



CLAUDE PEPPER LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

LESSON PLAN - UNDERSTANDING ISLAM

Purpose/Rationale: As Islam and the Middle East are large players in daily international news stories, it is important for students to understand the major underpinnings of Islam and the various misconceptions that many have about this religion. In order for students to begin to see possible pathways for understanding and international dialogue, they must first have the facts.

Objectives:

- Students will realize that Islam is a religion practiced by many people in many different countries.
- Students will understand that not all Muslims (and in fact a very small percentage of them) ascribe to the radical practices of Islamic terrorists.
- Students will understand the basic tenets of Islam in terms of how it influences daily life
- Students will get a brief overview of several different Islamic countries in order to show them similarities and differences

Day One: KWL

Activity One:

Divide students into groups of four. Ask students to brainstorm about Islam. What do they know? What do they want to know? What create a KWL chart about Islam. KWL charts ask students to cover what they know, what they want to know, and what they have learned when the activity is finished.

- Each group will receive a large piece of newsprint or poster board to make their chart.
- They should start brainstorming and taking notes on notebook paper before they put anything on the newsprint
- When the groups have finished filling out what they know, their next task will be to research what they still want to learn!

***Teachers: Be sure to caution your students about what they write on their KWL charts. What they “know” about Muslims and Islamic culture should only include facts, not assumptions.

Day Two: Research

Activity One:

Students will need computers for this portion of the lesson – arrange time to use the media center, computer lab, or classroom computers.

- In their groups from the previous day, students will begin to research what they still want to know about Islam.
- Teachers should make sure that the groups are searching for varied information – ideally, each group will bring something new to the table.
- As students learn new information about Islam, they will begin to fill out their charts. Information from each new source should be written in a different color pen so that students can cite their information properly.

Here are some sites for students to look at:

- <http://www.aail.info/mga/teachings/physical.htm>
- <http://www.inter-islam.org/faith/Part1a.html>
- <http://www.islamic.org.uk/I4WM/wherethe.htm>
- http://islamicity.com/mosque/Intro_Islam.htm

They should feel free to visit other sites, but they should ask the instructor if the site is appropriate or not.

Day Three: Presentations and Discussion

Activity One:

Groups will come to the front of the room and share what they learned in their research. The instructor should be prepared to answer questions and direct students back to research for unanswered questions and lingering ideas.

Activity Two:

Teacher will conduct a class discussion based on what the student groups learned.

Some questions to lead discussions might include:

- What seems to stay the same from one Islamic country to the next?
- What is different?
- Were there any total misconceptions that many of us held?
- Are there any Islamic students in the class who would like to share their own experiences with their religion and culture?
- What is jihad?

Some important points for students to understand:

- Muslims believe that Islam is a complete way of life. Therefore, there is no separation of the religion from politics and economics.
- The economy of an Islamic state is a free market, as it is in the Judeo-Christian world. A key difference, however, is that Islam does not allow for interest payments to individual investors. Interest is considered a form of gambling under Islamic law. The government assumes the role of ensuring that wealth is distributed fairly.
- Islam believes that war as self-defense is justified in removing oppression. Oppression is defined as the denial of the right to life and/or property and the right to follow Islam freely. **The term "jihad" means striving for justice and can be accomplished in many ways: through writing, making a pilgrimage, or by fighting.**
- Islam allows men to be married to as many as four women at once, as long as a man treats all his wives well. Not all Muslims practice polygamy.

Day Four: Other Religions

Activity One: Class Discussion

As a class, the students will discuss what they know about other religions and how they view the issues touched upon in the discussion on Islam.

Activity Two:

Next, they will individually research other world religions to fill in the gaps in their knowledge. Some sites to visit:

Judeo-Christian Traditions:

http://www.acton.org/publicat/m_and_m/1998_Oct/novak.html
<http://www.kusala.org/buddhisctatholic/justice.html>
<http://www.georgetown.edu/centers/woodstock/wbc/wbc-r62.htm>

Buddhism and Hinduism:

<http://xenob2.tripod.com/alternate.htm>
<http://www.friendsofindia.net/home/hindu.html>
<http://www.kusala.org/buddhisctatholic/justice.html>
<http://www.dalailama.com/html/training.html>
<http://www.top-religion.com/9016-Dalai%20Lama/teachings.htm>

Homework: For homework, ask students to write a 200 word journal on the similarities and differences between these different religions. Ask them to explore the question of how people from different backgrounds and traditions ought to communicate and try to “bridge gaps” in understanding.

Day Five: Wrapping It Up

Activity One: Class Discussion

Students will discuss what they have learned about different religions in a round-table discussion called a Socratic Seminar. Students must begin new topics by posing questions to the group. This discussion will last all period and will be moderated by the instructor.