

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

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## Unit 2: Expressions of Religion in the Arab World

Religion permeates through the cultures and societies of the Arab world, manifesting itself in diverse ways. Its presence is seen at an institutional level as well as in personal behaviors and interactions including dress, daily routines, and patterns of speech. Although religion is ubiquitous, the way individuals understand and practice the religion varies widely. Furthermore, while Islam is the predominant religion of the region, religious sentiment pervades broadly and a host of other religions are practiced throughout the region.

This unit guides students through an understanding of religion in the Arab world within its own cultural context. It challenges students to consider the complexities of religion and religious expression in a region in which its presence is unavoidable. This unit exposes students to diverse religious practices and expressions of Islam and the relationships between religious practitioners in the region.

### Enduring Understandings:

- Arabs practice a number of religions through widely varied traditions, and some Arabs do not practice a faith at all.
- It is widely recognized throughout the Arab world that the three major monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, share common values and traditions as well as many religious stories and figures.
- Religion is more than a personal choice in the Arab world; it relates to identity and an individual's association with their family and society.
- Minority religious groups and sects face particular challenges as a result of their religious identity.

### Curriculum Framing Questions:

- How is religious faith and practice present in the Arab world?
- What characterizes the relationship between different religious groups in the Arab world?
- What does religious identity in the Arab world entail on personal and community levels?
- How does association with a particular religious group inform someone's power and agency in society?
- What can we learn about religion in the Arab world from its presence in literature and film?

### Overview:

#### **Lesson 1:** The Presence of Religion in Daily Life

Students explore the presence of Islam in daily life and consider the different ways that Muslims express their religious identity.

#### **Lesson 2:** Exploring Religious Presence in Arabic Fiction

Students explore the role of religion through Arabic fiction.

#### **Lesson 3:** Relationships between Religious Groups in the Arab World

Students compare religions in the Arab world and watch *Hassan wa Marcus* (Egypt, 2008), a comedy highlighting relations between Christians and Muslims in Egypt.

#### **Lesson 4:** Four Women of Egypt

Through *Four Women of Egypt* (Canada, 1997), students see how four women negotiate their differing religious and political affiliations while maintaining the bonds of their friendship.

#### **Lesson 5:** Religion in the Arab World: Independent research

Students conduct independent research and explore minority religions in the Arab world.