



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

## Center for Middle Eastern Studies

**Lesson Plan: American Women Writers of Muslim Heritage: An educational resource presenting texts and voices influenced by the Muslim world – many lessons and source materials on the website: <http://betseycoleman.com/>**

### Overview:

These lessons are designed to bring American women writers of Muslim heritage into the classroom. The writers give students multiple perspectives of women from Muslim heritage who may practice their religion or simply be influenced by their heritage. Using the website, [betseycoleman.com](http://betseycoleman.com), with its reading, writing, and collaborative classroom practices, students will build connections with local and global communities through reading about and viewing the lives of writers whose heritage includes such countries as Palestine, Afghanistan, Syria, Morocco, Sudan, Pakistan, and Turkey. The purpose for curating this collection of short readings, biographical information, creative writing prompts and student models is to introduce middle, high and even university students to the diversity of American women's voices influenced by the Muslim world. Teachers can use the site to connect their students with relevant and lively materials.

### How to use the site and writers:

Each writer, such as the poet Naomi Shihab Nye, has biographical information, at least one selected high interest work by the writer, followed by a video and discussion questions. Whether reading the work of Syrian American Mohja Kahf's *Emails from Scheherazad* <http://betseycoleman.com/mohja-kahf/> or the Bangladeshi American Tarfia Faizullah's "What I Want is Simple" <http://betseycoleman.com/tarfia-faizullah/>, the material builds conversations about being the other in the US, immigration, coming of age, women, and further important issues.

Individual and collaborative poetry and prose writing assignments follow these readings. The exercises connect the students' identities to those of the writers. All of the writing prompts have student models which the teacher might choose to use. For example, a reading of Afghan American Wajma Ahmady's "What You Never" <http://betseycoleman.com/29167-2/> is followed by a discussion of the reading. After this, students do the suggested writing activity, first reading a student model "English Lessons" based on Ahmady's piece.

Teachers will be able to use multiple elements of the site in the classroom and students will connect their lives to the work of the writers. The readings are highly accessible. The discussion questions help with the readings. The writing applications connecting the readings to

the lives of students are clear, detailed, and varied while the student models will help students with their writing.

**Extended Activity:**

If teachers or students would like to send ideas and student writings to Betsey Coleman, she will consider them for the website.