

# Teaching about the Middle East

## *A Teacher's Resource Guide*

Abigail S. Chill, Writer

Dr. Aaron Willis, Project Coordinator  
Kerry Gordonson, Editor  
Katie Brown, Editorial Assistant

Social Studies School Service  
10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802  
Culver City, CA 90232  
<http://socialstudies.com>  
[access@socialstudies.com](mailto:access@socialstudies.com)  
(800) 421-4246

© 2003 Social Studies School Service

10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802  
Culver City, CA 90232  
United States of America

(310) 839-2436  
(800) 421-4246

Fax: (800) 944-5432  
Fax: (310) 839-2249

<http://socialstudies.com>  
[access@socialstudies.com](mailto:access@socialstudies.com)

Permission is granted to reproduce individual worksheets for classroom use only.  
Printed in the United States of America

ISBN: XXXX-XXXX-XXXX

**Product Code: ZP188**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgements</i> .....	x
<b>1. Introduction to Teaching about the Middle East</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Teaching about Geography</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<i>Topic 1: Orienting Yourself in the Middle East</i> .....	14
<i>Topic 2: Water—The Essential Resource</i> .....	23
<i>Topic 3: Oil and the Impact of Petrodollars</i> .....	36
<b>3. Teaching about Islam</b> .....	<b>59</b>
<i>Topic 1: Islam as a World Religion</i> .....	65
<i>Topic 2: Islam as a World Civilization</i> .....	86
<i>Topic 3: Islam as a Political Ideology</i> .....	94
<b>4. Teaching about Modern Egypt</b> .....	<b>115</b>
<i>Topic 1: Distinguishing Tradition from Modernity</i> .....	119
<i>Topic 2: Nineteenth Century Egypt</i> .....	126
<i>Topic 3: Nasser’s Revolution</i> .....	135
<i>Topic 4: Anwar Sadat (1970–1981) and Hosni Mubarak (1981– )</i> .....	153
<b>5. Teaching about Zionism</b> .....	<b>157</b>
<i>Topic 1: Distinguishing National and Civil Identity</i> .....	160
<i>Topic 2: Jewish Identity and the Origins of Jewish Nationalism</i> .....	162
<i>Topic 3: Zionism</i> .....	169
<b>6. Teaching about the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict</b> .....	<b>181</b>
<i>Topic 1: British Policy: Responsible or Irresponsible?</i> .....	189
<i>Topic 2: Palestinian Society: Catalyst or Obstacle to Nationalism?</i> .....	201
<i>Topic 3: Dilemmas in Leadership</i> .....	205
<i>Topic 4: Divergent Views of History</i> .....	211
<b>7. Teaching about the Search for Peace</b> .....	<b>219</b>
<i>Topic 1: The Search for Peace—Content and Process</i> .....	226
<b>8. Teaching about Current Events</b> .....	<b>253</b>
<i>Sample mini-unit: War in Iraq</i> .....	260
<b>9. Teaching about Israeli Society</b> .....	<b>269</b>
<i>Topic 1: Are Jewish Culture and Zionist Culture the Same?</i> .....	276
<i>Topic 2: What is Israel’s National Character?</i> .....	281
<i>Topic 3: The Political Process as an Expression and Shaper         of National Character</i> .....	297
<b>10. A Teacher’s Toolbox</b> .....	<b>305</b>

## Acknowledgements

This work is a culmination of twenty-six years of teaching experience and hence my greatest debt is to my students who over the years have taught me what works best. At the beginning of the Lebanon War (1982) and during the aftermath of the Gulf War (1991) it was Forrest Broman, then Superintendent of the Walworth Barbour American International School in Israel, who encouraged and supported the production of two editions of The Modern Middle East: An Activity Text. This book is used as an in-house text in our required course for seniors in Middle East history. Over the years, collegial exchange has been an important factor in the gestation of this new work. The fact that other teachers have successfully implemented my materials in their classrooms has validated their worth and encouraged me to move forward with this project.

This new kit of materials contains many of the features of these earlier works with several added dimensions. This new work is firstly a resource guide for teachers and not a classroom text for students. Here you will find a synthesis of scholarship on Middle Eastern topics and introductory overviews that provide discussion for teachers who may have no formal academic training in Middle Eastern history and politics. Secondly, unit plans, lessons and student handouts provide jump starts for teachers who want to get started including Middle East topics in their regular curriculum. Thirdly, the visual presentations that are a part of this kit are offered as ancillary means of providing input to students. Finally, the kit contains an expanded menu of topics that connect closely to curricula in World History, International Relations, Current Events, Economics and Geography.

Many individuals have contributed to the fruition of this project, including Dr. Aaron Willis at Social Studies School Service who supported my concept and Mr. Bill Williams who edited the manuscript. My thanks go to Dr. Kenneth Stein of Emory University and Edie Weitzman who read significant portions of the manuscript and encouraged my efforts. Thanks also to Loretta Cohen who worked with me to develop visuals for the PowerPoint presentations. This project required the focus and concerted attention that a sabbatical from daily teaching duties affords. The Walworth Barbour American International School in Israel has my thanks for facilitating this wonderful opportunity.

Finally, my deepest thanks to my husband Dan who believed in me from the moment I began to teach Middle East History and never doubted the success of my curriculum or my efforts to share it with the teaching community.

Abigail Chill  
Kiryat Ono, Israel  
Summer, 2003

## Chapter 1

### An Introduction to Teaching About the Middle East

Since September 11, 2001, the perception of the Middle East as a world region with tremendous potential for impacting us has become deeply etched into our consciousness. However, the enduring centrality and importance of the Middle East to our cultural, geopolitical, historical and economic lives has long been a “given” that mandates educating and informing young people about this region of the world—no small task. Dramatic events capture the headlines daily and news travels fast. Sound bites bombard us with images and brief commentary; our opinions are shaped without our even being aware of how and by whom. Certainly the rapidity of change in the region is one challenge to grappling with this subject; coping with the myriad of opinions, analyses and information made available by the media and assorted interest groups is another. As teachers we need to distinguish historical inquiry from current events. While there is no question that knowledge of history in its complexities ideally should inform our critical analysis of current events, they are not one and the same. This book is designed to assist teachers in their endeavors to make the Middle East more comprehensible to youth.

#### **In this chapter you will find:**

- A rationale for teaching Middle East history
- A description of how to use this book
- Suggestions for how to integrate the study of the Middle East into your existing curriculum
- Diagnostic assessment activities to use in your classroom as triggers for beginning study of Middle East history

In each chapter you will find a discussion for the adult reader that provides an overview of an important theme in Middle East history. A unit plan modeling a sequence of lessons, step by step lesson plans and student readings to facilitate implementation in your classroom are also included. Feel free to adapt or adopt these materials for your individual classroom, selecting the topics and activities that meet your needs.

The rapid unfolding of political, economic and social events in the Middle East calls for teacher readiness to flex as history happens. Thus, a goal of this guide is to empower teachers with models for translating academic materials and current events headlines into student activities that are well-grounded in history. The materials presented here reflect more than twenty years of teaching experience and collegial exchange,<sup>1</sup> are classroom-tested and predicated on the conviction that learners actively engaged in the learning process acquire and retain more knowledge than passive ones. The Middle Eastern “souk” or market bazaar is traditionally the locus for finding what you need at a reasonable, negotiated price. It is my hope that this resource guide will equip you with a shopping basket of strategies and information that will enhance your students’ learning and make your role as educator more rewarding.

---

<sup>1</sup> Materials presented here are original, unless cited as originating from published or collegial sources.

### Middle East Studies and your Curriculum

Whether you are planning a lesson, unit or course, stop and consider what you want your students to understand and know as a result of the learning opportunities you develop for them. In a tenth grade global history class, standards mandate that students become familiar with a variety of belief systems, comparing their theologies, rituals and values. In an international relations elective, the origins and methods of managing conflict are studied. Both of these topics create opportunities for applying a case study method for introducing material on the Middle East. Familiar history and social science topics such as supply and demand, nationalism and imperialism, revolution, tradition and modernization, diplomacy and foreign policy, social structures and institutions each have their illustrative counterpart in Middle East studies. The chart below gives examples of connecting links between familiar social studies courses and Middle East topics. Each general topic area is paired with a Middle East standard or outcome that I have worked with. Finally, in column three there is a list of suggested content that link to the standard.

Social Studies Courses	Unit of Study/Middle East Standard	Suggested Content or Case Studies
<b>World/Global History</b>	<b>Islam-</b> Students will understand the origins, development and impact of Islam on the Middle East.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparing and contrasting Arabian society before and after Mohammed.</li> <li>• The expansion and development of the Islamic Empire.</li> <li>• Comparing Islam to other faiths.</li> <li>• Islam as a political ideology in the past and present.</li> </ul>
<b>World/Global/European History</b>	<b>Nationalism</b> – Students will understand the seminal role that nationalism has played in shaping Middle Eastern history.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluating national claims (Palestinian, Jewish, Kurdish).</li> <li>• Origins and Expressions of Arab Nationalism.</li> <li>• Origins, Methods and Outcomes of Zionism.</li> <li>• Why did the Jews succeed and the Palestinians fail to achieve independence?</li> </ul>

<b>World/European History</b>	<b>Imperialism</b> – Students will understand the nature of European imperialism in the Middle East.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ottoman Empire and European contacts.</li> <li>• The Case of the Suez Canal.</li> <li>• Administration of the Palestine Mandate.</li> <li>• Is Zionism a form of Colonialism?</li> </ul>
<b>European History</b>	<b>World War One</b> – Students will understand how the political boundaries and institutions of the modern Middle East were a result of World War One.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• War time diplomacy: Evaluating Britain’s policies and strategies as a potential and later governing Mandatory power.</li> </ul>
<b>European History</b>	<b>Holocaust</b> – Students will understand the origins and expression of European anti-Semitism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethnic v. civic identity; evaluating the status of the Jewish minority in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe.</li> <li>• The impact of the rise of Nazism on the relationship between Arabs and Jews in Mandatory Palestine.</li> <li>• The psychological impact of the Holocaust today.</li> </ul>
<b>Twentieth Century History (IB)</b>	<b>Cold War</b> – Students will understand how the Middle East is a case study in Cold War politics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The case of the Aswan Dam and Suez War.</li> <li>• How did the end of the Cold War impact on the politics of the Middle East and the quest for peace?</li> </ul>
<b>Twentieth Century History/Sociology</b>	<b>Developing Nations-</b> Students will distinguish between traditional and modern world views and understand that the process of modernization has played a central role in the Middle East.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparative study of the process of modernization in Palestine, Egypt, the Jewish community, Gulf states.</li> </ul>

<p><b>International Relations</b></p>	<p><b>Conflict</b> – Students will understand that conflict in the Middle East stems from mutually frustrated interests and/or values of individuals, groups and nations.</p> <p>Students will understand the factors and strategies that may contribute to a fruitful or aborted peace process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Causes and content of the Arab-Israeli Conflict.</li> <li>• Evaluating models of managing the Arab-Israeli conflict.</li> <li>• Evaluating the role of the UN in the Middle East.</li> <li>• Comparing military confrontations in the Middle East: How have military confrontations resolved or created problems?</li> <li>• Negotiating and proposing solutions to conflicts such as Jerusalem, Water.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Geography</b></p>	<p><b>Human Geography</b> – Students will understand how geography has shaped the economic, political and social development of the Middle East.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The conflict over water.</li> <li>• The impact of the discovery and development of oil in the Middle East.</li> </ul>
<p><b>U.S. History</b></p>	<p><b>Foreign Policy</b> – Students will understand the pattern of American foreign policy in the Middle East.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U.S. policy during the vote on partition of Palestine, the Suez War, the 1973 War.</li> <li>• Examine and evaluate U.S. foreign aid to Middle Eastern nations.</li> <li>• The role of the U.S. in the peace process.</li> </ul>

The National Standards for History developed by the National Center for History in the Schools includes multiple references to the rise and importance of Islamic civilization and the Ottoman Empire in World History standards addressing the years 300–1770 CE and 1770–1914.<sup>2</sup> This same document highlights the transformation of the Middle East in Standards One, Two and Three during the period 1900–1945.<sup>3</sup> Finally, Standard 2, “The search for community, stability and peace in an

<sup>2</sup> Gary B. Nash and Charlotte Crabtree, National Standards for History (Los Angeles: National Center for History in the Schools, 1996), pp. 157, 163, 167, 180, 190, 194.

<sup>3</sup> Gary B. Nash and Charlotte Crabtree, National Standards for History (Los Angeles: National Center for History in the Schools, 1996), pp. 201-202.



interdependent world,”<sup>4</sup> specifically addresses the Arab-Israeli conflict. Finally, the “Ten Strands” standards produced by the National Council of Social Studies charge educators to give students an understanding of cultural diversity, governance, economics, continuity and change in time, environment, global connections, civic practice, technology, identity and interaction among individuals, groups and institutions.<sup>5</sup> Regardless of the standards and indicators underpinning your curriculum, the history, culture and people of the Middle East provide excellent illustrative examples of principles, patterns and processes that are represented there.

Before you begin the process of identifying content objectives for your students, however, take a moment to consider your own attitudes and beliefs and how they might affect your teaching. If you are a “Tabula Rasa” when it comes to the Middle East, your class may experience a more objective presentation, although a less well informed and impassioned one. But if this possibility was unlikely before September 11, 2001, it most probably is unrealistic now. All of us have views and opinions on what America’s policy towards Iraq should be, the appropriateness of a global war on terror, the presence or absence of justification for Palestinian and Israeli policies and tactics and the efficacy and power of Islam in a post Taliban world. Perhaps when the Twin Towers crashed to Ground Zero, your views may have shifted or become ever stronger.

It seems that each year since I began teaching Middle East history in 1977, there has been a watershed event that has challenged me to re-examine my understanding of the region I am teaching about. Anwar Sadat’s historic visit to Jerusalem in November 1977 that paved the way for the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt was such an event. The commencement of the Intifada in 1987, the Gulf War in 1991, the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin and the violent hostilities in progress since 2000 between Israel and the Palestine Authority are others.

Teaching a multicultural population with short-term and long-term stakes in the volatile region being studied creates difficulties for the teacher. I will never forget the challenge pitched to me by a boy from Chile in the mid 1980s when he asked whether I wanted students to agree with my personal viewpoint. Surprised by his question, since I believed that I had been careful to withhold my personal viewpoint on the issue under discussion, I looked him straight in the eye without blinking and said as convincingly as possible: “I don’t care about that at all. I want to empower you to think intelligently about the issues and arrive at your own conclusions.” I meant it then and I still believe it today. What my student didn’t know was that inwardly I was thankful to him for asking his question. He had provided me with a reminder to be ever vigilant and careful in how I presented material and to be respectful of the power of point of view and its appropriate place in the classroom.

---

<sup>4</sup> Gary B. Nash and Charlotte Crabtree, National Standards for History (Los Angeles: National Center for History in the Schools, 1996), p. 212.

<sup>5</sup> National Council for the Social Studies, <http://www.ncss.org/standards/2.0.html>.

## Getting Started with Diagnostic Assessments

Upon preparing to leave Israel for a school in Oman, the editor of our student newspaper wrote an editorial comparing reactions of friends to its plans with those she received from stateside companions three years earlier when she announced her family's intention to relocate to Tel Aviv. For her, it was a case of *déjà vu*. Our international population held a stereotypical view of Omani life just as American teenagers had of Israel. In both cases, the tendency was to visualize a technologically inferior society stagnating in an unmitigated desert environment, peopled by quaint exotic nomadic people riding camels. Our student editor concluded pessimistically that the prevalence of stereotypical understandings augur ill for bridging the differences that divide people and lead to conflict.<sup>6</sup> This is exactly where Middle East studies in particular and global studies in general can make an important contribution.

Teachers have long recognized the importance of beginning inquiry about any topic from the student's starting point. This idea is built into the popular "What I know; what I want to find out" paradigm and the ubiquitous pre-test or informational survey frequently administered at the beginning of a unit of study. Diagnostic assessments such as these can become learning opportunities that enable students to reflect on their beginning knowledge base, their attitudes and those of their classmates. This information will be helpful to you and the class as you introduce topics, moderate class discussions and develop strategies to maximize student participation. The activities presented here are generic ones appropriate as openers to a learning segment on any aspect of the Middle East and adaptable for use with other topics as well. They are designed to reveal:

- The level and accuracy of the students' knowledge base
- The degree to which the student has a personal connection to the content
- The students' affective attitudes

---

<sup>6</sup> Ellen Clark, "Why I Lack Faith in the Middle East Peace Process," The Word (June 14, 2002), p. 12.

## Activity One – Middle East Metaphors

### Objectives:

- Students will reflect on the origin and content of their own perceptions of the Middle East.

**Grade Level:** Middle/High School

**Time Frame:** 30 Minutes

**Materials:** Pencil/Pen and Paper

### Step-By-Step Instructions:

1. This is an excellent trigger activity that encourages creative and divergent thinking. Invite the class to write metaphors for the Middle East or alternatively other related expressions such as: The Arab World, Israel, or Islam.
2. Students can do this individually, pair and share.
3. Students select their favorites, interpret meaning and reflect on where the images in our minds actually originate and how Middle Easterners might respond to them.

Here are some examples my students created on day one of Middle East history class. In this case I collected student metaphors, collated them and presented them to the class with questions for discussion the following day.

The Arab world is a microwave.

The Arab world is a treasure chest of mystery and treasure.

The Arab world is a gas station.

The Arab world is a school of fish.

---

Israel is a carton of Neapolitan ice cream.

Israel is a simmering cauldron.

Israel is a packed, sold-out football game.

Israel is the ugly duckling.

Israel is a young tree.

Israel is a bomb.

Israel is a fruit salad.

Israel is a lonely, winding desert road interrupted by barriers and cattle crossings.

---

The Middle East is a pin ball machine.

The Middle East is a rocky road.

The Middle East is a volcano.

The Middle East is an aircraft carrier.

The Middle East is a dove that can't fly.

The Middle East is a shiny red ball on a kindergarten playground.

The Middle East is an old marketplace.

Discuss these metaphors with one another. Are there common themes reflected in them?

1. Which do you feel are especially meaningful or accurate and why?
2. Which defy your understanding and why?
3. Select the one “best” from each group and tell why you selected it.
4. What do these metaphors reveal about us, the authors?
5. How might a citizen of a Middle Eastern Country, an Arab or an Israeli, react to our images and why?

### **Activity Two – Concept Map**

#### **Objectives:**

- Students will discover common perceptions or misconceptions about the Middle East.
- Students will discover links and connections between concepts associated with the Middle East.
- Students will identify topics about which they are well informed or require more information for better understanding.

**Grade Level:** Middle/High School

**Time Frame:** 30 Minutes

**Materials:** Pen and Paper or Markers and Poster Paper

#### **Step-By-Step Instructions:**

1. Invite students to create a web of terms, ideas, people, and events that they associate with a central idea such as The Middle East, Conflict, Israel, Arab World, and Islam. Begin with a center circle and add “spokes” and smaller circles as concepts and facts come to mind triggering new associations.
2. When students have exhausted their energy, information or space, have them identify connections, contradictions and frame questions suggested by their map. Have them distinguish the items they understand most accurately and about which they are most confident from the items they are unsure about or need more information about.
3. Debrief with a discussion of what we can learn about our own attitudes, assumptions and awareness from the webs we have created.

### **Activity Three – How do I Connect?**

#### **Objectives:**

- Students will examine how their own lives and experiences have been linked to events in the Middle East.

**Grade Level:** Middle/High School

**Time Frame:** 1 Lesson

## Materials: Handout 1.1- Survey Questions

### Step-By-Step Instructions:

This activity is predicated upon the assumption that the world is an interdependent one and that our lives, wherever we live them, are influenced to a lesser or greater extent by what happens in the Middle East, just as they are by events in other parts of the world. In this exercise, students have an opportunity to consider multiple ways in which they, or their classmates, may be personally connected to this world region.

1. Distribute Handout 1.1 to the class.
2. After completing a survey, students rank information about themselves on a continuum that reflects their appraisal of how close or distant their personal connection to the Middle East is. These questions focus on personal, cultural, intellectual and political connections that students might have to the Middle East.
3. After filling out the form, students can sit in small groups and discuss their answers. Students should be encouraged to ask for and supply examples to expand upon their “Yes-No” response. For example: # 8 “ If there is war in the Middle East the price of oil is likely to go up, making gasoline, heating oil, everything that utilizes petroleum products more expensive.” Or # 2 “My grandmother often tells me stories about what it was like to live in Beirut before her family moved to the USA.”
4. It is useful to provide students with an assortment of recent news-magazines, newspaper headlines or articles to illustrate some of the economic and geopolitical connections that may not readily come to mind. Students’ survey responses and discussion will reveal the character and nature of your students’ awareness and perceptions of personal relevance to the subject.
5. Encourage students to listen respectfully and to be aware that self-disclosing comments and contributions need to be listened to with empathy. There may be a student who brings the memory of painful or emotional experiences to this exercise.
6. After sharing responses, students evaluate where they would place themselves on a continuum of connection to the Middle East.
7. Distant-----Close
8. In order to do this, students will need to evaluate the nature of their connection. For example, is it cultural, economic, political, personal, or intellectual? Someone without personal ties but an intense curiosity about terrorism might place themselves on the far right of the continuum alongside someone who is Jewish and planning a family trip to Israel to celebrate his bar mitzvah.
9. To assist in the continuum exercise, have students refer to the survey questions.
10. Count the number of affirmative responses and decide how each one illustrates a connection to the Middle East and where it should be placed on the line.

11. A kinesthetic expression of the exercise would be to have students line up along a physical representation of the continuum and express in a sentence or two why they place themselves where they do.
12. Conclude this activity by having students write a reflection about the process they experienced in the course of the lesson and/or a discussion of the different ways in which they connect to Middle East studies.

**A Final Word**

Regardless of the context in which you are teaching topics pertaining to the Middle East, it is helpful to begin with a preparatory activity that may be a lesson in its own right or a short introductory learning opportunity similar to the ones suggested above. Through these activities you can identify student interests, involvement or indifference, and become aware of potential hot topics before they come up in class discussion. Similarly, students are exposed to classmates' perspectives and gain insights as to where and why they originate.

## Student Handout 1.1

### Survey Questions

1. Have you ever lived in or visited a Middle Eastern country? Y N
2. Have members of your family emigrated from a Middle Eastern country? Y N
3. Do you have friends or family who have lived or worked in a Middle Eastern country? (Armed Forces, Study Abroad, Business Travel, Employed by an NGO or Government) Y N
4. Are you acquainted with anyone who has personally suffered as a result of conflicts associated with the Middle East? Y N
5. Do you practice a religion whose history and traditions are rooted in the Middle East? (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) Y N
6. Do you speak a language associated with the Middle East? (Arabic, Turkish, Farsi, Hebrew, Kurdish) Y N
7. Do you believe that citizens in a democracy have a responsibility to be informed on issues about which their elected representatives and government are making policy? Y N
8. Do you believe that developments in the Middle East can have a direct impact on your personal life? Y N
9. Have you personally paid attention to controversial issues connected to the Middle East that have been publicly discussed in the media by reading, listening to news programs or discussing issues with family or friends? Y N
10. Have you ever watched or participated in a political demonstration connected to Middle East issues? Y N
11. Do you rely on products that originate in the Middle East? Y N