

**NEH Summer Institute for Teachers
The Arab World and the West:
A History of Cultural Encounters
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Changing American Teens Images of the Arab World

By Lori Tritz

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INTRODUCTION

These lesson plans are intended for use at the ninth and tenth grade level. Rather than teach one concentrated unit about the Arab World, I decided to spend approximately twenty weeks with ongoing curriculum. I plan to implement these lessons twice weekly in the form of mini-lessons lasting 15-20 minutes each.

The lessons I will be outlining include: journals, cultural presentations, current events, poetry recitation, topical discussions, debates, videos, and guest speakers.

By exposing students to accurate information about the Middle East they will:

- Learn about life in the Arab World
- Develop an understanding and appreciation for Arab culture
- Learn to discern bias in the media
- Appreciate Arabic, Turkish, and Persian literature and poetry
- Recite Arabic poetry and folktales
- Learn and understand their own cultural backgrounds
- Practice discussion and debate techniques
- Listen to music from the Middle East
- Taste foods from the Arab World

Some of the materials I plan to use:

Books: Selections from *Silent no more* by Paul Findley
Selections from *The Poetry of Arab Women* Ed. Nathalie Handal
Selections from *The Glance Songs of the Soul Meeting, Delicious Laughter* and *Say I Am You* by Jelaluddin Rumi
A Treasury of Turkish Folktales for Children retold by Barbara K. Walker

CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS

- Students:** Ninth grade (1/3 special needs population)
- Context:** English class with humanities emphasis
- Time:** Each student will give a 4-5 minute oral presentation
- Rationale:** By encouraging students to explore their own unique cultural heritage and background they will learn to develop an interest and appreciation for cultures other than their own.
- Procedure:** Teacher will model a successful cultural presentation to the class
Important facts to include:

- Place of birth
- How many generations of your family were born in America?
- From where do your ancestors originate?
- What special customs does your family practice?
- What special foods does your family prepare for holidays or special occasions?
- Languages spoken at home
- What makes your family unique?
- Rituals

Students should interview as many relatives as possible, taking notes during the process. Visuals must be used during presentations such as photos, toys, or clothing. If possible prepare and share a small sample of a traditional food to share with students. Playing quiet background music during presentations is encouraged.

- Materials:** World map, CD player
- Evaluation:** Students will be assessed by: organization, timing, voice inflection, visual aides

GUIDED JOURNAL TOPICS

- Students:** Ninth and tenth grade
- Subject:** English with a humanities emphasis
- Time:** Once or twice a week for six weeks
Each lesson is 15-20 minutes in length
- Rationale:** To introduce humanitarian attitudes, expose students to viewpoints other than their own, encourage discussion about global issues particularly the United States involvement in the Middle East.
Discuss inequality, racial, gender and religious bias in America and what students can do to combat these
- Procedure:**
1. Write journal topic on the chalkboard or on overhead transparency and display photographs of people from the Middle East
 2. Read the quote to students without any explanation and play various selections of global music
 3. After copying the quotation students will write a four to six sentence response to the quote in their journals
 4. Class discussion about the topic and the author of the quote
 5. Wrap up by finding relevancy of the quote in today's world by citing several examples
- Materials:** Composition notebooks, chalkboard or overhead projector
- Evaluation:** Students work will be graded according to content, maturity, spelling, grammar and length

FAMOUS QUOTATIONS

“The world is too dangerous to live in-not because of the people who do evil, but because of the people who sit and let it happen.”

-Albert Einstein

“There was no particular day on which I said, From henceforth, I will devote myself to the liberation of my people; instead I simply found myself doing so, and could not do otherwise.”

-Nelson Mandela

“Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against an injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope.”

-Robert F. Kennedy

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committee citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

-Margaret Mead

“Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

-James Baldwin

“Let us not forget, after all, that there is always a moment when a moral choice is made.”

-Elie Wiesel

“In seeking wisdom, the first step is silence, the second listening, the third remembering, the fourth practicing, the fifth teaching others.”

-Ibn Gabirol

“Carpe Diem” (seize the day)

-Gandhi

“If you judge people, you have no time to love them.”

-Mother Teresa

“A superior man is modest in his speech, but exceeds in his actions.”

-Confucius

“You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.”

-Kahlil Gibran

“I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.”

-Albert Einstein

“He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetuate it.”

-Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

CURRENT EVENTS

- Students:** Tenth grade
- Context:** English class with humanities emphasis
- Time:** Twice a month for one semester
Each lesson 55-75 min.
- Rationale:** To emphasize the importance of being informed on global issues and learn to discern bias in the media.
- Procedure:** This assignment can be done individually or in small groups. Students will read a variety of news articles chosen in advance by the teacher. At least two different sources will be used; preferably, one will be from a conservative viewpoint and the other a liberal viewpoint.
- * Read a minimum of three relevant news articles
 - * Half the class will read from a conservative source, and the other half will read from a liberal source
 - * Take brief notes on each article
 - * Divide class into four groups
 - * Each group will discuss the articles read
 - * Entire class will discuss and debate the articles read
 - * Each student will write their opinions about what source they believe to be more factual
- Variation:** View or listen to a variety of news broadcasts instead of reading news articles
- Materials:** New York Times, The Washington Post, Time, PBS, NPR, Local newspapers, National Geographic, etc.
- Evaluation:** Students will be assessed by their participation in discussion groups, notes and written opinions.

POETRY

Students: Ninth and Tenth Grade

Context: English

Time: Three class periods
Part of a three-week poetry unit

Rationale: Introduce students to Middle Eastern poetry
Learn different poetic forms such as: the qasida, the ghazel, the qitah, the masnavi and the roba 'i.
Appreciate the differences between Arabic, American, African and European poets

Procedure:

- * Each student will have an Arabic poetry packet compiled by the teacher
- * Read poetry aloud
- * Analyze and interpret two poems with the entire class
- * Students will read silently any poems they choose from their packets
- * Individually students will analyze and interpret two poems
- * Students will choose two poems to memorize and recite
- * Each student will create an artistic visual to accompany his or her poem
- * Students will recite poems and display artistic creations
- * After the recitations the class will listen to Middle Eastern music and eat tabbouleh and pita bread

Materials: A variety of Arabic poems, construction paper, markers, colored pencils, glue, scissors, and magazines

Evaluation: Students will be graded on the quality of their recitations and visual component

Sources: www.library.cornell.edu/colldev/mideast/islamlit.htm
www.khamush.com/poems.html

Books: *Women of the Fertile Crescent: Modern Poetry by Arab Woman*
Kamal Boullata, editor (Washington DC: Three Continents Press)
Say I Am You and *The Glance* by Jelaluddin Rumi translated by Coleman Barks
In the Beginning Was the Female Sa'ad al-Sabah translated by Dr. 'Abdul-Wahid Lu'lu'ah

Music: The Oud by H. Aram Gulezyan, Instrumental music Arabian
Yalla (various artists) Label: Mango, released 1990 Egyptian, Bedouin and Nubian rhythms