



Coming Together in Skokie

A Celebration
of the
Assyrian People



Book Selections and Events
January - March 2012



Gilgamesh: a New Rendering in English Verse by David Ferry

The Epic of *Gilgamesh* is the oldest recorded work in world literature. The daring quests for immortality by Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu were preserved on stone tablets. Poet David Ferry's version of this epic is not a literal translation, but instead, is a new adaption of this classic tale—one that is wholly accessible to the modern reader. Ferry's lyrical style makes this ancient work come to life and demonstrates the universality of the themes of this epic tale.



Home Is Beyond the Mountains by Celia Barker Lottridge

In this story of unimaginable loss and profound courage, a young Assyrian girl loses her family while fleeing her home in the face of war. By knitting together a new family, she finds the strength to survive. With the help of her dedicated orphanage director, she makes the incredible five year journey back to her home. Based on historical events, this story tells the tale of the Assyrian flight from Persia at the end of World War I.



Children of War: Voices of Iraqi Refugees by Deborah Ellis

Author Deborah Ellis steps away from fiction in her compilation of firsthand accounts of children displaced by war in Iraq. These heartbreaking stories remind the reader of universal truths such as joy, fear, hate, love and forgiveness. A poignant reminder that those who suffer from the atrocities of war are still with us; children who had no hand in creating this war must somehow find a way to survive.



Sahra = Moon

Written and illustrated by Romil and Victor Benyamino

This illustrated children's book written in Assyrian and English is a playful bedtime story that takes children on a journey into the wilderness to discover animals and experience events that take place at night.



Dear Skokie Community:

I am pleased that **Coming Together in Skokie** continues for another year. The Village is deeply committed to this important and unique collaboration between many different community groups, as it presents the opportunity for everyone to take part in a valuable learning experience. It is my hope that the entire community will participate in the 2012 **Coming Together in Skokie** project.

This year, **Coming Together in Skokie** highlights the Assyrian culture. The great epic *Gilgamesh* shows that our ancestors dealt with many of the same challenges we face today, the value of friendship, how to become a better person, and mortality. *Home Is Beyond the Mountains*, by Celia Barker Lottridge illustrates the strength and courage of a young Assyrian girl who loses her family and home during World War I. Again, the committee also has selected additional entertaining and inspiring books that will provide children and adolescents with a view of the Assyrian culture. The more we know about other cultures, countries and people that are different from us, the greater our compassion and the stronger our community.

I look forward to participating in many of the **Coming Together in Skokie** program activities, and also hope to meet many Skokie residents who participate. The committee has worked tirelessly to develop a wide variety of activities and events this year, and Susan and I are grateful for the many community partnerships that make **Coming Together in Skokie** possible, with special thanks to the Skokie Public Library, Niles Township High School District 219, Skokie Park District, Niles Township Schools ELL Parent Center, Holiday Inn North Shore/Skokie, Sanford-Brown College, Oakton Community College, the Oriental Institute and the many representatives of the Assyrian culture for their valuable contributions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'George Van Dusen'.

George Van Dusen, Mayor
Village of Skokie

Dear Neighbors:

The Village of Skokie is a community rich in diversity. Our residents hail from many different countries and speak more than 90 languages and dialects. This exciting mixture of cultures offers an opportunity to build knowledge, awareness, and appreciation for all of our neighbors.

Two years ago, Niles Township High School District 219, Skokie Public Library, the Village of Skokie, the Holiday Inn North Shore/Skokie, and the Indian Community of Niles Township initiated a unique program called **Coming Together in Skokie** to explore in depth a different culture each year through reading and discussing a common book, and enjoying a host of other exciting activities. The event takes place during a six-week period from January through March. Our first two projects showcased the Asian Indian and Filipino communities. Thousands of residents attended book sessions, lectures, dramas, and musical events for each celebration.

This year **CTIS** spotlights the rich culture of the Assyrian community. Adding their support and resources to this project are Oakton Community College, the Skokie Park District, Skokie elementary and middle schools, the Niles Township Schools ELL Parent Center, the Assyrian Universal Alliance Foundation, the Assyrian Chaldean Syriac Student Movement, the Assyrian National Council of Illinois, Assyrian American Civic Club of Chicago, the Niles North and Niles West Assyrian Clubs, the Oriental Institute, Sanford-Brown College, and more.

Four books have been chosen. The great epic poem *Gilgamesh*, translated by David Ferry, is the first known recorded literature discovered among the archaeological ruins of Assyrian King Ashurbanipal's great library. Authors Cecilia Barker Lottridge, *Home Is Beyond the Mountains*, and Deborah Ellis, *Children of War*, will visit Skokie to speak with elementary, high school and college students, as well as the general public. *Sahra=Moon* is a lovely children's bedtime story in both Assyrian and English. It is written by Romil Benyamino and illustrated by Victor Benyamino. The Skokie Public Library, and other schools and institutions, will host several reading discussions. We invite you to read these books and discuss them at the library, or in your own groups. The Library has a supply of each book along with kits to enhance the reading experience. They are also on sale at Barnes & Noble at Westfield/Old Orchard. The many planned activities, including signing up for a tour of the Oriental Institute, are free, and appeal to both children and adults.

An afternoon of cultural offerings serves as the official kick-off for **Coming Together in Skokie** on Sunday, January 29, 2012, 2:30 p.m. at Niles West High School.

Learn more about an ancient culture that has withstood conflict and time. Discover more about our Assyrian neighbors who live with us in our very special community.

Coming Together in Skokie Founding Members

Dear Skokie Community:

The Assyrian community is honored to be the chosen culture for **Coming Together in Skokie**. This unique project introduces us to the many different cultures that coexist in our Village. It is only through knowledge that we can understand each other, and through that understanding, live together in peace and harmony.

Assyrians are descendants of one of the world's oldest civilizations. Our ancestors made great contributions to mathematics, literature, art, and architecture. Many, however, do not know who we are, or where we came from. That is because there is no current-day nation of Assyria.

The Assyrian Empire was located in what is now modern-day Iraq. Many different countries fought over our land. Our people scattered throughout the world. Although we emigrated to many countries, our language, religion, and traditions have remained strong and vibrant.

We look forward to showing you our rich heritage during this year's **Coming Together in Skokie**.

Sincerely,

The Assyrian Community





David Ferry is a translator and a prize-winning American poet who has brought his gift for language to world classics and met with huge critical acclaim. Perhaps due to his personal literary success, his translations are known for their beauty as well as scholarly accuracy. *Gilgamesh* is the first of his poem-translations, but certainly is no exception. Having no background in ancient language, Ferry worked with word-for-word translations to create a more lyrical rendering in English verse. Born in 1924, he was married to literary critic Anne Ferry until her death in 2006.



Celia Barker Lottridge became a children's author after longing to "tell stories" all her life. As a child she traveled to many places and always found a home in the local library. She even became a librarian! Lottridge is keenly interested in the oral tradition and teaches courses in storytelling. Born in Iowa, her travels have led to her current residence in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Lottridge is an award-winning author of 19 books for children, including our selection for **Coming Together** in *Skokie*, *Home Is Beyond the Mountains*.

Deborah Ellis is the award-winning author of 14 books for youth and adults. Her best known series, *The Breadwinner*, was inspired by an interview with a mother in a refugee camp in Afghanistan. She is passionate about sharing the stories of people living in developing nations and increasing awareness through anti-war activism. Ellis is a philanthropist. Her financial support enables organizations such as Street Kids International and Women for Women to offer assistance and education to people in need. Ellis lives in Cochrane, Ontario, Canada where she was named to the Order of Ontario in 2006.





Romil and Victor Benyamino are second generation Assyrian-Americans living in California. Their parents, father from Iran and mother from Iraq, moved to the United States as teenagers. Although the brothers grew up

in a typical American community, their parents worked hard to instill in them an Assyrian identity. This identity drives their work. Creators of benyamino.com, they are passionate about sharing Assyrian culture and entertainment with their divided nation. When they aren't creating fun and interesting content for their website, Romil is a chemistry researcher and Victor is a graphic design student. *Sahra=Moon* is their first children's book.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Homer Ashurian: Born in Urmia, Iran. Received his M.A. in Archaeology, majoring in Assyriology. High school principal in Tehran. Elected to Iranian Parliament in 1975. He was curator of Cultural Museum of Tehran. He edited *Kirkha* ("The Scroll") and *Shvila* ("The Way") of The Assyrian Youth Cultural Society. Currently CEO of the Assyrian Universal Alliance Foundation.

Vincent van Exel: Graduate student in Near Eastern Archaeology in the University of Chicago's Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. He has excavated extensively in Syria and Turkey.

Edward Odisho: Edward Odisho is an Assyrian born in Kirkuk/Iraq. He is currently Professor Emeritus, Northeastern Illinois University. Holds a Ph.D. in speech sciences and linguistics and has published 9 books, 6 of which are at the Library of Congress. Has also published scores of research papers in different international journals.

Vasili Shoumanov: Orientalist and former wrestling champion of Russia. Graduated from St. Petersburg State University with M.A. in History of Eastern Civilizations. Editor-in-chief of *Atra* ("Homeland"), 1990-1996. Author of *The Russian-Assyrian Dictionary* and *Assyrians in Chicago*. High school wrestling coach. Currently works at AUAF library.

Christopher Woods: Associate Professor of Sumerian in the Oriental Institute, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, and the Program on the Ancient Mediterranean World, University of Chicago. Received his B.S. from Yale University, his Ph.D. in Assyriology from Harvard University, and was a Junior Fellow in the Harvard Society of Fellows before joining the faculty of the University of Chicago in 2002.



Today's Assyrians are descendants of ancient Mesopotamia, one of the world's earliest civilizations, which began to develop around 3500 BC. The land corresponds to present-day Iraq, located between the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. The area, frequently called the Fertile Crescent, was bounded by Turkey's mountains in the north, the mountains of Iran to the east, and the deserts of Syria and Arabia in the west and south.

Northern Mesopotamia, settled by Assyrians, offered good land for farming, adequate rainfall, and stone for building. Akkadians claimed the northern part of the central plain. Its fertile soil lacked water, stimulating the development of irrigation. Soil also was used to make clay tablets upon which scribes wrote. Sumerians lived in the south where fish and fowl were plentiful. Reeds found by the river were used for building houses.

These early civilizations formed a series of city-states in which kings ruled and priests oversaw temples dedicated to the many gods they worshipped.

Although ancient Assyrians came to power in 1900 BC, their influence peaked in 900 BC. Under their reign, a highly sophisticated civilization with great respect for literature, the sciences, art, and law flourished. Assyrians built the cities of Nineveh and Ashur. Their last great king, Ashurbanipal, created a splendid library. Many of its clay tablets are preserved and exist in museums around the world, especially at the British Museum in England.

In 612 BC, enemies conquered the Assyrian capital city of Nineveh. In later years, they were under constant siege by the Babylonians, Persians, and other invaders.

Assyrians were among the first to accept Christianity. During the rise of Islam, they continued to be persecuted, and many fled to Turkey's Hakkari Mountains until 1915 when they were driven out by the Ottoman Empire.

American Christian missionaries came to Hakkari and the Iranian city of Urmia to initiate religious programs during the 1800s. They helped the Assyrians establish schools, to educate both boys and girls, and they built the first university in the Middle East. Printing presses were brought in so Assyrians could communicate with the outside world. After World War I, massacres forced many Assyrians to leave their homes.

In 1921, Iran opened the gates for the Assyrian refugees to return to their homeland. Again, they prospered, developing villages, farming their land. Turkey, however, refused to permit those who had lived in Hakkari to return. Many Assyrians were forced into refugee camps in Baghdad, Iraq. In 1933, after the massacre in Simeil, Iraq, Assyrians fled all over the world, seeking safe haven until the day they could once again have their own country.

Assyrians who emigrated to the United States actively participate in their communities. Their culture and heritage remain vibrant and strong.



Come and share your thoughts with us:



Wednesday, February 1

Parent-Child Book Discussion: *Home Is Beyond the Mountains*

7 p.m. to 8 p.m. Skokie Public Library

Tuesday, February 28

Celia Barker Lottridge discusses *Home Is Beyond the Mountains*

5 p.m. NTS ELL Parent Center

6:30 p.m. Highland School

Wednesday, February 29

Book Discussion: *Children of War*

12:30 p.m. - 1:45 p.m.

Oakton Community College

Skokie Campus, Room P103

Wednesday, March 7

Deborah Ellis will discuss her book *Children of War*

10:30 a.m. Niles North High School

7 p.m. Skokie Public Library

Friday, March 9

Deborah Ellis will discuss her book *Children of War*

10:30 a.m. Niles West High School

1:30 p.m. NTS ELL Parent Center

Thursday, March 15

Book Discussion: *Children of War*

7:30 a.m. Niles West High School

3:30 p.m. Niles North High School

Tuesday, February 21

Book Discussion: *Gilgamesh*

7:30 p.m. Skokie Public Library

Thursday, February 23

Book Discussion: *Gilgamesh*

10 a.m. Skokie Public Library

Wednesday, March 21

Book Discussion: *Gilgamesh*

10 a.m. Skokie Public Library

Thursday, March 22

Book Discussion: *Gilgamesh*

7:30 p.m. Skokie Public Library



Home Is Beyond the Mountains

1. Samira suffers many great losses, from family deaths to the loss of her home. Does Samira grieve? What enables her to continue on? How would you recover from this kind of devastating loss?
2. How will taking on so many adult roles so early in life change Samira's development into an adult?
3. How does Miss Shedd make sure that the children bond with their "families" before the trip back home across the mountains? What makes a family?
4. Why does Miss Shedd ask the children to write rules for the Hamadan Orphanage? Do you think the rules they write are good? What rule would you put on the list?
5. At the end of the book, Samira decides to go back to her village while her brother chooses not to go. How is Samira's refugee experience as a girl different from her brother's? What would you have chosen? Why?
6. Is the ending of the book what you expected? Why or why not?
7. What are your hopes for Samira and the other orphans in the book?
8. Clearly, "home" is a major theme in the book. What does "home" mean to a displaced population and their cultural identity? What does this book teach you about the Assyrian diaspora and the effects of being far from home?





Children of War: Voices of Iraqi Refugees

1. If you only had three words to describe your impression of this work, what would these three words be?
2. What was going through your mind when you were reading about these children suddenly losing their homes and parents and having to relocate to other places?
3. Were there events or scenes in the book that were hard for you to read? Why?
4. What did you learn about the effects of war after reading this book?
5. Have you or someone you know experienced anything similar to what these children are going through?
6. Are there lessons to be learned from these children's stories? What are they?
7. Some of the children in the book speak about the American people in a negative way. What are the reasons for that? What would you say to these children in order to change their view of Americans?
8. Having finished this book, do you feel hope for the children? Why or why not?
9. What is one thing you'll remember about this book?
10. What do you think was the author's motivation for writing this book?
11. Did this book change your views in some way? Explain.
12. Are the issues in the book controversial? In what way?



Gilgamesh

1. Gilgamesh was composed more than 4,000 years ago. Is it still relevant to us today? In what ways?
2. This epic tells the stories of two heroes: Gilgamesh and Enkidu. How do their individual stories compare or contrast with each other?
3. Gilgamesh doesn't achieve immortality, he can't save his friend's life, and he loses the plant that restores youth. Do you think that Gilgamesh is a failure? Why do you think this story has survived through time?
4. Does Gilgamesh change over the course of the story? If so, how? Why is that important?
5. The tablets containing the standard version of Gilgamesh were found in the ruins of an Assyrian king's library. Do you think the poem contains useful lessons for leaders?
6. Gilgamesh includes several responses people have to their own mortality. What are these responses and what are their limitations?
7. There are three worlds in Gilgamesh: the City, the Wild, and the Divine. How are these worlds distinguished and where do they intersect? What are the good and bad points of each? Where do Gilgamesh and Enkidu fit?
8. What do you make of the ending of the poem? Is it at all satisfying?
9. In what ways does Gilgamesh prefigure later literary works such as Homer's epics and stories in the Bible?





All events are open to the general public.

Register for Skokie Public Library events at calendar.skokieliibrary.info, or call (847) 673-3733 (for adult events) or (847) 324-3149 (childrens events).

Event Locations:

- Highland School, 9700 Crawford, Skokie
- National Louis University, 5202 Old Orchard Road, Skokie
- Niles North High School, 9800 Lawler Ave., Skokie
- Niles West High School, 5701 Oakton St., Skokie
- Niles Township Schools ELL Parent Center, 9440 Kenton Ave., Skokie
- Oakton Community College, Des Plaines Campus, 1600 E. Golf Road, Des Plaines
- Oakton Community College, Skokie Campus, 7701 N. Lincoln Ave., Skokie
- Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, 1155 East 58th St., Chicago
- Sanford-Brown College, 4930 Oakton St., Skokie
- Skokie Park District, Oakton Community Center, 4701 Oakton St., Skokie
- Skokie Public Library, 5215 Oakton St., Skokie

Kickoff Celebration

Members of the Assyrian community are pleased to present this celebration of Assyrian culture, including a brief historical summary, art exhibit, Assyrian wedding practices, dancing, and the personal journeys of Assyrian students.

Sunday, January 29, 2012

2:30 p.m. Exhibition of Assyrian Art Opens, networking

3:15 p.m. Cultural Program

Niles West High School

Assyrian Art Traveling Exhibition

A traveling exhibition featuring art, sculpture, maps and cultural artifacts from Assyrian culture. This exhibit will begin January 29 at Niles West, travel to Niles North, and then to the Skokie Public Library. Please contact the locations for exhibit dates: Niles West/North (847) 626-2051 and Skokie Public Library (847) 673-3733.

Presentation: Assyrians, the Indigenous Mesopotamians

The history of the Assyrians as the indigenous people of Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), including their language, culture and contributions to the Mesopotamian and world civilizations. Presenter Edward Odisho is a Professor Emeritus from Northeastern Illinois University.

Wednesday, February 1

7 p.m.

Skokie Public Library, Mary Radmacher Meeting Room



Parent-Child Book Discussion: Home Is Beyond the Mountains

Kids in grades 4-8 along with an adult are invited to a special book discussion of *Home Is Beyond the Mountains* by Celia Barker Lottridge. A story of unimaginable loss and profound courage, 9-year-old Samira loses her family while fleeing her home in the face of war during World War I.

Wednesday, February 1 (Register beginning January 2)

7 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Skokie Public Library, Youth Services Program Room

Craft Studio Featuring Assyrian Craft

Learn to make an Assyrian-inspired craft. For kids in grades 4-8.

Wednesday, February 8

4:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Skokie Public Library, Craft Room

Assyrian Festival

Join Assyrian students and community members for a festival of music, dance, food, and fun. **\$5 entrance fee includes food and entertainment.** Children under 5 are free.

Friday, February 10

6 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Oakton Community College, Skokie Campus, Room P103



Assyrian Day at Niles West

This all-day celebration of the Assyrian culture will include performances by the Assyrian students of Niles West.

Wednesday, February 15

Throughout school day

Niles West High School, Information Resource Center (IRC)

Craft Studio Featuring Assyrian Craft

Learn to make an Assyrian-inspired craft. For kids in grades 4-8.

Wednesday, February 15

4:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Skokie Public Library, Craft Room



Pajama Storytime Featuring Sahra=Moon

Put on your pajamas and join us under the stars as we feature *Sahra=Moon* by the Benyamino brothers, this year's picture book for **Coming Together in Skokie**. For ages 2-7 with parent or caregiver.



Wednesday, February 15

7 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Skokie Public Library (Register starting February 1), Youth Services Program Room

Understanding Gilgamesh

Learn about the meaning, history, and cultural context of the Standard Babylonian Epic of *Gilgamesh* with Christopher Woods, associate professor at the University of Chicago. He will also address the connections between *Gilgamesh* and other works of Mesopotamian literature, its representation in the visual arts, and its legacy.

Thursday, February 16

7 p.m.

Skokie Public Library, Mary Radmacher Meeting Room

The Significance of the Epic of Gilgamesh

Hollace Graff, professor of philosophy/Co-Chair of Humanities and Philosophy at Oakton Community College and Tom Bowen, professor of philosophy at Oakton Community College, will discuss why the discovery of the Epic of *Gilgamesh* changes our understanding of Western culture.

Tuesday, February 21

12:30 p.m. - 1:45 p.m.

Oakton Community College, Des Plaines Campus, Room 1610

Book Discussion - Gilgamesh

Gilgamesh book discussion will be moderated by Library staff and include a representative from the local Assyrian community.

Tuesday, February 21

7:30 p.m.

Skokie Public Library, Book Discussion Room

Assyrian Day at Niles North

This all-day celebration of the Assyrian culture will include performances by the Niles North Assyrian Club.

Wednesday, February 22

Throughout school day

Niles North High School, IRC



Reading Night at Sanford-Brown

A reading night for Sanford-Brown students and their children, discussing *Home Is Beyond the Mountains*.

Wednesday, February 22

7 p.m.

Sanford-Brown College

Pajama Storytime and Craft

Pajama storytime featuring *Sahra=Moon* and an Assyrian craft (parents and children ages 2-7).

Wednesday, February 22

7:30 p.m.

NTS ELL Parent Center

Book Discussion - Gilgamesh

Gilgamesh book discussion will be moderated by Library staff and include a representative from the local Assyrian community

Thursday, February 23

10 a.m.

Skokie Public Library, Book Discussion Room

A Celebration of Assyrian Culture

Celebrate Assyrian culture by participating in an interactive dance performance, sampling Assyrian cuisine, and enjoying children's activities.

Saturday, February 25

10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Skokie Park District, Oakton Community Center

Music of Mesopotamia: Classical Guitar and Setar

Lily Afshar, the first woman to earn a Ph.D. in classical guitar performance in the United States, will perform on guitar and setar and address the historical context of music and instruments throughout Mesopotamia and neighboring regions.

Sunday, February 26

3 p.m. (get free tickets at 2:30 p.m.)

Skokie Public Library, Petty Auditorium





Featured Author: Celia Barker Lottridge

Author Celia Barker Lottridge will discuss her book *Home Is Beyond the Mountains*.



Tuesday, February 28

5 p.m. NTS ELL Parent Center
6:30 p.m. Highland School (This event will also include Assyrian singing, dancing, and food.)

Book Discussion - *Children of War*

Book discussion of *Children of War* by Deborah Ellis.

Wednesday, February 29

12:30 p.m. - 1:45 p.m.

Oakton Community College, Skokie Campus, Room P103

Discussion with Medical Professional

The Assyrian Club students will hear from Dr. Belmina Michael on her journey to the United States and her professional success in the medical field.

Wednesday, February 29

3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Niles West High School, Room TBD



Second Homeland: Film and Panel Discussion

Following the film, which explores the city of Urmi, related topics will be explored by Celia Barker Lottridge, author of *Home Is Beyond the Mountains*, based on the true story of her great-aunt who served as a missionary to orphaned Assyrian children in World War I; and Homer Ashurian, CIO of the Assyrian Universal Alliance Foundation.

Wednesday, February 29

6 p.m.

Skokie Public Library, Petty Auditorium

Assyrians in Chicago History

Homer Ashurian, CIO of the Assyrian Universal Alliance Foundation and Vasili Shoumanov, author of *Assyrians in Chicago*, will speak about Assyrians and their lives in Chicago.

Thursday, March 1

11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Oakton Community College, Skokie Campus, Room P103



Splendors of Assyria

From their sumptuous capitals in northern Iraq, the Assyrians ultimately subjugated two of the cradles of civilization: Mesopotamia and Egypt. Vincent van Exel of the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago will introduce the art, archaeology, and history of the Neo-Assyrian empire, as well as its royal propaganda, religious ideologies, and military prowess.



Thursday, March 1

7 p.m.

Skokie Public Library, Mary Radmacher Meeting Room

Featured Author: Deborah Ellis

Deborah Ellis leads a discussion of her book, *Children of War: Voices of Iraqi Refugees*, and the experiences of young Assyrians who have been displaced.



Wednesday, March 7

10:30 a.m. Niles North High School Auditorium

7 p.m. Skokie Public Library, Mary Radmacher Meeting Room

Friday, March 9

10:30 a.m. Niles West High School Auditorium

1:30 p.m. NTS ELL Parent Center

Saturday, March 10

10 a.m. National Louis University Global Fair

Book Discussion - Children of War

A book discussion of *Children of War* by Deborah Ellis.

Thursday, March 15

7:30 a.m. Niles West High School, IRC

3:30 p.m. Niles North High School, IRC

Book Discussion - Gilgamesh

Book discussion will be moderated by Library staff, including a representative from the local Assyrian community.

Wednesday, March 21

10 a.m.

Skokie Public Library, Book Discussion Room



Book Discussion - Gilgamesh

Book discussion will be moderated by Library staff, including a representative from the local Assyrian community.

Thursday, March 22

7:30 p.m.

Skokie Public Library, Book Discussion Room



Photo Courtesy of the Oriental Institute

Tour the Ancient Wonders of the Oriental Institute

Coming Together in Skokie is providing a tour of the Oriental Institute on February 18, 2012. Bus transportation to and from the museum will be provided. You must sign up in advance for this tour, and only registered participants will be allowed to board the buses, beginning at 9:30 a.m. The buses will leave promptly at 10 a.m. Register with a Library card number at calendar.skokieliibrary.info, or call (847) 673-3733 by February 9 to register. Buses will leave from and return to Skokie Public Library.

The Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago is a research center and museum devoted to the archaeology, languages, and history of civilizations in the ancient Near East. Founded in 1919, the Institute is an internationally recognized center for the study of the civilizations of Assyria, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Nubia, Anatolia, Persia and ancient Israel. The Oriental Institute's world-class museum displays art and artifacts from Oriental Institute excavations across the Near East, as well as rotating exhibits.



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DEBORAH ELLIS

Wednesday, March 7

10:30 a.m. Niles North High School Auditorium
7 p.m. Skokie Public Library

Friday, March 9

10:30 a.m. Niles West High School Auditorium
1:30 p.m. Niles Township Schools ELL Parent Center

Saturday, March 10

10 a.m. National Louis University

CELIA BARKER LOTTRIDGE



Tuesday, February 28

5 p.m. Niles Township Schools ELL Parent Center
6:30 p.m. Highland School

Wednesday, February 29

6 p.m. Skokie Public Library, Petty Auditorium





KHA B'NEESAN: April 1 is the Assyrian New Year. The festival lasted 12 days in which the king's past year's performance was evaluated, and he strengthened his ties to the people. The Assyrian New Year is believed to have started after the great flood that occurred 4,750 years before Christ, making the current year 6761.

BA'OOTA D'NINVAE: Literally "request, prayer, rogation ...of the Ninevites". This is the fast of the people of Nineveh following Jonah's (Yonan's) visit when the entire city repented. We observe this day because it shows the greatness of our ancestors, who turned to God after one sermon by Jonah.

KALOO SULAQA: "Kaloo" means bride; "Sulaqa" means ascension. After Jesus ascended to heaven, he left the Church on earth. The Church is considered the bride. Little girls dressed as brides go from house to house. After ascension, Jesus instructed His apostles to go and preach the Word. This going from house to house apparently symbolizes the Church (brides) doing that.

SOMIKKA: The word is derived from "sowma" (a fast or abstinence from food). Traditionally, children go from house to house asking for goodies just the way Halloween is practiced in the U.S. However, Somikka is a religious ceremony at the beginning of Lent, before Easter, and was intended to collect money to help poor families afford the expenses incurred for Easter.

NOOSARDIL: "Water sprinkled to the god". Commonly pronounced "Musardi", it occurs on the seventh Sunday after Pentecost to celebrate the beginning of summer. On this day, Christians (and sometimes their non-Christian neighbors), pour water on each other to denote baptism.

YOMA D'SAHDE (Assyrian Martyr Day): Honors the sacrifice of thousands of innocent Assyrians who were tortured and murdered between August 5 through 12, 1933 in Northern Iraq, particularly in Simeil.

SHARA: Festivals celebrating the birthday of a Saint under whose name churches are built in the Assyrian inhabited areas of the Middle East. Examples are Mar Giwargis (Saint Georges), Mar Awdishoo (Saint Awdishoo), and Mart Maryam (Saint Mary). Several sheep would be sacrificed, their meat cooked in large pots and served to feed the participants.

DOOKHRANA: Remembrance. Celebration of a saint's death in a church named for him. People gather in this church and make special food called mirtookha, girdo, and harrisa.



<i>Dakhee wit?</i>	How are you?
<i>Baseema, Spai eewin.</i>	Thank you. I am well.
<i>Moodi le shimmukh?</i>	What is your name?
<i>Shimme _____ ee.</i>	My name is _____.
<i>Qaidamtookh brikhta.</i>	Good morning.
<i>Poosh b'shaina.</i>	Goodbye.
<i>Aika ke khayyit?</i>	Where do you live?
<i>Ke khayyin go Skokie.</i>	I live in Skokie.

<i>Baaba</i>	Father	<i>Yimma</i>	Mother
<i>Akhoona</i>	Brother	<i>Khaata</i>	Sister
<i>Sawoona</i>	Grandfather	<i>Nanoonta</i>	Grandmother
<i>Navigga</i>	Grandson	<i>Navigta</i>	Granddaughter
<i>Mamoona</i>	Uncle (paternal)	<i>Umta</i>	Aunt (paternal)
<i>Khaluwa</i>	Uncle (maternal)	<i>Khalta</i>	Aunt (maternal)
<i>Gawra or Bar Zawga</i>	Husband	<i>Bakhta or Bat Zawga</i>	Wife
<i>Malpana or Raabi</i>	Teacher	<i>Madrashta</i>	School
<i>Baita</i>	House	<i>Bet Kreehe</i>	Hospital

Here is a simple way to make an Assyrian dish that uses few ingredients and is perfect for cold weather.

Kipteh (Rice Meatballs in a thick tomato basil soup)

Serves 4. Recipe provided by Olivia Thomas

Rice Meatballs:

1 lb. ground beef	1/4 tsp. each, salt and black pepper
1/4 cup long grain rice	1/2 tsp. dried basil

Tomato Basil Soup:

4 cups water	1/4 cup diced green pepper
1/4 cup finely chopped onion	1/4 cup diced celery
1/2 tsp. dried basil	1/2 tsp. paprika
1/4 tsp. salt	1/4 tsp. black pepper
2 medium tomatoes, chopped (or 16 oz. can of diced tomatoes)	

Method:

1. Place all soup ingredients together in a medium or large pot and bring to a boil.
2. Mix rice meatball ingredients together in a bowl.
3. Form golf ball size rice meatballs (one rice meatball is always made in the shape of a cross).
4. Drop meatballs in the soup and bring all to a boil.
5. Lower the temperature. Cover the pot and simmer for 45 minutes to 1 hour.



Breakfast

Speera

A flat, thick omelet made with fresh farm eggs, milk and a variety of fresh herbs (parsley, dill, chive, basil, thyme). Served with fresh baked *lawasha* or *gardaia*, fresh baked round about a 1/2" thick of whole wheat bread, or soft-ened *lawasha*, a flat sheet of crisp whole wheat bread that is stored and/or consumed as a cracker in dry form, or soft-ened, by rehydrating the bread with a sprinkling of water.

Guopta Tomerta

Literally means "buried cheese." It is made using rich, creamy, non-homogenized sheep milk, stored in a large pottery with a long neck which is sealed, covered and buried in a cool area of the garden. It develops a sharp, rich flavor. Cheese with or without jam is rolled inside of softened *lawasha* and enjoyed with a cup of black or white (with milk) strong tea. This rolled lawasha is called *durmak*.

Lunch

Daweh

A yoghurt drink.

Dolmeh

Stuffed grape or cabbage leaves filled with meat, rice and vegetables.

Gurgur

This dish uses *burghul*, converted cracked whole wheat, about the size of long grain rice, cooked with fresh or dry cubes of lamb, chicken, or partridge. A platter with a variety of fresh herbs is served along with *lawasha*, bread.

Dinner

Booshala

A thick, cooked yoghurt soup, served hot or cold, cooked with *silka*, Swiss chard, *satra*, mountain thyme/oregano, *shibbit*, dill, onion, dried hot pepper, gurgur, whole wheat or *rizza et matwateh*, village/mountain rice. Served with bread, *lakhma/gardaia* or *lawasha*.

Snacks/Dessert

Chai

Samovar-brewed black tea with sugar served in small glasses. Served with *gaozeh and kishmeesheh*, dried fruits and nuts

Kadeh

Flat pastry made with whole wheat and butter, filled with a flour and butter roux, sweetened with *naipokhta*, raisin syrup.





King Ashurbanipal	Son of King Esarhaddon, the last great king of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (668 B.C.- 627 B.C.). He established the first systematically organized library in the ancient Middle East, the Library Ashurbanipal, which survives in part today at Nineveh.
Queen Semiramis	Assyrian queen of Shamshi-Adad V (ruled 824 B.C.- 811 B.C.), King of Assyria and ruler of the Assyrian Empire. Legends say she built the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.
Hormuzd Rassam	(1826-1910) A native Assyrian Assyriologist, British diplomat and traveller who made important discoveries, including the clay tablets that contained the epic of <i>Gilgamesh</i> , the world's oldest known literature.
Mar Shimun Benyamin	(1887-1918) The Catholic Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, he was the spiritual and political leader of the Assyrians in the 20th century.
Joel Warda	Editor and publisher of the <i>Assyrian American Courier</i> , president of the Assyrian National Association and author of many articles and books.
Freydun Atouraya	(1891-1926) An Assyrian physician, poet, journalist. Born in Urmia, Iran, he founded the Assyrian Socialist Party, which was the first Assyrian political party.
Joseph Durna	(1889-1958) An Assyrian activist, lawyer and journalist. President of the Assyrian American National Association for 19 years and editor of the Assyrian <i>STAR</i> .
Homer Ashurian	Born in Urmia, Iran. Received his M.A. in Archaeology, majoring in Assyriology. High school principal in Tehran. Elected to Iranian Parliament in 1975. He was curator of Cultural Museum of Tehran. He edited <i>Kirkha</i> ("The Scroll") and <i>Shvila</i> ("The Way") of The Assyrian Youth Cultural Society. Currently CEO of the Assyrian Universal Alliance Foundation.
Anna Eshoo	U.S. Representative (D), California 14th congressional district since 1993.
John Nimrod	(1922-2009) An Assyrian, minority rights activist and Illinois State Senator(R).
Andre Agassi	Retired professional tennis player and former number one player in the world. He is considered by critics and players as one of the greatest tennis players of all time.



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Cover artwork: Pastor Younan Shiba is an Assyrian artist, sculptor and graphic designer from Iraq. He and his family live in Niles.

About the artwork: (Front Cover) Gilgamesh grasping a lion, which to some represents mastering untamed nature. (Back Cover) Lamassu, the head of a human, body and ears of a bull, and the wings of a bird.

