

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

Unit 4: Gender Roles

This curriculum understands gender and gender roles as social constructs that are built, defined, and fulfilled on an individual and societal level. These roles are both an outcome of and rationale for appearance, behavior, and interactions of individuals and groups. Such concepts of gendered behavior are impacted by various factors including one's age, geographic location, social class, religion, marital status, and ethnicity.

In this unit, students explore the dynamics of gender in the Arab world and consider their varied manifestations, perhaps challenging traditional notions of gender in the region. Students will explore the nuances of gendered interactions in public and private space and the pressures that gender expectations may place on individuals in the region. By engaging with texts and stories from the region, students will consider how those traditional expectations are negotiated and contested in a variety of ways.

This unit uses the following definition of gender roles:

Gender roles are the culturally established set of behaviors and expressions that are socially acceptable for a specific sex.

Enduring Understandings:

- Gender roles and relations in the Arab world are complex and vary based on demographics, geographic location, religious identity, ethnicity, socio-economic status and so forth.
- Gender roles are dynamic and change depending on setting.
- Gender is built, defined, and fulfilled by social and cultural norms and can vary from culture to culture.
- Traditional gender roles are negotiated and contested in a variety of ways.

Curriculum Framing Questions:

- How does culture impact the parameters of gender roles?
- What are the different ways that individuals negotiate gender roles within the Arab world?
- How does gender impact one's voice and agency in the Arab world?
- What insights can Arab literature and film offer about gender roles in Arab culture and how individuals experience them?

Overview:

Lesson 1: Gender and Culture

Students consider how gender roles and expectations are constructed and construed in their community and in the Arab world.

Lesson 2: Gender Roles and Gendered Space

This lesson provides students an opportunity to explore gender in the Arab world through the dynamic characters of the film *Masquerades* (Algeria, 2008).

Lesson 3: Traditional Women's Roles in the Arab World

Students read Arabic literature and explore how women negotiate and challenge traditional social norms.

Lesson 4: Women in Sport: Breaking Boundaries?

Students explore how women athletes navigate social expectations.