

"men in the sun" by ghassan kanafani essay sample

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Ghassan Kanafani is one of the famous Arab writers who represent resistance literature. His writings were mainly devoted to depict the struggle of his people and ignite new resistance acts against Israeli forces of occupation. The writer affirmed the strong determination of the Palestinian people to liberate their occupied lands whatever the cost would be. Kanafani was a writer and journalist from Acre, the editor of al-Hadaf. A member of the Political Bureau of PFLP and its spokesperson, he published their newspapers (Al-Ray, The Opinion). Kanafani was killed by a car bomb on July 8, 1972 in Beirut.

Men in the Sun is Ghassan Kanafani's first novel. This novel explains the consequences of the Nakbah on Palestine and the Palestinians through three generations who have different backgrounds but they all share the same goal and dream which is to find their way to Kuwait. They believe Kuwait is their hope for survival in this world and by reaching there they will accomplish their dreams. Their dreams are the basic human rights which are having a house with a concrete roof and enough food and money.

Abu Qais

Abu Qais is the first character in the novel. He is an old man who lost his house and his olive trees and now he is living with his wife and his son Qais in the refugee camp. Everyday he dreams of returning to his olive trees but he doesn't know how will he go back there after the Jews have invaded it. He is forced to move to Kuwait because of his family's economic condition. His dreams are to come back with enough money to build a house and buy olive trees.

Asaad

Asaad represents the middle generation, he is being chased by the authorities for his political activities. He is deceived by his father's old friend. The friend took 20 Dinars from him promising that he would take him to Iraq but Asaad never found him. This incident makes Asaad lose his trust in people. Asaad reaches Iraq by himself with the determination to reach Kuwait and to pay back fifty Dinars given to him by his Uncle who wants him to marry his daughter Nada. This results from the fact that Asaad doesn't love her and therefore he is not willing to marry her.

Marwan

Marwan is the youngest among them all. Marwan's father divorced his mother for a woman whose father had money and he stopped supporting his family. Marwan's older brother Zakaria was in Kuwait and he was sending money to his family but once he got married his support stopped as well. Marwan had to leave school and go to Basra in order to reach Kuwait because he wants to support his mother and siblings after his father left them and his brother stopped sending them money from Kuwait. Marwan wants to prove to his father that he is old enough to support his family and they do not need him anymore.

The three characters refuse to deal with the smuggler because he insists on taking fifteen Dinars before taking them to Kuwait. Rather, they insist on paying him after reaching Kuwait. They meet the fourth character in the novel "Abul Khaizuran" who agrees to take ten Dinars from them in order to

smuggle them to Kuwait and they can pay him after reaching Kuwait. Abul Khaizuran is a very good driver, he worked for the British Army and he worked with the freedom fighters and while fighting for his country he was captured by the enemy who stripped of his manhood. He couldn't marry and have a family of his own and he hated his fate. He felt that he lost the most important thing in a man's life " his manhood", never the less, the sacrifice was not worth it for him homeland was not free. After losing his manhood, Abul Khaizuran's only purpose in life is to gain money and more money. He is trying to prove his manhood by helping them in escaping to Kuwait.

Abul Khaizuran drives a lorry with a water tank. The plan is to hide the men inside the water tank fifty meters before they reach the border and clear immigration procedures should take seven minutes only and then drives the car for another fifty meters from the border. The water tank was like an oven and they won't survive for more than seven or ten minutes. Abul Khaizuran doesn't take long in the Iraqi borders. The second attempt to cross the border takes longer though because Abul Khaizuran is held up by the officials who are joking with him about a girl of whom they have heard he had a relation with.

During his talk with the officers the three men are burning inside the tank. After crossing the Kuwaiti borders Abul Khaizuran opens the tank and he discovers that the three men ended up suffocating to their death. He is shocked and he feels horrible. First he thinks of throwing their bodies in the desert but he changes his mind because he doesn't want their bodies to be eaten by vultures. He decides to throw their bodies in the garbage so

someone might find them and they could have a decent funeral, but first he steals their watches and searches for any money in their pockets.

After he leaves the bodies on the road, he could only think of one thing " why haven't they knocked?" he asks himself over and over again and the novel ends with this question. The three men didn't knock because they have realized by doing this they would be caught and that's the end of their dreams.

The three men in this novel represent the people who abandoned their homeland in search for a better life. This is what happens to people who abandon their homeland, their death is a shameful and undignified death unlike the people who die defending their country where they are honored and looked up to. Abul Khaizuran represents the leader who betrays his people by promising them to fulfill their dreams but instead he leads them to their death for he only cares to fulfill his personal needs. The road represents the struggle of life that the characters go through to reach their dreams and the desert represents the obstacles that keep them from achieving those dreams. The three men should have knocked to be saved but they never did, the Palestinians, like wise, need to raise their voice in order to be heard just like knocking on the tank.