



Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

The Question of Identity: Ethnicity, Language, Religion, and Gender Before Islam: Overview

Geoff Emberling, Chief Curator, Oriental Institute Museum of the University of Chicago

Lesson Plan 2:

Comparing Modern and Ancient Ideas of Ethnicity and Identity

General Description of Lesson Plan: Affiliation with a group that has a specific culture, defined by rituals, customs, and outward symbols of belonging, date to the earliest civilizations and are still an important way that many people define themselves today. Students will compare Near Eastern ways of defining one's social group or standing with those they see in their own lives and world.

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

For Grade Level(s): 6-10

Time Needed: 3 hours, divided among class time and homework at the teacher's discretion.

Outcomes/Objectives:

Research: Students will develop secondary analysis and reading/note-taking skills.

Writing: Students will take notes on readings and create a bibliography of sources. Students will generate a thesis statement. Students will produce a 3- to 5-paragraph essay with a thesis, topic sentences, transitions, and supporting evidence. Students will use appropriate citation style for sources (MLA or Chicago style format to be specified by instructor).

Historic Understanding: Students will understand cultural identity and affiliation, and be able to apply that to their understanding of the societies of the ancient Near East.

Materials:

Computers with Internet access, note cards, paper, pencils or pens.

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Suggested Procedure(s):

This lesson has five parts. It can be done over two or three days, or condensed by combining elements (based on student familiarity with research and note-taking) or by using sections of it as homework. Several sections also adapt well for class discussion. Make sure students understand about keeping a bibliography card for each source as well as the importance of identifying where each piece of information they record came from.

Distribute the included student directions sheet.

Evaluation/Assessment Strategies:

Use the included Evaluation Rubric

Use these guiding questions to spur discussion in your classroom:

1. Where do we see people try to indicate their membership in groups (ethnic, cultural, social, etc.) in our communities today?
2. How did identity function in the ancient Near Eastern world, according to the module? How is the world described in the module similar to or different from the 19th- and early 20th-century one represented by the pictures you looked at?
3. Are people's ideas of ethnicity or identity in your world today more alike or different from the ancient and 19th- and early 20th-century Near East?

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Student directions:

1. What is an ethnicity or a tribe? Visit the dictionary and encyclopedia sources below and look up “tribe” and “ethnic” on each site. Then, on a note card, make a list of the elements that are common to tribes or ethnic groups – the types of things that make a tribe a tribe. As you make your list, be sure to indicate which source each piece of information on tribalism came from. Make a bibliography card for each source.

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/> Online edition of the dictionary

<http://www.encyclopedia.com> Free online resource to search many different encyclopedias – make sure that you only look for a GENERAL definition of “tribe” in the list of search results, as there will be a lot of information about specific tribes that are retrieved as well.

Your school may have access to online databases and encyclopedias that you may use as well.

2. Go to <http://mideastimage.com/search.aspx> to click and search under the PEOPLE category. Look at the various pictures of people taken from about 1850 to 1950. How many different ethnic groups can you find represented (Kurds, Druze, Yazidi, Chaldeans, Jews, Arabs, Armenians, etc.)? What kinds of distinctive features do these groups have, if any (clothing, hair, etc.)? In the main page search box, type “ethnic groups” and conduct a search. Look for details in the seven or so pictures that come up. Look especially at the old postcard that has people of many different ethnicities posing together – what features make each unique? On note cards, take notes of each tribe or ethnicity and what things about the way the people look relate them to their group. Be sure to indicate the source on each card, and make a bibliography card for this site. Think – if you lived among all of these different groups, how would you know who belonged to what group? What would you be wearing that would let them know who you were?

3. Now, make a list of KINDS of physical ways that people indicate what group they belong to (clothes, headgear, jewelry, etc.) in the pictures you found. Do people at your school indicate what group they belong to in similar ways? How? Are there other places where you live that you can see people try to show that they belong to a specific group or groups?

4. Read over the module entitled “The Question of Identity: Ethnicity, Language, Religion, and Gender” again, taking notes on note cards about how ethnicity and identity functioned in the ancient world.

5. Formulate a thesis about how ethnicity and/or identity in your school or where you live is similar to or different from how people in the ancient and/or 19th century Middle Eastern world understood ethnicity and identity. Write a 3- to 5-paragraph essay that supports your thesis using data collected on your note cards. Use the bibliographic and citation style which is the standard for your class (MLA or Chicago style) to cite each piece of supporting evidence you use.

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Evaluation Rubric:

Research Report: Comparing Modern and Ancient Ideas of Ethnicity and Identity

Teacher Name: Laura Wangerin

Student Name:

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Thesis	Paper has a clearly stated, arguable thesis statement.	Paper has an arguable thesis statement.	Paper has an argument, but does not attempt a thesis statement.	Paper is a report, and does not have an arguable thesis.
Organization	Information is very organized with well-constructed paragraphs and subheadings.	Information is organized with well-constructed paragraphs.	Information is organized, but paragraphs are not well constructed.	The information appears to be disorganized.
Sources	All sources (information and graphics) are accurately documented in the desired format.	All sources (information and graphics) are accurately documented, but a few are not in the desired format.	All sources (information and graphics) are accurately documented, but many are not in the desired format.	Some sources are not accurately documented.
Support	Information clearly relates to the main topic. It includes several supporting details and/or examples.	Information clearly relates to the main topic. It provides 1-2 supporting details and/or examples.	Information clearly relates to the main topic. No details and/or examples are given.	Information has little or nothing to do with the main topic.
Paragraph	All paragraphs include introductory sentence, explanations or details, and concluding sentence.	Most paragraphs include introductory sentence, explanations or details, and concluding sentence.	Paragraphs included related information but were typically not constructed well.	Paragraphing structure was not clear and sentences were not typically related within the paragraphs.