an Israeli; his town a settlement on the West Bank; the people on the other side of The Wall Palestinians. Though the opening has a feel of dystopia to it, this is a fable set in a world that is only too real.

Sutcliffe was inspired to write the book after a visit to the PalFest literary festival and intends it to evoke the realities of life in the region for his young readers. In Joshua he has created a central character whose story will hold their interest. Told in the first person, and in the present tense, The Wall succeeds in making the political personal. Joshua's increasingly tense and bitter relationship with his step-father feels real, the breakdown of his friendship with the boys at school will strike a chord with his audience too. When Joshua takes over the care of the olive grove that used to belong to the Palestinian family he has come to know, he enjoys a freedom that any adolescent will immediately understand, while the scenes provides a tangible sense of what the family, and families like them, have lost.

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Links:

[1] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/the-wall-0>

[2] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/200>

[3] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/andrea-reece>