



Center for  
Middle Eastern Studies

## Mini-Lesson/Discussion Prompt on Iran

**Purpose:** If you are discussing Iran (either modern or ancient), here's a discussion prompt that is sure to wake up your students! It includes a rap video (less than 4 minutes long), which will get them thinking about the scope of Persian history, Iran's geographic and religious diversity, and the impact of modern media/culture on society.

**The Rap Video:** "My Identity" ("Hoviate-e Man") by YAS on YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VdJCIWSMNT0> (The translated lyrics – with notes – are available in a handout included in this mini-lesson. Make copies to hand out to your students.)

### Process:

1. Before showing the video, ask the students:
  - What have you heard about Iran: its language, people, culture?
  - Have any of you seen the movie "The 300"? For those who have seen it: why might people from Iran dislike that movie?
  - Why do you think the video would be in the Persian language but have some English in it? (Tell them that the video was made in Great Britain – such music is forbidden in Iran today.)
2. Show the video
3. Discussion after the video:
  - What did you notice about the geographical features of Iran? (Point out the diversity: not just deserts but the green Caspian Sea region, the Persian Gulf, cities.)
  - The song is called "My Identity." From the visual images, what do you learn about the Iranian identity? (emphasis on their long history – especially the pre-Islamic history, religious diversity – Jewish and Christian minorities that are still allowed to practice today)
  - What issues of identity are raised by the lyrics? (Aryan – not in the anti-Semitic, European sense but in the ethnographical sense – Persians are NOT Arabs, nor do they speak Arabic, but they are of Aryan origin and speak an Indo-European language more closely related to English than to Arabic; pride in their great poets and writers like Omar Khayyam and Rumi; pride in human rights – Cyrus the Great's cylinder that they showed in the visuals that freed the Jews from the Babylonian captivity and was a statement of religious freedom)
  - Why do Iranians dislike the movie "The 300"? (for portraying Persians as monsters and for being a put-down of their history and identity)
4. If you have time, show the video again since they will get a lot more out of it after the discussion.