



Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

Writing and Literature, Islamic Period

Michael Sells, John Henry Barrows Professor of Islamic History and Literature, Divinity School, The University of Chicago

Lesson Plan 2:

The Expansion and Influence of Muslim Literature 600–1600 CE

General Description of Lesson Plan: Students will read the module, examine elements of the textual and visual record, and will comment on differences between the artistic traditions in the Middle East and Europe and the impact the former had on the literary traditions of the latter.

Created By: Peter M. Scheidler, Kenwood Academy High School, Chicago, IL

Subject Area(s): British or World Literature, Cultural Studies, World or European History

For Grade Level(s): 11–12

Time Needed: Two or three class periods

Outcomes/Objectives: Students will enhance their appreciation of the cultural exchanges between Europe and the Muslim world from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance.

Materials: Color copies of images from the module, or Internet access and links.

Suggested Procedure(s):

Students will be given the entire module article to read:

(<http://teachmiddleeast.lib.uchicago.edu/historical-perspectives/writing-and-literature/islamic-period/index.html>) and prepare notes for homework. Class the next day will include a discussion of the five sections of the body of the module and the five other sections. The following day, students will be put into groups of four (or three, if necessary), and will receive the list of four essay questions included at the end of this plan. Students will either need internet access at this point or will have color copies of the associated images along with their commentaries.

The next class day, students will sit to compose written responses to the questions from the previous day's discussions. Each student will receive one of the essay questions to work on.

Public Education Department

The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

1155 E. 58th Street, Chicago, IL. 60637

<http://oi.uchicago.edu>

Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

Lesson Plan 1: The Expansion and Influence of Muslim Literature 600–1600 CE

These will be issued at random. The impetus here is to make the discussion and study at home sufficient that each student could tackle any of the four prompts, rather than having students adopt a “divide and conquer” approach that negates the group process. Teachers will choose whether students should be allowed to consult with notes when writing this final paper or not. The total reflection and writing time should not exceed 20 minutes of class time, and the final written work should not be less than one nor more than three handwritten pages.

Evaluation/Assessment Strategies: Teachers submit written work after their discussions. There are four questions here. One method would be to establish groups of four and instruct students that they will randomly receive one of the four to which they must respond in writing.

Specific questions for students to respond to:

1. Consider the original and newer meaning of the term “Ajami”. How does the shift in the meaning of this word illustrate the extension of Arab political and social influence in the Middle East?
2. Find the following image from this module and read the description listed with it.

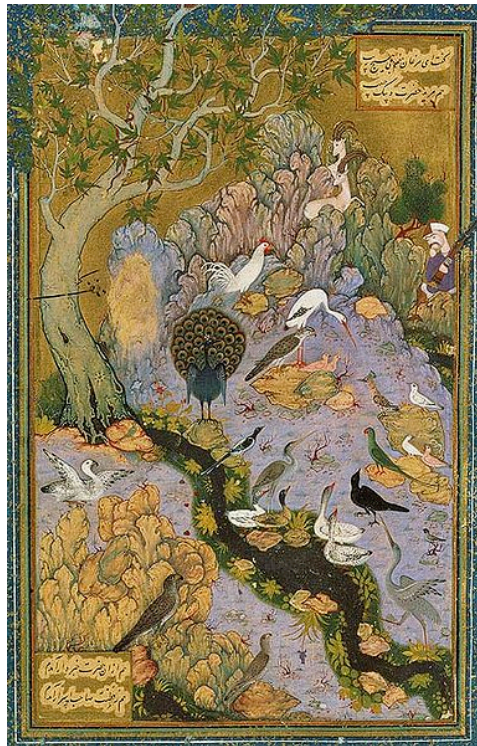


How do the relative sizes of paintings from the early second millennium CE reflect the existence of a “culture of the book” in the Middle East that was not mirrored in Europe until much later?

Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

Lesson Plan 1: The Expansion and Influence of Muslim Literature 600–1600 CE

3. Find the following image from this module and read the description listed with it. Relate the content of this image and the text that included it with the central theme of *remembrance* in Middle Eastern literature.



Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

Lesson Plan 1: The Expansion and Influence of Muslim Literature 600–1600 CE

4. Consider the following two images and the translation of the poem “Dead on the Trail in Dhāt al-Áda” at the end of this module.



How do the stories that these images illustrate relate to the concept of “love at first sight”? Which western story is most closely associated with this concept (hint: it has a character named Mercutio), and how do the images and plot lines of the two stories and the poem above relate to the famous play written in English around 1595?

Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

Lesson Plan 1: The Expansion and Influence of Muslim Literature 600–1600 CE

Evaluation Rubric:

Writing Rubric Content and Conventions: The Expansion and Influence of Muslim Literature 600-1600 CE				
CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Content: FOCUS	Topic/subject is clear, though it may/may not be explicitly stated.	Topic/subject is generally clear though it may not be explicitly stated.	Topic/subject may be vague.	Topic/subject is unclear or confusing.
Content: ORGANIZATION	Organizational structure establishes relationship between/among ideas/events.	Organizational structure establishes relationships between ideas/events, although minor lapses may be present.	Organizational structure establish some relationship between/among some of the ideas/events. The structure is minimally complete.	Organizational structure does not establish connection between/among ideas/events. The overall structure is incomplete or confusing.
Content: STYLE - Vocabulary	Exhibits skillful use of vocabulary that is precise and purposeful	Exhibits reasonable use of vocabulary that is precise and purposeful.	Exhibits minimal use of vocabulary that is precise and purposeful.	Lacks use of vocabulary that is precise and purposeful.
Conventions	Conventions scale is 0-2 -->	Conventions scale is 0-2 -->	Exhibits REASONABLE CONTROL of grammatical conventions appropriate to the writing task: sentence formation; standard usage including agreement, tense, and case; and mechanics including use of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.	Exhibits MINIMAL CONTROL of grammatical conventions appropriate to the writing task: sentence formation; standard usage including agreement, tense, and case; and mechanics including use of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.
Content: STYLE - Sentence Fluency	Demonstrates skillful sentence fluency (varies length, good flow rhythm, and varied structure).	Demonstrates reasonable sentence fluency.	Demonstrates minimal sentence fluency.	Sentence fluency is lacking.

Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

Lesson Plan 1: The Expansion and Influence of Muslim Literature 600–1600 CE

Use these guiding questions to spur discussion in your classroom:

1. Papermaking and bookbinding were in widespread use in the Muslim world well before they were used in any large degree in Europe. How is this difference manifest in the differing artistic traditions that emerged in each region?
2. Do universal themes exist because the human experience includes similar episodes regardless of mingling of cultures, or is cultural exchange the cause of this universality?