



Center for Middle Eastern Studies

Pren Woods
“Lesson on Islam”
6th grade World History

The 6th grade standards read:

1. Compare the origins, founding leaders, basic principles, and diffusion of major religions and philosophies as they emerged and expanded, including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, and Taoism.
2. Compare the features and major contributions of the African civilizations of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai, including the influence of geography on their growth and the impact of Islam and Christianity on their cultures.
3. Summarize the characteristics of the Islamic civilization and the geographic aspects of its expansion.

Standard 1 is taught during the first nine weeks. Standard 2 is taught during the second nine weeks and standard 3 is taught during the third nine weeks. Furthermore, students will see these themes again in the 7th grade world history curriculum. Because of this, it is vital that students have a good foundation of Islam not only for their academic well being but also for cultural literacy for understanding contemporary world events.

The bulk of this lesson plan focuses on how I teach students the fundamental aspects of Islam. When I get to standards 2 and 3, I review those aspects and correlate them to the standard's content.

Day 1*

Students are shown a map of the Arabian Peninsula. They are shown Mecca and Medina and explained their significance to the Islamic world. Students learn that Mohammed was called to spread monotheism on the Arabian Peninsula and how his decision to spread a monotheistic belief led to conflict and the hegira. Students learn the five pillars of Islam and we have a group competition on creating the most imaginative mnemonic device for the five pillars. I model this by sharing my mnemonic device—“The (Testimony of Faith) Priest (Prayer) Called (Charity/Alms) For (Fasting) Peter (Pilgrimage/Hajj). As I share my mnemonic device, I explain how these pillars play out in day-to-day Islamic life.

A representative from each group must share its mnemonic device and explain each pillar. The class votes on the best mnemonic device. This mnemonic device will be reference throughout the unit and later in the 2nd and 3rd nine weeks.

Day 2

Haiku Writing Project and Alston's (the name of our school) Next Top Model (a play on America's Next Top Model TV show).

We review the mnemonic device. The class is divided into five groups. Each group is charged with writing a haiku on an assigned pillar. The haiku's title must be the pillar (i.e., Testimony of Faith, Pilgrimage, Charity, etc.). The haiku must, then, explain the pillar. Student groups must draw an appropriate illustration to go with the haiku. A representative from each group will read the haiku and talk about the illustration.

After this, each student group has to "model" the pillar. I serve as host "Tyrone Banks" (instead of Tyra Banks). Student groups are given ten minutes to think about what its pose will be. I call the first group forward to model "Testimony of Faith." I ask them to explain why their pose is "Testimony of Faith." A variation to this solo judge panel is that I may get students to be judges with me (this is quite hilarious as they love telling their peers that your pose does not reflect "Alms" at all). I eliminate three groups and then have two final groups come up with a pose that reflects the "heart" of Islam. I take my digital camera and take pictures of these final two groups and the class and judging panel discusses the merits of both groups (the groups are outside the room). I take my memory card out of my camera and pop it in my computer and, with great suspense, show the pose of the winning group for Alston's Next Top Model. Of course, the two groups have been called in before this time and eagerly wait to see which pose pops up on the SmartBoard.

Day 3-Project Religious Runaway (a play on Project Runaway)

I provide the student groups with posterboard paper, glue, and a pair of scissors. Students can bring in any other items they choose for creating their "fashion." They have thirty minutes to create a T-shirt and have a member from their group model it. Their T-shirt must capture all the pillars of Islam. This is a lot of fun and the class is a mess afterwards. I typically get four students to be judges with me and we walk around shaking our heads, giving advice, etc. in order to get students to think about the T-shirt they are creating.

*These days can be switched around as the teacher sees fit.

Days 4-6—Newscast Project. Students have three days to work on the project (in-class and at home) and the 7th day, student groups present their projects.

Directions: Each group is presenting a news show on Mohammed's life and the Pillars of Islam. They will have three class days to work on this project. Minimal outside work is required, though they may wish to create props, signs, etc. However, this is unnecessary. Students use their notes and textbook (use the index and table of contents to find out pages in the textbook). The newscast should not go over 8 minutes.

Here is what is needed for the news show.

A sign with the call letters/numbers of your news show-5 POINTS

Project a map on the SmartBoard to do a geography/weather report of the Arabian Peninsula-10 POINTS

Late-breaking news segment (the anchors do this)- 10 POINTS

Talkback Piece—someone calls in to the station or an anchor reads a letter from an audience member and the anchors banter about the content-10 points

Live from scene with a witness- A reporter from the anchor goes “live on the scene” with someone (maybe Mohammed, maybe someone who made him flee to Medina, etc.)-10 POINTS

Additional Notes

- Make sure everyone in your group is used in an economic fashion.
- The news show can not go over 8 minutes.
- Only the anchors can use note cards
- Make sure your news show flows. You do not have to present it in the order that I have.
- Be creative and have fun.

Days 8-9 “Mohammed Thriller”

Student groups learn the Mohammed song to the tune of Michael Jackson’s “Thriller.” I wrote the lyrics to this song. Half of the class is spent learning the words to the song and making sure that students understand the story that is being told through the song. The other half of the class is devoted to students choreographing their song. Since I am a dancer, I work with the student groups on the Michael Jackson’s moves, but guess what? Everyone knows the basics of that video. Day 9, students perfect their dance moves and one member from each group does a voice-over (like Vincent Price) on Mohammed and/or the Pillars of Islam) while the other members dance.

Day 10- Student groups sing the songs to their parents, staff, and faculty. Before students perform, we just speak the lyrics and then I randomly ask students to explain the meaning of the lyrics to demonstrate student knowledge. Then, student groups perform and dance. It’s a great time. If time permits, we hold a “Mohammed Thriller” workshop for parents.

I have sent you a link to my singing the song. If it does not work, then please let me know and I’ll try to upload it to TeacherTube.

Here are the lyrics to “Mohammed Thriller” to the tune of “Thriller”

**It’s in Arabia (It’s close to midnight), something strange is happening in the land
Mohammed’s wealthy, traveling in his desert caravan
He heard a voice. It told him that there was just one God. (Allah-in a whisper)
He made a choice to preach his word and make him His Lord. You know he did.**

Cuz he’s Mohammed. Mohammed, yeah. He’s standing for what’s right and he is running for his life. Cuz he’s Mohammed. Mohammed, yeah. His peeps are gonna mob you as they go into the Kaaba. That’s right. That’s right. Islam.

After the above part, student groups are dancing while a student voice-over narrates important content (an example—Mohammed was from the Arabian Peninsula and he. . .)

After the voice-over, students go back to “Cuz he’s Mohammed. . . .

Sample guiding questions to check for student understanding?

Why is it in Arabia?

What is the belief in one God?

Why did he run for his life and what was that journey from Mecca to Medina called?