



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Center for Middle Eastern Studies

Syria: “I will not write poetry for anyone else” (Amenah Abou Kerech’s “Lament for Syria”)

Overview

Students will critically analyze a short film, historical maps of Syria and poetry by Syrian authors in three days

These lessons for 3 to 4 days serve as an anticipatory set or introduction to a large four-week English II inquiry unit on the history and geography of Syria including **several texts (see below for complete list)** but anchored by Syrian-American author Jennifer Zeynab Joukhadar’s novel *The Map of Salt and Stars*. Although the lessons below were designed to be introduction, they can be used as stand-alone lessons. Before this unit, students will have been introduced to the roles of perpetrator, victim, bystander and hero to use as a critical lens for analysis of the multi-genre texts including critical reading and seminar on the biblical parable “The Good Samaritan.” Additionally, they will have been trained on critical analysis of maps as stand-alone texts and the TPCASTT protocol to read and analyze poetry. They will also know how to use the Horizontal and Vertical movement graphic organizers as a tool for literary analysis. Following the study of Syrian poetry, art and maps as well as Joukhadar’s novel, student small groups will read current Syrian refugee stories and utilize Spheros to compose and code the tracks of these refugees. The unit will culminate in a research-based model UN hearing on the Syrian Refugee Crisis where student pairs will take on the role of a particular country and be prepared to represent that country’s interests in a hearing based on a model-UN-type assimilation hearing. This curriculum was designed for an environment where if students don’t have 1:1 devices, they have easy access to computers.

1. Short film *Mare Nostrum* Copy of the short film <http://www.manhattanshort.com/finalists.html> AND you can rent it for a 72-hour streaming period for a \$1.19 here through vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/marenostrum>
2. Maps of Syria (see below for specific ones)
3. Kahil Gibran’s poem “To Young Americans of Syrian Origins” http://www.alhewar.com/gibran_to_young_americans.htm
4. Syrian-American author Omar Offendum’s performance of Gibran’s “To Young Americans of Syrian Origins”: digital recording here <http://www.hawaiipublicradio.org/post/potent-poetry-omar-offendum>
5. Shaun Tan’s picture book *The Arrival* (animated digital copy here: <https://vimeo.com/74292820>)
6. Poems by Syrian poets (see specific titles and links below)
7. Jake Halpern and Michael Sloan’s graphic novel *Welcome to the New World* as published in installments in the New York Times: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/10/26/opinion/sunday/welcome-to-the-new-world.html?_r=0
8. Jennifer Zeynab Joukhadar’s novel *The Map of Salt and Stars*
9. Website for the digital game: <http://www.gamesforchange.org/game/syrian-journey/>
10. Khaled Hosseini’s *Sea Prayer*; although designed for Google VR headsets such as the cardboard ones, this 3D film can be viewed on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKBNEEY-c3s>

Essential/Compelling Question(s) for these stand-alone lessons:

-How is art including poetry, song, media and visual art used to document the Syrian refugee crisis historically and in the most recent conflict of the 21st century? How is art used as resistance against the feelings of exile, oppression and longing for home? How is poetry used to document the daily human behaviors and emotions of relationships?

-What can a critical read and analysis of maps of Syria reveal about its history, geography and culture?

- What historical, geographic and cultural information can we infer by looking at a series of maps of Syria?
- Does Syria's geography make it more vulnerable to attack and oppression?
- What choices do Syrian refugees have?
- What impact is the 2010-present conflict in Syria having on individuals?
- What is the relevance of the Syrian refugee crisis to me as an individual?

Grade(s)

English II

Subject(s)

Critical reading, writing, thinking and discussing of multi-genre texts

Although designed for an **English language arts course**, excerpts from this unit could easily be used in social studies courses such as World History, AP Human Geography, or Contemporary Genocidal Studies.

Standards

Reading for Literature

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1](#) - Cite strong textual evidence

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2](#) - Determine theme or central idea

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3](#) - Analyze complex character(s)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4](#) - Determine meaning of words and phrases, tone

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.6](#) - Analyze point of view and cultural experience

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.7](#) - Analyze subject in two different artistic mediums

Reading for Information

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1](#) - Cite textual evidence and make inferences

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.2](#) - Determine central idea of text and how it emerges

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.5](#) - Determine and analyze author's claims

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.8](#) - Delineate and evaluate argument in a text

Materials:

Although not absolutely necessary, it is helpful if students have access to laptops or devices.

Copy of the short film *Mare Nostrum* <http://www.manhattanshort.com/finalists.html> AND you can rent it for a 72-hour streaming period for a \$1.19 here through vimeo:

<https://vimeo.com/ondemand/marenostrum>

Class set of copies of the horizontal and vertical graphic organizer:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-huLzgBjJOZeVRHt6Oczko5CPDwCqTXAe7C-qd5ON08/edit?usp=sharing>

Class set of copies of the AssertProveExplain (APE) rubric:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wPHcil65522aDGp3F7z7FwqVjZLuVCXUhbNctpkZD3E/edit?usp=sharing>

Smartboard projection of the maps below that can be found at several of the websites including this one:

<http://www.midafternoonmap.com/2014/01/14-maps-of-syrias-history.html> - although you can project them,

I encourage you to print hard copies for students, possibly in color if that is an option as the materiality of maps has documented learning differences from digital copies. If there is any way possible cost-wise and

technologically speaking, a transparency of each map would be ideal as then the teacher could layer the maps in the synthesis discussion to help students see the overlays and what observations might be made as a result. I have purposely selected maps of Syria from different time periods, different cartographers and which feature different information so that in synthesizing the information, students are exposed to a lot of different views. It should be emphasized that a map always portrays a point of view and always leaves something out. This means that no one map tells the complete truth but rather makes a claim(s). Use this handout to help facilitate the analysis questions students should be asking about maps:

1. JH Colton and Company's 1855 American made map of Turkey in Asia and Caucasian Provinces of Russia -
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1855_Colton_Map_of_Turkey,_Iraq,_and_Syria_-_Geographicus_-_TurkeyIraq-colton-1855.jpg
2. Revised and digitized version of Yeremia Chelebi, 1691 Map of Ottoman Empire and the province of Aleppo at the beginning of the 20th century -
<https://www.houshamadyan.org/en/mapottomanempire/vilayetaleppo.html> paired with
3. The Carter Center's map Tracking the Front Lines in Syria from Jan. 2015 to Present:
<https://d3svb6mundity5.cloudfront.net/dashboard/index.html>
4. Health Cluster Whole of Syria Syrian Arab Republic, June 2018
https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/wos_4ws_june_2018_v2.pdf
5. US CIA Intelligence Political Map of Syria, 1976
https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/syria_pol_1976.jpg
6. Lonely Planet's 2011 Map of Syria <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/middle-east/syria/>
7. 1993 Atlas of the Middle East's map of Economic Activity,
https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/atlas_middle_east/syria_econ.jpg
8. Guerilla Cartographers 2017 Map of Syria and Iraq
<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/08/maps-atlas-water-conflict-syria-isis/#/03-maps-water.jpg>
9. Modern copy of Tabula Rogeriana by Konrad Miller map (cartographer Muhammad al-Idrisi), map originally published in 1154: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tabula_Rogeriana

Class Set of copies of Mapy Analysis Form:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1DxFTzzjfSr9Dfh0Hze2VmMqdBEgTGKSJVDfKVaDpc-0/edit?usp=sharing>

3 x 5 sticky notes or post-its (enough for small groups to have 4 to 5 each)

If students do not have 1:1 devices, provide hard copies of this aljazeera.com article "A 'new poetry' emerges from Syria's civil war: <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/09/20139784442125773.html>

Class Set of copies of the TPCASTT protocol and graphic organizer:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GIfHDuDBGATvNst5Bk7LPbq0bLDG-cqjHAqVaZ0Cwpo/edit?usp=sharing>

Large Chart Paper - At least 9 to 10 pieces for the small group poem activity

Class Set of copies of each of the following poems - I would have a packet to give each student so that every student has a hard copy of each of the poems:

1. Mohja Kahf's "Voyager Dust:"
<http://iwannallearntowrite.blogspot.com/2012/02/52-short-stories-and-poems-voyager-dust.html>
2. Ali Ahmad Said Esber aka Adonis' poem "Desert:"
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/55320/desert-56d236c9c16e2>

3. Golan Haji's poem "Autumn Here is Magical and Vast:"
<https://www.wordswithoutborders.org/article/autumn-here-is-magical-and-vast>
4. Aminah Abou Kerech's "Lament for Syria:"
<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/oct/01/the-13-year-old-syrian-refugee-prizewinning-poet-amineh-abou-kerech-betjeman-prize>
5. Najat Abdul Samad's "When I Am Overcome by Weakness:"
<https://www.pri.org/stories/2013-10-12/take-peek-syria-through-poetry-spurred-its-war>
6. Youssef Abu Yihea's "I Am Syrian:"
<https://www.pri.org/stories/2013-10-12/take-peek-syria-through-poetry-spurred-its-war>
7. Nizar Qabanni's "On Entering the Sea:" <https://allpoetry.com/On-Entering-The-Sea>
8. Faraj Bayraqdar's "Ode of Sorrow:" <https://www.wordswithoutborders.org/article/ode-of-sorrow>

Duration

These lessons will take 3 to 4 class periods, depending on the length of the class.

Procedure

Day 1

1. Put the word Syria on the board. Ask students to take 3" of silent time and do a "braindump." They should write down as many things as they know or think they know about Syria. They can do it as a bullet list or in complete sentences. After the 3 minutes, have students pair/share for a couple of minutes. Then, as a whole class, have students share out while teacher or student-scribe makes a list of what students know or think they know. This is an excellent opportunity to pre-assess what students know as well as identify misconceptions you will want to deconstruct throughout the unit. The total activity should take no more than 30 minutes and culminate with a question of very brief discussion of what students have heard or know about the Syrian Refugee Crisis. Take a photo of the list of what they know so that you can make it digitally available to students throughout the unit.
2. Introduce them to the short film *Mare Nostrum*. Explain that there this is a short relatively speech-free 13 minute film created in 2016 about a Syrian father and his daughter. Using the inquiry-based horizontal and vertical movement framework (students should already be familiar with this framework here: https://docs.google.com/document/d/10AKVKIQbZQMs1sDnUKKP-IZilH9FeVP71oLkizSZb_E/edit?usp=sharing), have students watch the film 2x. The first time, they should just watch it without having to worry about writing anything down. The second time, have them make observations for horizontal movement. After the second viewing, have students discuss as a class the horizontal movement observations they made. For homework, they need to complete the vertical movement portion of the graphic organizer. Here is a clean copy of the graphic organizer students use: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-huLzgbJJOZeVRHt6Oczko5CPDwCqTXAe7C-qd5ON08/edit?usp=sharing>

Note: Although I don't give students formal questions to answer as they watch the film in hopes that they will bring up the very issues I want them to note through the inquiry-based vertical and horizontal movement framework, below are the big ideas I would solicit through our day 2 discussion if they do not bring them up on their own.

Day 2

3. Begin class with having students pair/share their graphic organizers to share the vertical observations and ideas they see being put forth by the film *Mare Nostrum*. After students have had approximately 8" to

pair/share, then bring the class to a whole class discussion of their observations, taking about 20 minutes. It's helpful again to have a student or the teacher scribe the vertical observations students offer so that the entire class can see this as a bank. At this time, if students are not hitting on the ideas you want them to notice and bring forth, the teacher can solicit questions from this bank:

- A. Does the father love the daughter? How do you know?
- B. What skill is most important for the little girl to have? How do you know? What does this reveal?
- C. What would motivate a father to leave the "safety" of where he and his daughter are staying currently in the film?
- D. What inferences can you make about where the mother is?
- E. Why do you think the father does not ask someone to help him with his daughter?

Homework Assigned at this Time: Students will write a well-developed constructed response, pulling from the horizontal and vertical observations of *Mare Nostrum* on this prompt: Using textual evidence, explain what you see as the overall message of the short film. Be sure to address whom you believe the audience is and why. Ultimately, agree, disagree or qualify how you feel about the film's message. Explain why.

To assess this constructed response, I use this simple rubric:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wPHcil65522aDGp3F7z7FwqVjZLuVCXUhbNctpkZD3E/edit?usp=sharing>

4. Map Jigsaw: Divide students up into small groups of 3 to 4 each depending on size of your class and using your knowledge of your class personality and learning needs. Give each group individual copies of one of the Syrian maps. It's okay if you have more than one group on the same map as that can be helpful to see what each group brings forth on their analysis of the map. Each group should take the assigned map and use the map questions on the handout to analyze the map of Syria and make inferences. Give them about 10 to 15 minutes to analyze using these questions on this handout:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1DxFTzzjSr9Dfh0Hze2VmMqdBEgTGKSJVDfKVADpc-0/edit?usp=sharing>.

They should use the sticky notes to make at least 4 to 5 observations and inferences. Each group will then make a quick presentation to the whole class of what they discussed and the inferences they have made about their map. As each group presents, it is the teacher's job to help the class synthesize the information they are getting from each of the maps. In practice, it would be a good idea to have a student scribe synthesis statements from the map presentations as well as questions arising from the map study. Make it digital to provide students a copy. I would encourage the teacher to hang up a copy of each map that the group presents on in a cluster so that it can be a visual reminder for students throughout the unit.

Reminder about Homework Assignment: Write your constructed response to the prompt on *Mare Nostrum*, providing textual evidence that comes from your horizontal and vertical graphic organizer. And ask students to read the background aljazeera article on Syrian poetry found at the link below in prep for tomorrow's work on Syrian poetry: <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/09/20139784442125773.html>

Day 3-4

Collect the homework (constructed response to *Mare Nostrum*) while students are preparing a GIST statement that summarizes synthesized information from the map study the previous day.

5. As a warmup, ask students to write a GIST statement on a 3x5" index card synthesizing what they understand about Syria as a result of the map presentations. Take them up and read them to again assess what students are taking away at the moment from the maps. (If you're not familiar with GISTs, please read

more about this strategy here:

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/gist-summarizing-strategy-content-290.html>) - This should take approximately 10 minutes. If students want to pair to compare, I will let them do that. I then collect the 3 x 5 index cards.

6. Pass out copies of the TPCASTT form

(<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GlfHDuDBGATvNst5Bk7LPbq0bLDG-cqjHAqVaZ0Cwpo/edit?usp=sharing>). Assuming students have some experience using the TPCASTT protocol with reading and analyzing poetry, I divide the class into approximately 8 groups (3 to 4 per group is the goal) and assign each small group one of the poems by a Syrian poet listed under materials. Each small group receives one of the pieces of Chart paper. They need to read the poem aloud at least 2x and then work through as a group on the TPCASTT, charting for each letter on the large paper. They should use sticky notes to annotate their questions, observations and themes individually before looking at it as a small group. Although I would want students to really utilize the TPCASTT protocol to guide their deep annotations, I would provide some questions and ideas they might see referenced in their poems to help focus their interrogation of the texts.

- A. What geographical markers or references do you find in the poem? Cities, rivers, regions, mountains, animals, plants and natural resources, spring, summer, fall and winter, weather, natural disasters?
- B. Use of colors to symbolize?
- C. Historical allusions?
- D. Conflict - effects of that?
- E. What does the poem have to say about relationships?
- F. How does the poet feel about Syria? Does the poet seem to be in exile?
- G. How might the poem be considered an act of resistance? To whom or what?

Here is the group of poems:

Mohja Kahf's "Voyager Dust:"

<http://iwannalearntowrite.blogspot.com/2012/02/52-short-stories-and-poems-voyager-dust.html>

Ali Ahmad Said Esber aka Adonis' poem "Desert:"

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/55320/desert-56d236c9c16e2>

Golan Haji's poem "Autumn Here is Magical and Vast:"

<https://www.wordswithoutborders.org/article/autumn-here-is-magical-and-vast>

Aminah Abou Kerech's "Lament for Syria:"

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/oct/01/the-13-year-old-syrian-refugee-prizewinning-poet-amineh-abou-kerech-betjeman-prize>

Najat Abdul Samad's "When I Am Overcome by Weakness:"

<https://www.pri.org/stories/2013-10-12/take-peek-syria-through-poetry-spurred-its-war>

Youssef Abu Yihea's "I Am Syrian:"

<https://www.pri.org/stories/2013-10-12/take-peek-syria-through-poetry-spurred-its-war>

Nizar Qabanni's "On Entering the Sea:" <https://allpoetry.com/On-Entering-The-Sea>

Faraj Bayraqdar's "Ode of Sorrow:" <https://www.wordswithoutborders.org/article/ode-of-sorrow>

As students work on this, the teacher circulates around, helping as needed and monitoring. This would take a good 60 minutes. Students should be prepared to share briefly the next day their group's discussion and charting.

7. Student groups will present their TPCASTT charts, beginning with reading aloud the poem their group worked on. Non-presenting students should pay attention, take notes and ask questions. They should be

building the foundation for a Paideia Seminar over the poetry the next day of class. Again as with the maps, the teacher should help the students synthesize ideas from these poems.

Homework: Tonight, you should go to tricider at the link below and respond to the question. Post your response and then respond to at least 2 other classmates' arguments. Provide pros and cons for your argument. Tomorrow, we'll look at the results and poll to see who provides the best argument.

<http://www.tricider.com/brainstorming/2hSa6AANENZ>

In case you do not have internet access, the question on tricider is this:

Out of the 8 Syrian poems, which speaker was the most effective at engaging readers? Make an argument. Be sure to include titles in quotation marks. Provide textual evidence for your answer.

Tricider.com is a free app for teachers used to set up a prompt where students then respond and build an argument, adding pros and cons. It has a feature where students can vote on each other's arguments for which one they think is the best. They can also add pros and cons to each other's arguments.