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# English Literature

ملخصات تخصص الأدب الإنجليزي

**E121 MTA**

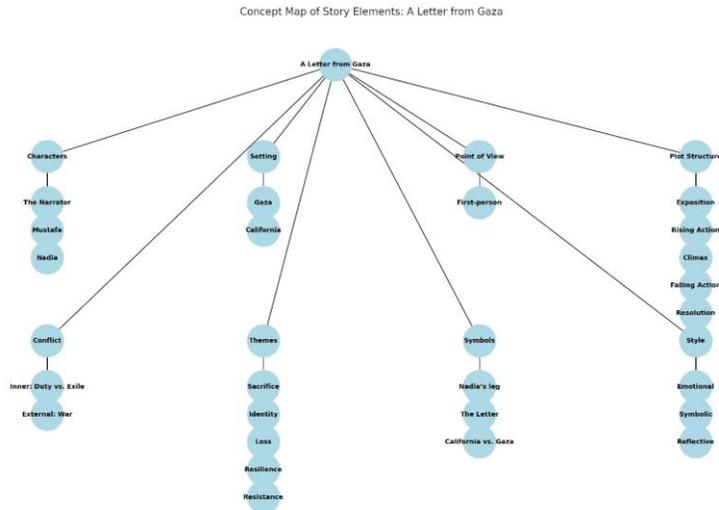


ملخصات البروفيسور



## E121: A LETTER FROM GAZA - MTA

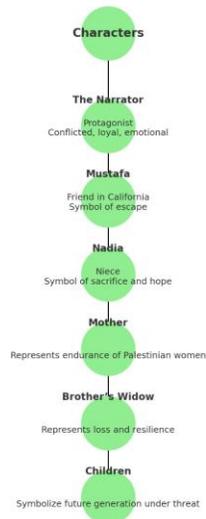
### ANALYSIS:



#### 1. Characters:

- **The Narrator:** A conflicted Palestinian man who writes to his friend Mustafa from Gaza. He represents the emotional struggle between personal dreams and national duty.
- **Mustafa:** The narrator's friend living in California; symbolizes escape and disconnect from the homeland.
- **Nadia:** The narrator's 13-year-old niece who loses her leg in a bombing; symbolizes sacrifice, innocence, and the price of resistance.

Character Map - A Letter from Gaza



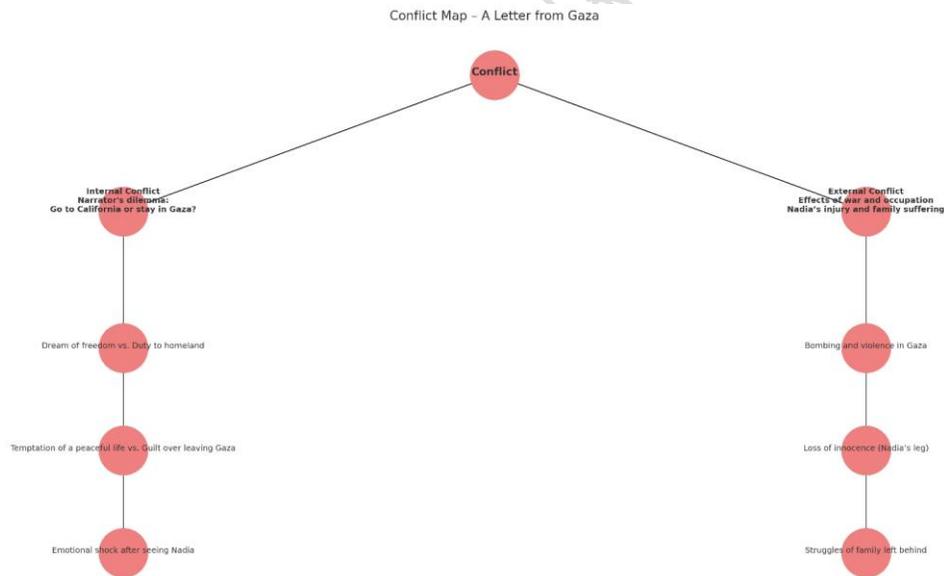
**2. Setting:** the story is set primarily in Gaza, amidst war and destruction. “Everything in the amputated town reminded me of failed pictures painted in gray.” The contrast between Gaza and the promised land of California symbolizes the narrator’s emotional conflict between home and exile, struggle and comfort.

**3. Point of View:** the story is told in the first-person point of view, which gives the narrative a deeply personal tone. The narrator’s thoughts and feelings are central, allowing readers to experience his inner conflict. It is allowing readers to see the narrator’s emotional and moral struggle, “There is a quarter of an hour left before the plane takes off... and I have decided not to leave.”

**4. Theme:** the central message or insight revealed through a literary work. **One main theme is sacrifice and belonging. The narrator ultimately sacrifices his dream to support his homeland.** “So I am not coming to you, Mustafa... Come back, my friend.”

- Sacrifice and Resistance: Nadia’s injury inspires the narrator to reject exile.
- Identity and Belonging: The narrator feels torn between Gaza and California but chooses his homeland.
- Hope through Suffering: Despite loss, the people, especially Nadia, show resilience.

**5. Conflict:** a struggle between opposing forces, either internal (within a character) or external (between characters or forces). The narrator experiences internal conflict as he struggles between going to California and staying in Gaza, “I hated Gaza and its inhabitants... but I can't leave.” The main conflict is internal, where the narrator struggles between his desire to leave Gaza and pursue a better life in California, and his emotional and moral obligation to stay with his family and people in Gaza. This conflict is heightened by the physical and emotional suffering caused by the war. "I hated Gaza and its inhabitants... but I can't leave, not after seeing Nadia."

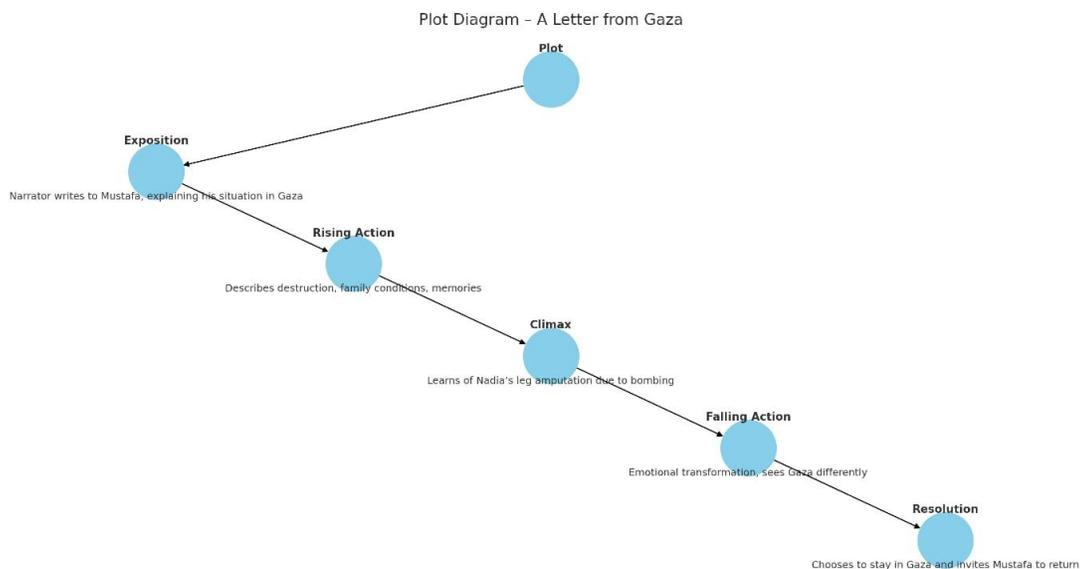


**6. Plot:** the sequence of events in a story, typically including exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. It follows the narrator as he reflects on his recent visit to Gaza and reconsiders his decision to emigrate. Through his emotional experiences, especially seeing the suffering of his niece Nadia, he chooses to stay in Gaza and urges his friend Mustafa to return.

- **Exposition:** the story begins with the narrator writing a letter to his friend Mustafa, who lives in California. The narrator writes to Mustafa explaining he will not join him in California. He explains the circumstances in Gaza and sets the emotional tone of the story, hinting at a deep internal conflict. *"There's a quarter of an hour left before the plane takes off, and I have decided not to leave."*
- **Inciting Incident:** the inciting incident occurs when the narrator visits the hospital and discovers that his 13-year-old niece Nadia has lost her leg due to a bombing. "I stood there, unable to say a word, as she smiled up at me with only one leg beneath her blanket."



- **Rising Action:** he describes his return to Gaza and the destruction he sees. The narrator begins to reflect on his surroundings, his mother’s hardships, his brother’s widow, and the lives of his people in Gaza. These reflections intensify his emotional struggle. *"Everything in the amputated town reminded me of failed pictures painted in gray..."*
- **Climax:** the emotional climax is reached when the narrator sees Nadia’s amputation. He learns that Nadia, his niece, has lost her leg. This becomes the turning point in his decision-making. *"She lost her leg... but she smiled and said, 'I will dance again.'"*
- **Falling Action:** the narrator processes the depth of what he has witnessed. He reflects on her strength and his guilt. His view of Gaza shifts from resentment to deep empathy and connection.
- **Resolution:** the narrator resolves not to leave Gaza. He decides to stay in Gaza and calls Mustafa to return. Instead, he embraces his role in the Palestinian struggle and asks Mustafa to come back. *"So I am not coming to you, Mustafa... Come back, my friend. Let us build the future together here."*



**7. Style:** Kanafani’s style is emotional, symbolic, and reflective. He uses simple but powerful language to express complex ideas like guilt, duty, and resistance. The letter format makes the story personal and intimate.

## DEFINITIONS:

1. **Symbolism:** the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities by giving them meanings different from their literal sense. Nadia’s amputated leg symbolizes the deep wound of Gaza and the sacrifice of innocent children. *"She lay there smiling, her leg gone beneath the blanket."*
2. **Tone:** the author’s attitude toward the subject or audience. The tone is somber and emotional, filled with loss, guilt, and resolve. *"I hated Gaza... Yet I stayed."*
3. **Imagery:** descriptive language that appeals to the senses. *"The beach, barbed wire, the gray pictures painted by a sick man..."* This creates a vivid picture of Gaza’s devastation.
4. **Flashback:** a literary device where the writer presents past events to provide background. The narrator recalls his farewell with Mustafa at Cairo Airport. *"At that moment everything was rotating in time with the ear-splitting motor..."*
5. **Characterization:** the process by which the writer reveals the personality of a character. Nadia is characterized as brave and resilient despite her injury. *"She said to me: 'I will dance again with one leg.'"*



- Irony:** a contrast between expectation and reality. The irony lies in the narrator once dreaming of leaving Gaza but ending up rejecting the idea after witnessing its pain.
- Mood:** the atmosphere or emotional condition created by the piece. The mood is reflective and sorrowful, drawing readers into the narrator's emotional turmoil.

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## SHORT ANSWER:

**Q: The writer of this story uses the form of the personal letter to "frame" his story. Do you think this is a personal story? In answering this question, think about the title of the story?**

*A Letter from Gaza* is a personal story, both in form and in emotional depth. Ghassan Kanafani uses the structure of a personal letter to create a direct and intimate connection between the narrator and his friend Mustafa, which allows the reader to witness the narrator's emotional conflict firsthand. The title itself, "*A Letter from Gaza*," suggests not just a private communication, but also a symbolic voice representing the suffering, loss, and resilience of the people in Gaza. Although the narrator's name is never mentioned, the tone and first-person perspective give the impression that this is more than just a fictional account, it feels like a testimony of lived experience, shaped by the harsh realities of war and occupation. Through vivid descriptions, such as the moment he sees his niece Nadia in the hospital "She lay there smiling, her leg gone beneath the blanket..." — the story becomes deeply personal and emotionally charged. The personal letter form makes the story universal and collective, as though Gaza itself is writing to the outside world through the narrator's voice.

**Q: The treatment of children in 'A Letter From Gaza', reveals that the world is not a safe place for them to live in. It is a world that cares nothing for their fragility and innocence. Discuss with reference to the character of Nadia?**

In *A Letter from Gaza*, the character of Nadia, the narrator's 13-year-old niece, powerfully illustrates how innocent children are tragically affected by war. Her amputation, losing a leg in a bombing, symbolizes the brutal violence inflicted on the most vulnerable members of society. The narrator's shock upon seeing her in the hospital reflects how deeply this violence shatters not only physical bodies but also the emotional world of families. "She said to me: 'Shall I dance with this leg, uncle?' And she laughed." This line shows Nadia's courage and resilience, but it also underscores the cruel irony of her condition, a child who once danced now struggles to walk, her innocence violated by war. Her suffering exposes the harsh truth: the world she lives in does not protect children but instead forces them to endure pain and sacrifice. Nadia becomes a symbol of both innocence and resistance, showing that while children are the first victims of conflict, they also carry the silent strength of a community that refuses to give up.

**Q: Discuss the use of 'symbolism' in 'A Letter from Gaza'?**

Ghassan Kanafani uses symbolism in *A Letter from Gaza* to deepen the emotional and political meaning of the story. One of the most powerful symbols is Nadia's amputated leg, which represents the innocent victims of war and the physical and emotional cost of occupation. Her injury is not just a personal tragedy but a symbol of Gaza's wounded identity. "She said to me: 'Shall I dance with this leg, uncle?' And she laughed." This moment symbolizes both loss and resilience, as Nadia's desire to dance reflects hope despite devastation. Another important symbol is the letter itself. It represents a bridge between two worlds, the comfort of exile in California and the harsh reality of life in Gaza. It also reflects the narrator's inner conflict, acting as a vehicle for expressing both guilt and belonging. The beach and barbed wire are also symbolic: they contrast freedom with confinement, showing that even natural beauty is surrounded by political and physical barriers. Through these symbols, Kanafani communicates themes of sacrifice, identity, and resistance, making the personal story a collective cry for justice.



**Q: Discuss the role of the plot in Ghassan Kanafani's *A Letter from Gaza*. Kanafani is known for his use of the flashback technique. Does it contribute anything to the plot?**

The plot of *A Letter from Gaza* is structured as a personal reflection, framed through a letter to the narrator's friend Mustafa. It follows a non-linear structure, using flashbacks to gradually reveal the narrator's emotional journey and the events that led to his decision to stay in Gaza. Kanafani's use of flashback is essential in developing the plot. For example, the memory of his parting with Mustafa at Cairo Airport. "At that moment everything was rotating in time with the ear-splitting motor, and you were in front of me...", allows readers to understand the depth of their friendship and the narrator's original intention to emigrate. By contrasting these past moments with the present reality of destruction, particularly the scene where he sees Nadia's amputated leg, Kanafani shows the shift in the narrator's perspective, building toward the climax and resolution. Thus, the flashback technique enriches the plot, adds emotional depth, and emphasizes the narrator's moral transformation, making his final decision, to remain in Gaza, not only believable but meaningful.

**Q: Familial and social pressure can place high demands on the individual. Discuss with reference to *A Letter from Gaza*.**

In *A Letter from Gaza*, familial and social pressure profoundly shapes the narrator's emotional and moral conflict. He is torn between fulfilling a personal dream of studying in California and staying in Gaza with his family during a time of hardship. The pressure is evident in his deep sense of responsibility toward his loved ones, especially after witnessing his niece Nadia's suffering, "She said to me: 'Shall I dance with this leg, uncle?' And she laughed." This moment becomes a turning point, as the emotional weight of family loyalty and the symbolic pain of his homeland outweigh his personal ambitions. The narrator also reflects on the suffering of his mother and his brother's widow and children, realizing that leaving would feel like betrayal. Socially, the story implies that Gaza needs its people to stay, fight, and support each other. These expectations, both familial and communal, influence the narrator's ultimate decision to remain, revealing how such pressures can lead individuals to sacrifice personal freedom for collective responsibility.

**Q: How does the narrator in Ghassan Kanafani's *A Letter from Gaza* express his relationship with his homeland, Gaza? Support your answer with incidents from the story.**

The narrator in *A Letter from Gaza* expresses a complex, emotional, and evolving relationship with his homeland. At first, he admits his hatred for Gaza, calling it an "amputated town" filled with grey and failure, "I hated Gaza and its inhabitants. Everything in the amputated town reminded me of failed pictures painted in gray by a sick man." However, this feeling shifts after witnessing the suffering of his niece, Nadia, who lost her leg in a bombing. Her bravery and innocence awaken a sense of belonging and moral duty in the narrator. Her simple, powerful words, "Shall I dance with this leg, uncle?", cause him to reconsider his decision to leave Gaza. Ultimately, he rejects his dream of a better life abroad and chooses to remain in Gaza. His letter concludes with a plea to his friend, "Come back, my friend." This transformation reveals a deepening emotional and national connection to Gaza, shaped by pain, sacrifice, and love.

**Q: Ghassan Kanafani is known for his use of the 'Flashback Technique'. Where exactly do we see a 'Flashback' in this story? Does it contribute anything to the plot?**

Ghassan Kanafani effectively uses the flashback technique in *A Letter from Gaza* to deepen the emotional impact and drive the plot. One key flashback occurs when the narrator recalls his farewell to Mustafa at Cairo airport, as he prepared to travel to Sacramento, "At that moment everything was rotating in time with the ear-splitting motor, and you were in front of me, your round face silent." This flashback reveals the strength of their bond and the narrator's original intention to leave Gaza. It contrasts sharply with his present experience of destruction, especially after witnessing Nadia's injury, which becomes a turning point. The flashback enriches the plot by providing emotional context for the narrator's decision. Emphasizing the contrast between past dreams and present reality. Highlighting the narrator's internal transformation, as he chooses to stay in Gaza rather than escape it. Thus, the flashback is not only a narrative tool but a crucial part of the character's moral journey.



**Q: How does Kanafani present the tension between personal dreams and harsh realities in *A Letter from Gaza*? How does this tension affect the narrator's sense of identity and belonging? Use specific scenes from the story to illustrate your argument?**

Kanafani presents the tension between personal dreams and harsh realities through the narrator's internal struggle. Initially, the narrator dreams of leaving Gaza to study in California, seeking a peaceful, promising future. This is symbolized in his plan to join his friend Mustafa in "the green dreamland of California." However, upon returning to Gaza and witnessing the destruction caused by war—particularly Nadia's amputation—his perspective drastically changes. "She said to me: 'Shall I dance with this leg, uncle?' And she laughed." This moment symbolizes the reality of suffering and loss, contrasting sharply with the narrator's previous desire to escape. The incident forces him to confront the pain of his people and leads to a moral awakening, shifting his sense of identity from an individual seeking opportunity abroad to someone deeply rooted in his homeland's collective struggle. By the end of the letter, he writes, "Forgive me, Mustafa... I have decided to stay." This decision reveals that the tension between his personal dreams and the harsh realities of Gaza reshapes his identity. He no longer sees himself as someone fleeing hardship, but as someone who belongs among his people, committed to enduring and resisting alongside them.

للحصول على الملخصات الحصرية مع الشرح  
عن طريق المعهد 66837797



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