



## Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

### The Middle East as Seen Through Foreign Eyes: From Antiquity to the Nineteenth Century

Matthew W. Stolper, Professor of Assyriology and the John A. Wilson  
Professor of Oriental Studies

#### Lesson Plan 2:

#### Modern media: bridging the gap to the past

**General Description of Lesson Plan:** This lesson addresses Stolper's concern that the relationships between the Middle East and Europe are seldom still, or fixed, and that "no where is this clearer than in transmission, loss, and rediscovery of knowledge about the remote antiquity of the Middle East." In part this transitory relationship is based on the shifting sands of historic political and/or ideological agendas. In a modern context, bias is often transmitted via editorial selection and at worst outright misinformation. This lesson uses Stolper's historic analysis to address modern bias in online media.

Students will learn how the story of Near East antiquity has been influenced by the outsiders who, peering in, tell it through the soft bias of their own culture and cultural perceptions of the Middle East. Modern students are subject to the same soft influences that affected the historical record and this lesson seeks to help students develop greater savvy in identifying biased sources.

**Created By:** Michael C. Shea, Kenwood Academy High School, Chicago, IL

**Subject Area(s):** World history, Social Studies

**For Grade Level(s):** 11-12<sup>th</sup> Honors/Regular

**Time Needed:** Two to three days

#### Outcomes/Objectives:

Students will develop a greater media literacy skill to aid their ability to identify media bias and propaganda. To that end, students will also establish/develop collaborative working relationship skills.

**Prior Knowledge:** Students should have read Stolper's module and answered the questions therein. Students should have a solid background knowledge tracing the theme of world history from antiquity to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

# Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

## Lesson Plan 2: Modern media: bridging the gap to the past

### **Suggested Procedure(s):**

**Part I: Class Discussion:** whole class or small group.

Use the Framing the Issues questions to summarize Stopler's work to assess student comprehension:

- a) How did medieval Europeans encounter the antiquities of the ancient Near East?
- b) How did 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> century Europeans learn about the Middle East and its past?
- c) Whose antiquity is Near Eastern antiquity?

*Other discussion questions:*

- d) How do we view the Middle East now?
- e) Through what means do we learn about Near Eastern antiquity?
- f) How do we know these histories to be true, given the context of the Near East emerging from the shadows of European bias?
- g) Are we relatively free of bias' that affected our understanding of Near Eastern antiquity?
- h) What means can students, concerned groups and individuals use to determine the validity of material?

### **Part II: Homework (Day 1)—Analyze popular media sources**

1. Complete the attached worksheet.

Students will select a popular search engine (Google, Yahoo, Bing, etc.) and do a general search for "images" and the "web" for each of the terms below:

- a) Muslim
- b) Middle East
- c) Arab

### **Part III: Discuss homework**

Using a laptop/desktop project several websites the students have analyzed for homework and ask students to "informally" walk through their analysis in class:

- a) Visually analyze site discussing appearance, format, tech-savvy, images, font, color palate, updates, etc.
- b) Content
- c) Legitimacy & bias—how do we know?

**Part IV: Lecture-how does one apply the requirements of education (to prevent bias) to a population?**

# Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

## Lesson Plan 2: Modern media: bridging the gap to the past

In a lecture the teacher may summarize the system of government for each of the periods below and then ask, via Socratic method, how education would benefit the motives of government for each.

- Alexander the Great: policy of empire, policy of Hellenism
- European Feudalism & Ummayad expansion
- The Papacy and the expansion of Christian Europe
- European empire & industrial society
- Globalism & the information age

### Part V: Addressing bias in an educational setting

The classroom teacher has several options at this point. S/he can either a) lead into Wood's module: *The Middle East As Seen through Foreign Eyes*) or b) assign a formal essay analyzing contemporary views of Near East antiquity, or c) conclude with a short skill activity looking for bias to ensure the validity of the content presented in online sources.

a) see Woods' module: *The Middle East as Seen Through Foreign Eyes*

b) Formal Essay:

This 2-3 page essay should utilize students previous work analyzing web resources for possible bias. Students' thesis should orbit the three Framing the Issues questions Stopler answers in the module, but also bridge the gap to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In short, students should attempt to formally answer the question *how we learn about Near East antiquity*.<sup>1</sup>

c) Identifying Bias Peer Support

1. In teams of 3-4 assign students to identify the most common elements of bias as observed in their homework (worksheet).
2. Once students identify the most common elements of bias as seen in their web assignment they will then discuss the most effective means to ID bias—what questions to ask oneself or others and what clues to look for.
3. Students will then create a guide/handout for fellow students providing instructions to become better informed.

### Evaluation/Assessment Strategies:

- 1) Class Discussion
- 2) Website worksheet & class analysis
- 3) Formal essay

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<sup>1</sup> This may be difficult for students because their first answer to this question may be *YOU* and your students may be insecure about leveling a pointed finger in your direction (well, perhaps, some more than others!).

# **Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators**

Lesson Plan 2: Modern media: bridging the gap to the past

4) Guide to identifying bias

**Use these guiding questions to spur discussion in your classroom:**

1. Whose antiquity is Near Eastern antiquity?
2. How do we view the Middle East now?
3. In our analysis of perceptions of the Middle East, what resources seem most reliable?

# Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

## Lesson Plan 2: Examining Images for Meaning

### Visual Analysis of Media Bias

Search "Arab"

<b>Site name:</b>			
<b>URL:</b>			
<b>When was the site last updated?</b>		<b>Rate Professional Appearance: (1-10-- 1 being very poor)</b>	
<b>Describe site's construction (images, font, color scheme)</b>			
<b>Describe the sites content (information)</b>			
<b>Who made the site? Who is responsible for it's content?</b>			
<b>Is the information biased? What specific clues inform your decision?</b>			

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# Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

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## Lesson Plan 2: Modern media: bridging the gap to the past

<b>Who made the site? Who is responsible for it's content?</b>
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### Visual Analysis of Media Bias

Search "Muslim"

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# Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

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# Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

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# Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

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## Lesson Plan 2: Modern media: bridging the gap to the past

### Evaluation Rubric:

#### Collaborative Work Skills: Peer Collaboration

Teacher Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
<b>Time-management</b>	Routinely uses time well throughout the project to ensure things get done on time. Group does not have to adjust deadlines or work responsibilities because of this person's procrastination.	Usually uses time well throughout the project, but may have procrastinated on one thing. Group does not have to adjust deadlines or work responsibilities because of this person's procrastination.	Tends to procrastinate, but always gets things done by the deadlines. Group does not have to adjust deadlines or work responsibilities because of this person's procrastination.	Rarely gets things done by the deadlines AND group has to adjust deadlines or work responsibilities because of this person's inadequate time management.
<b>Working with Others</b>	Almost always listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Tries to keep people working well together.	Usually listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Does not cause "waves" in the group.	Often listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others, but sometimes is not a good team member.	Rarely listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Often is not a good team player.
<b>Problem-solving</b>	Actively looks for and suggests solutions to problems.	Refines solutions suggested by others.	Does not suggest or refine solutions, but is willing to try out solutions suggested by others.	Does not try to solve problems or help others solve problems. Lets others do the work.

# Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

## Lesson Plan 2: Modern media: bridging the gap to the past

### Persuasive Essay: How do we learn about the ancient Near East?

Teacher Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
<b>Focus or Thesis Statement</b>	The thesis statement names the topic of the essay and outlines the main points to be discussed.	The thesis statement names the topic of the essay.	The thesis statement outlines some or all of the main points to be discussed but does not name the topic.	The thesis statement does not name the topic AND does not preview what will be discussed.
<b>Evidence and Examples</b>	All of the evidence and examples are specific, relevant and explanations are given that show how each piece of evidence supports the author's position.	Most of the evidence and examples are specific, relevant and explanations are given that show how each piece of evidence supports the author's position.	At least one of the pieces of evidence and examples is relevant and has an explanation that shows how that piece of evidence supports the author's position.	Evidence and examples are NOT relevant AND/OR are not explained.
<b>Accuracy</b>	All supportive facts and statistics are reported accurately.	Almost all supportive facts and statistics are reported accurately.	Most supportive facts and statistics are reported accurately.	Most supportive facts and statistics were inaccurately reported.
<b>Grammar &amp; Spelling</b>	Author makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes 1-2 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes 3-4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes more than 4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the

# Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

## Lesson Plan 2: Modern media: bridging the gap to the past

				content.
<b>Sentence Structure</b>	All sentences are well constructed with varied structure.	Most sentences are well constructed and there is some varied sentence structure in the essay.	Most sentences are well constructed, but there is no variation in structure.	Most sentences are not well constructed or varied.
<b>Transitions</b>	A variety of thoughtful transitions are used. They clearly show how ideas are connected	Transitions show how ideas are connected, but there is little variety	Some transitions work well, but some connections between ideas are fuzzy.	The transitions between ideas are unclear OR nonexistent.
<b>Closing paragraph</b>	The conclusion is strong and leaves the reader solidly understanding the writer's position. Effective restatement of the position statement begins the closing paragraph.	The conclusion is recognizable. The author's position is restated within the first two sentences of the closing paragraph.	The author's position is restated within the closing paragraph, but not near the beginning.	There is no conclusion - the paper just ends.