

Arab Culture Through Literature and Film / A Five Unit High School Curriculum

Unit 1: Introduction to Culture and the Arab World

The Arab world is a large and diverse region that spans from Morocco in the west, through the Levant, and the Arabian Peninsula. It includes twenty-three countries and represents a wide range of customs, traditions, and cultures. This unit frames the region through the lens of cultural unity and diversity, a concept essential to this curriculum. The historical and cultural background provided in this unit serves as a foundation for students to identify and understand the nuances and complexities of the region. Additionally, students are introduced to the primary tool used for cultural analysis of the Arab world throughout the curriculum, the culture as iceberg metaphor.

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.
- Culture is a shared way of life among a group of people with common beliefs, values and customs that shape their worldview.
- Art, film and literature can provide valuable insight into the values, beliefs and worldviews of another culture.

Curriculum Framing Questions:

- How does culture influence our thoughts and actions?
- 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)?

Overview:

Lesson 1: What is the Arab World?

As students define key terms and understand the parameters of the Arab world, they also begin to consider the unity and diversity of the region.

Lesson 2: History in the Arab world

In this lesson, students learn the history of the region and consider how the political history impacts Arab culture.

Lesson 3: Culture as an Iceberg

In this lesson, students define culture through the metaphor of an iceberg, a concept that repeats throughout the unit.

Lesson 4: The English Sheikh and the Yemeni Gentleman

Students apply the iceberg metaphor of culture to examine Yemeni culture as seen through the film *The English Sheikh and the Yemeni Gentleman* (UK, 2000).

Lesson 5: The Arabic Language

In this lesson, students learn about the Arabic language and its impact on regional culture.