Unit 1: Introduction to the Arab World

Lesson 1: What is the Arab World?

About this Lesson:

The Arab world is a diverse geographical and cultural region spanning two continents, yet is united by a shared historical, cultural, and linguistic fabric. In order for students to critically study and discuss the Arab world, it is important to identify the region, define relevant terms, and review its basic history and geography. In doing so, this introductory lesson brings forth the question of unity and diversity in the region, a recurring theme in this curriculum.

This lesson is designed for students to consider elements of unity and diversity in the region. Encourage students to ask questions and think critically about the similarities and differences they see in the sources provided.

In this lesson, students will:

- read The Arab Table, by May Bsisi.
- listen to a mix of music from the Arab world.
- examine maps of the region.
- read “Middle East or Middle World”, by Tamim Ansary, published in The Globalist, June 17, 2009.

Key Terms

- Arab world: A region of 22 Arabic-speaking countries whose populations are ethnically Arab. See map here.
- Middle East: A geographical region that includes countries in West Asia and Egypt. See map here.
- Levant: A geographical region comprised of Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestinian Territories, and Syria. See map here.
Enduring Understandings
- The Arab world is defined by shared historical, geographical, religious and linguistic factors.
- The Arab world is a large and diverse region containing religious, political, geographic, ethnic, and linguistic differences.

Curriculum Framing Questions
- What is the Arab world and what defines it (geography, language, culture etc)?
- Who is a part of the Arab world?
- What insights can art and literature from the Arab World offer about Arab culture(s)?

Learning Objectives
By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:
- identify patterns of unity and diversity in the geography and culture of the Arab world.
- analyze maps of distinct regions that share area with the Arab world.
- reflect on identity of the Arab world.

Assessment & Evaluation of Student Learning
Written response to “The Middle East or Middle World,” by Tamim Ansary, exploring how external forces have impacted the region.

Materials Needed in Class
- Introduction to The Arab Table, by May Bsisu
- The Arab Table Handout
- Arab Music Video
- Maps
- Map Handout
- “Middle East or Middle World,” by Tamim Ansary
- “Middle East or Middle World” Homework Assignment
Implementation

Before Class

1. Assign students to read pages 1-5 from the introduction to The Arab Table, by May Bsisu before implementing this lesson. Ask students to highlight words, phrases, and sentences that point to the diversity and unity within the Arab world.

In Class

2. Ask students to write what first comes to mind when they hear the terms “Arab world” and “Arab”.

3. After a short brainstorm, divide students into small groups and ask them to discuss the questions on The Arab Table Handout:

   - According to the reading, what defines the Arab world as a single entity?
   - What language does the text use to talk about unity and diversity?
   - What reasons does the text cite for diversity in the Arab world?
   - What comes to mind when you think of the Arab world?
   - Are your associations with the Arab World and the author’s similar or different? Why do you think that is?

4. Come together and share responses as a class.

5. Bsisu illustrates food as a point of overlap and divergence in the Arab world. Ask students where else they anticipate finding similarities and differences. Guide students to think about music as an art form in which they can see unity and diversity.

6. After a brief discussion, ask students to take notes about unity and diversity as they watch the Arab Music Video of songs from around the Arab world. Consider:

   - What do you notice about the music and the visuals?
   - What appeals or does not appeal to you in the music?
   - What sounds unfamiliar to you?
   - What sounds and styles are the same? What is different?
7. After discussing the music, guide students to think of geography as both an example of and a reason for the diversity and unity in the region. Explain to the class that you will be looking at various regional maps that overlap with the Arab world. What do they expect given their previous knowledge and their reading?

8. Distribute or project a map of the Arab world. Ask students if anything surprises them about this map. Are there countries included that are surprising? Are there countries that are not included?

9. Distribute maps covering the following regions (or a selection from them): Asia, Africa, North Africa, the Middle East, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), the Arabian Peninsula, West Asia, the Islamic World, Mediterranean, Levant, Arab World and the Map Handout. In small groups, ask students to look at the map and discuss the questions on the handout:

- Whose perspectives, interests, and values are represented in the maps?
- How do the regions designated in these maps overlap with the Arab World, and how do they extend beyond it?
- How might the inclusion of parts of these maps impact the reality of the Arab world?
- Is it important to designate the Arab world as a distinct region despite the many labels you have explored? Why?
- Bring the class together to share their answers and discuss the maps as a group.

Note: This activity illustrates to students the regional expanse of the Arab world and geographical reasons for both unity and diversity. By comparing the map of the Arab world to maps of other distinguished regions, students should consider the arbitrary nature of these borders and how culture migrates through them.

10. Bring the class together to share their answers and discuss the maps as a group.
Homework:

Assign students to read “The Middle East or Middle World,” by Tamim Ansary, and write a response to the following questions from the Middle East or Middle World Homework Assignment:

- What insights does this resource bring to the influence of outside powers on the “Arab world” and the “Middle East”?
- How have outsiders shaped the perception as well as the physical and political reality of the region?

Common Core State Standards 9-10

Reading: Informational Texts

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.6 Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.7 Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person’s life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

Writing

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)

Speaking and Listening

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
Language

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.2 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

History/Social Studies

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.7 Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.

Common Core State Standards 11-12

Reading: Informational Text

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.6 Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Writing

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
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- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.2 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

History/Social Studies

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

National Standards for Foreign Language Education

Standard 2.2: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.
Arab Culture through Literature and Film
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