

Assignment Description (For Teachers)

Title: The Kurds: People without a Country

Author: Lisa Adeli, University of Arizona Center for Middle Eastern Studies, PhD in History.

Purpose/Connection to the Curriculum: This lesson is designed for high school Social Studies classes and meets numerous World History and Geography standards: on the post-World War I treaties, the independence movements in developing nations, regional and human systems developments, and the ways in which both physical and human geography affect historical developments. The lesson also helps student improve their research and writing skills as well as their facility in problem solving and critical thinking.

Overview: The lesson begins with a lecture/presentation about the Kurds and their history/geography (materials included). Students are then asked to divide into pairs, randomly choose a place and a time in modern Kurdish history in which their character will live, do some research on that historical situation, fill out the research question guide and the options pros and cons guide, and write a detailed letter explaining what actions their fictional character plans to take and why.

Note: The instructor may use the powerpoint presentation without requiring the students to do the research/creative writing assignment. However, engaging students intellectually and creatively is recommended.

Grade Level: High School/College.

Time: It depends on how much time you allow for in-class work versus what is assigned as homework. 1 class period (1 hour) for the background lecture/presentation and 1-2 class periods for research and writing (plus homework).

Objectives: Students are expected to: conduct research and share their findings, write effectively, and develop a greater understanding of Middle Eastern history, geography, and ethnicity.

Targeted Skills - Based on Arizona State Standards:

High School Social Studies: Geography Strand:

- Concept 2: Places and Regions. PO 1 – Identify the characteristics that define a region – with specific reference to human processes such as religion and political organization. PO 4 – Analyze the differing political, religious, economic, demographic, and historical ways of viewing places and regions. PO 6 – Analyze how a region changes over time.

- Concept 4: Human Systems. PO 1 – Interpret population growth and demographics. PO 2 – Analyze push-pull factors that contribute to human migration. PO 3 – Analyze the effects of migration on places of origin and destination. PO 6 – Analyze factors that affect human populations.
- Concept 6: Geographic Applications. PO 2 – Analyze how changing perceptions of places and environments affect the choices of people and institutions. PO 3 – Analyze how geography influences historical events and movements.

High School Social Studies: World History Strand:

- Concept 1: Research Skills for History.
- Concept 8: World at War. PO 3 – Explain the end of World War I and its aftermath – specific references to treaties and the end of the Ottoman Empire. PO 8 – Compare independence movements of emerging nations.
- Concept 9: Contemporary World. PO 5 – Connect current events with historical events and issues using information from class discussions and various resources.

High School Writing:

- Writing applications:
 - Concept 4: Persuasive writing.
 - Concept 6: Research skills.

Suggested Procedures

- Day 1:

Required: Means of showing the PowerPoint presentation to the class and (optional) a Kurdish song that you can download or stream from a website.

1. Motivator: Play a song of your choice from the following website: <http://www.kurdonline.com/music/index.php>. Have the students respond to the music: the language, the instruments, the rhythms, the overall feel of the music.
2. Hand out the Basic Facts about the Kurds sheet (document #2). This will be a reference for students.
3. Using the notes/script (#3a) and powerpoint (#3b), discuss the situation of the Kurds across time and place. Topics for discussion: Why don't the Kurds have a country of their own? In which places/time periods have Kurds suffered the worst? What possible solutions to "the Kurdish Question" have been proposed? How effective has each of them been, and why?

- Day 2 (and maybe Day 3, according to your needs):

Required:

- **List of topics for research cut into strips (Cut up Topics for Research, handout, document #4.) In a random drawing, each pair should choose one topic.**
- **Photocopies (one for each student pair) of the research guide and pros/cons sheet (documents #5 and 6).**
- **Access to library resources and computers with internet connectivity.**

1. Tell the student pairs that they are Kurdish teenagers living in the time period and country that they have chosen. (Each pair should choose a realistic Kurdish name for their character.) Each pair should research the Kurdish situation in the specified time and place. Together, the two should carefully and thoroughly fill out the Research Question Guide (included – document #5).
2. The pair should then fill out the Options Pros and Cons sheet (included – document #6), considering carefully the possible or probable effects of each course of action. Then, they should decide on a course of action to take.
3. Using their completed Research Question Guide and the Options Pros and Cons sheet, the two should work together to write a letter of approximately 2 pages in length, describing to a close friend or family member what they have decided to do and why. Remind them that they are expected to include concrete facts and analysis as well as the emotional impact of what they are doing.

Assessing Student Learning

10% : Quiz on the Kurds (info. from the presentation)

60% : Research

- 30% : Research Question Guide
- 30% : Options Pros and Cons sheet

30% : Letter

- 20% : effectiveness of explaining the issue in writing (inclusion of important facts)
- 10% : persuasiveness of the writing

Extending the Lesson: Post the letters on a website or have students exchange hard copies of the letters. From the point of view of a friend of the author OR from a fellow Kurd in a different country, students could write a response to the original letter, indicating specific points with which they agree or disagree (and *why*).