



Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

Rulership and Justice, Islamic Period

John Woods, Professor of Iranian and Central Asian History, and of Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations

Lesson Plan 2:

What IS the difference between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims?

General Description of Lesson Plan: Students will read an article about Sunnis and Shi'ites, then create a Venn diagram to plot similarities and differences between the two.

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Subject Area(s): History, Religious Studies, Social Studies

For Grade Level(s): 8-12

Time Needed: One class period (45-60 minutes)

Outcomes/Objectives:

Students will be able to understand similarities and differences between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims and be able to explain both the history of the divide between the two sects, as well as why this information is important in understanding the world today.

Materials:

Article, "What Is the Difference Between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims--and Why Does It Matter?" at George Mason University's History News Network - <http://hnn.us/articles/934.html>

Paper and pencils, or multiple whiteboard markers

Suggested Procedure(s):

Hand out copies of article to students and either have them read it silently or read together out loud.

Working individually (on notebook paper) or in groups (at the board), have students map out a Venn diagram identifying as many features of Sunni and Shi'ite practice, history, and belief as they can from this article (you may also let them use other materials they may have read), with the common elements going in the overlapping part of their diagram.

Compare as much of their work as possible in class to create a master diagram

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Discuss the differences between the two, including the following questions:

1. Why do you think people get so confused about Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims? Do stereotypes play a role in this at all?
2. How did the loss of the caliphate affect Islam? How is understanding the importance of the caliphate and its end important for understanding Islamic leadership in the modern world?

Have there been any recent events in the news that knowing which was which might be important or that was specified? (Teacher can also bring in current articles for discussion)

Evaluation/Assessment Strategies: Collect the Venn diagrams and examine them for close reading of the article. If done in groups, eavesdrop on collaboration to see that all are contributing (you may have some scribes and some verbal contributors). Evaluate discussion for reading comprehension and understanding.

Use these guiding questions to spur discussion in your classroom:

1. What are the differences between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims? Why is understanding this important?
2. How is continuity of leadership important to the idea of Muslim identity in the present and in the past? What are the possible ramifications when that continuity is broken?

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Evaluation Rubric:

Analyzing Information: What IS the Difference Between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims?

Teacher Name: _____

Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Identifies important information	Student lists all the main points of the article without having the article in front of him/her.	The student lists all the main points, but uses the article for reference.	The student lists all but one of the main points, using the article for reference. S/he does not highlight any unimportant points.	The student cannot identify important information with accuracy.
Identifies details	Student recalls several details for each main point without referring to the article.	Student recalls several details for each main point, but needs to refer to the article, occasionally.	Student is able to locate most of the details when looking at the article.	Student cannot locate details with accuracy.
Analysis of Details	Student is able to create a Venn diagram that accurately categorizes most of the details in the article.	Student is able to create a Venn diagram that accurately categorizes many of the details in the article.	Student is able to create a Venn diagram that accurately categorizes some of the details in the article.	Student creates a Venn diagram that does not accurately categorize details in the article, or only lists two or three examples in each category.
Group Work Contributions	Routinely provides useful ideas when participating in the group. A definite leader who contributes a lot of effort.	Usually provides useful ideas when participating in the group. A strong group member who tries hard!	Sometimes provides useful ideas when participating in the group. A satisfactory group member who does what is required.	Rarely provides useful ideas when participating in the group. May refuse to participate or gets group off track with side conversations or other topics.