



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

## Center for Middle Eastern Studies

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### Lesson Plan for *The Librarian of Basra* By Shari Lossou-Lossavi

*This is a Reading Lesson that integrates Social Studies and Character Education. This lesson also has Geography, Writing, Science, and Math extension activities. The lesson is written for fourth grade, but could definitely be modified/changed for the upper grade levels.*

**Grade Level:** 4<sup>th</sup>

**Time Required:** At least two reading- block days

**Comprehension Strategy:** Make Connections

#### **Objectives:**

- The student will connect what he/she knows about books, libraries, and the Pillars of Character to his/her personal experiences.
- The student will research famous ancient libraries and compare them to libraries in his/her community.
- The student will create his/her own book about libraries.

#### **Standards: Strand 1: Reading Process; Concept 4: Vocabulary**

PO 1. Use knowledge of root words and affixes to determine the meaning of unknown words.

PO 2. Use context to determine the relevant meaning of a word.

PO 5. Determine the meanings, pronunciations, syllabication, synonyms, antonyms, and parts of speech of words by using a variety of reference aids, including dictionaries, thesauri, glossaries, and CD-ROM and Internet when available.

#### **Concept 6: Comprehension Strategies**

PO 1. Predict text context using prior knowledge and text features (e.g., illustrations, titles, topic sentences, key words).

PO 2. Confirm predictions about text for accuracy

PO 3. Generate clarifying questions in order to comprehend text.

PO 4. Use graphic organizers in order to clarify meaning of text.

PO 5. *Connect information and events in text to experience and to related text and sources.*

PO 6. Use reading strategies (e.g., drawing conclusion...) to comprehend text.

**Strand 2 : Comprehending Literary Text; Concept 1: Elements of Literature**

PO 1. Identify the main problem or conflict of a plot.

PO 2. Identify the resolution of a problem or conflict in a plot.

PO 5. Describe a character's traits using textual evidence(e.g., dialogue, actions, narrations, illustrations).

PO 7. Identify all aspects of the setting (e.g., time of day or year, historical period, place, situation).

PO 8. Compare (and contrast) the characters, events, and setting in a literary selection

**Strand 3: Writing Applications; Concept 6: Research**

PO 1. Paraphrase information from a variety of resources (e.g., Internet, reference materials).

PO 2. Organize notes in a meaningful sequence.

PO 3. Write an informational report that includes **main idea** (s) and relevant details.

**Social Studies Strand 2: World History; Concept 1: Research Skills for History; POs 1-4.**

**Concept 9: Contemporary World:**

PO 1. Describe current events using information from class discussions and various resources (e.g., newspapers, magazines, television, Internet, books, maps).

**Strand 3: Civics/Government; Concept 4: Rights, Responsibilities, and Roles of Citizenship**

PO 1. Discuss ways an individual can contribute to a school or community.

PO 2. Identify traits of character (e.g., responsibility, respect, perseverance, loyalty, integrity, involvement, justice, and tolerance) that are important to the preservation and improvement of democracy.

**Strand 4: Geography; Concept 1: The World in Spatial Terms**

PO 3. Construct maps using symbols to represent human and physical features.

PO 4. Construct charts and graphs to display geographic information.

PO 6. Locate physical and human features using maps, illustrations, images, or globes.

**Concept 3: Physical Systems; connect with Science Strand 3 Concept 1:**

Describe how natural events and human activities impact environments.

**Concept 6: Geographic Applications**

PO 2. Discuss geographic knowledge and skills related to current events.

**Mathematics; Connections (National Standard)**

Recognize and apply mathematics in contexts outside of mathematics.

**Materials:** *The Librarian of Basra*, by Jeanette Winter, *Books and Libraries*, by Jack Knowlton, *Making Books that Fly, Fold, Wrap, Hide, Pop Up, Twist, and Turn*, by Gwen Diehn (this book has a lot of historical information), paper for graphic organizer and drawing, pencils, Internet access, world map, art supplies.

**Building Background:** Begin by asking students

- What do you know about libraries? How long have they been in existence?
- Are they important? Why or why not?
- How would you feel if you made something that was very important to you and someone took it away or destroyed it?

**Direct Instruction:**

- Introduce vocabulary *abandon cupboards firestorm Koran Muhammad port city rages sand-swept shopkeepers*
- Based on the Building Background discussion and the vocabulary words, have students predict what the story will be about.
- Display a world map or globe, and show students where Basra, Iraq is located.
- Distribute paper and have students create a Double-Entry Journal graphic organizer. Column one is titled, “In This Story” and is numbered 1-4. (skip lines so there is enough room to write). Column two is titled, “In My Life”, and is also numbered 1-4. Students will complete the Double-Entry Journal as story is read to make connections.
- Explain to students that good readers make connections by comparing and relating what they’ve read to what they know about the world around them.
- Read the story aloud to students.

**Group Practice:** Literature discussion.

- *Have students share their responses to the Double Entry Journal.*
- *Then, ask these questions and have students discuss their answers –*
- What is the importance of Alia’s quotation at the beginning of the book? Why do you think this quotation was placed at the beginning and not the end of the book? (“*In the Koran, the first thing God said to Muhammad was ‘Read.’*”)
- In the beginning of the book, why do the people of the city come to the library? What do they do there? Do you do the same thing at your library?
- Why does Alia begin to worry?
- Why does the author say that Alia’s books are more precious to her than mountains of gold? What Pillar of Character does this reveal about Alia? (The Pillars of Character are **Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring, and Citizenship**)
- Why do you think the governor refuses to let Alia move the books to a safe place?
- Who helps Alia save the books? What Pillars of Character are they showing? How do you know this?
- The author illustrates parts of the story with different colors. Why do you think she does this? What do the colors represent to you?
- Compare the looks on Alia’s face on the pages that state, “Alia waits” and “She waits for war to end” (the following page). What is she thinking?

### Individual Practice:

- In their reading response journals or on paper, have students respond in writing to these questions: (1) How does this story relate to your life, thoughts, and feelings? (2) If something bad happened to your library, would you do something to help? What would you do?
- Have students draw what they think Alia's new library could look like.
- Have students use various resources to find out about one or more of these libraries:

The library at Alexandria

The library at Pergamum

King Ashurbanipal's Assyrian library at Nineveh

The medieval library at Hereford Cathedral in England

Your school library

Your local public/community library

Have students think about these questions-

- How many books/manuscripts were in the library?
- How were the books made?
- What happened to the library? Its books?
- Any other interesting facts or features

Using a Venn Diagram, students compare features of the ancient libraries to their school or local library.

**Assessment:** Using one of the formats in Gwen Diehn's *Making Books that Fly, Fold....*, students create their own book about (1) ways Alia modeled the Pillars of Character or (2) libraries. Teacher assesses student work.

### Extension Activities:

1. **Writing** - Students can write to the author or to the American Library Association to find out if Alia's library has been rebuilt.
2. **Geography** - Using a world map or a globe, students can locate their state, Iraq, and the countries of origin of the libraries they researched. Students then make labels/sticky notes naming the countries, attach them to the right places on the map, and use string and clear tape (I would not recommend using push-pins with fourth-graders) to 'connect' the locations of the libraries. You may even want to have students calculate the distance between their state and the countries.
  - Reproduce a map showing ancient cities in relation to Basra.
  - Use coordinates (latitude/longitude) to locate the ancient and modern cities (city X is located at \_\_\_degrees latitude , \_\_\_degrees longitude).
3. **Math** – Have students find out
  - how many books the ancient libraries had?
  - how many books the library in Basra had/has?
  - how many books are in your school library?

- How many books are in your local library branch?

Have students create a graph showing the number of books in each of the libraries. Students then formulate questions about their graphs for other students to answer.

4. **Science/Social Studies** - After researching what types of materials were used to make books (clay tablets, papyrus, etc.) from ancient to modern times, students create a timeline showing their findings.