

9/11 Backlash: Being Muslim in America

Teacher's Guide

Grade Level: 9-12

Curriculum Focus: Media Studies

Lesson Duration: Three class periods

Program Description

The History and Teachings of Islam (5 min.) – Discusses the divine revelation that gave birth to a world religion. *Old Faith, New Prejudice* (25 min.) – Looks at how the nearly seven million people in the U.S. who follow the Islamic faith were mostly ignored – until after the 9/11 attacks. *Casting Recall* (17 min.) – Examines Hollywood typecasting, especially the stereotype of the Arab villain, and how it works to perpetuate religious prejudice.

Onscreen Questions

- How do Muslim Americans preserve their connection with Islam?
 - How have the events of September 11th affected attitudes towards the Islamic faith?
 - How can the portrayal of movie villains affect racial stereotypes?
 - Do you think movies and other media should be held accountable for promoting stereotypes?
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Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

- Consider how television programs and movies affect our perception of ethnic groups.
- Learn what research has been done on this topic.
- Participate in a class debate examining whether the media shapes our ideas about different groups of people.

Materials

- *9/11 Backlash: Being Muslim in America* video and VCR, or DVD and DVD player
- Computer with Internet access

Procedures

1. Discuss the ways different ethnic groups, such as African Americans, Hispanics, and Muslims, are portrayed on television and in the movies. Do students notice any trends or patterns? For example, do they think that African Americans are often presented as bad guys? Are white people usually the heroes? Do students think that television programs and movies attempt to convey the complexity of any of the characters?
2. Tell students that experts on the media continue to debate the role television and movies plays in shaping our ideas about different ethnic groups. During today's lesson, students will debate this issue. One side will take the position that television and movies shape our attitudes toward ethnic groups. The second side will argue that television and movies do not shape our attitudes.
3. Divide students into two groups and assign each group a position. Give students time in class to discuss their position with their teammates. Encourage students to consider the following questions as they work to frame their arguments:
 - Are different ethnic groups usually presented in the same way? For example, are African Americans always the bad guys, or have you seen them as the good guys as well? What about other ethnic groups, such as Muslims?
 - Can the media show complexity, or are most characters one-dimensional?
 - Has the way that characters from different ethnic groups been portrayed on television or in the movies changed over the last few years?
 - Does the number of hours a person watches television or movies affect the degree to which the media can shape attitudes? Does more viewing result in a greater influence?
4. Suggest students watch the segment "Casting Recall" from the video *9/11 Backlash: Being Muslim in America*. The following Web sites also provide helpful information:
 - What Television Teaches Kids
<http://www.familyeducation.com/article/0,1120,45-9416,00.html>
 - A Century of Abuse: Ethnic Images on the Screen
http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article384.html
 - The Harm of Native Stereotyping
<http://www.bluecorncomics.com/stharm.htm>
 - Escape from Gilligan's Island
http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article273.html
 - Does TV Shape Ethnic Images?
http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article388.html

5. During the next class period, proceed with the debate. Have each side present an opening statement, followed by a rebuttal. Conclude the debate by having each side present a closing argument.
6. Ask students if they think that one side won the debate. Is there a class consensus about this question? Do most students think that television and the movies shape their views about different ethnic groups?

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- 3 points: Students were highly engaged with their groups while planning the debate; participated actively in the debate; were highly involved in class discussions following the debate.
- 2 points: Students were somewhat engaged with their groups while planning the debate; participated in the debate; were involved in class discussions following the debate.
- 1 point: Students were minimally engaged with their groups while planning the debate; participated minimally in the debate; were not involved in class discussions following the debate.

Vocabulary

ethnic

Definition: Of or relating to a group of people linked by racial, national, cultural or religious bonds

Context: Some ethnic groups find it difficult to become accustomed to life in the United States.

media

Definition: Collectively the various types of mass communication, including television, radio, newspapers, and movies

Context: Social scientists agree that the media plays a role in shaping our ideas about society, ethnic groups, violence, and other aspects of culture.

Muslim

Definition: A person who practices the Islamic faith

Context: After the September 11th attacks, some Muslims living in the United States feel that life became more difficult for them.

perception

Definition: A point of view fostered by the interpretation of sensory information

Context: It's often hard to tell how much our perceptions of the world are shaped by what we see and hear on television and in the movies.

prejudice

Definition: A preconceived judgment or opinion often based on insufficient or inaccurate information; a bias against a person or group based on their supposed characteristics

Context: Prejudice is often caused by fear and not understanding people different from ourselves.

stereotype

Definition: A one-dimensional view of a group of people based on inaccurate information, prejudices, or judgments

Context: Stereotypes of ethnic groups, such as portraying Arabs as terrorists, can have a negative effect on people's attitudes and behavior toward that group.

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- U.S. History: Era 10 – Understands economic, social, and cultural developments in the contemporary United States
- Behavior Studies--Understands that group and cultural influences contribute to human development, identity, and behavior
- Language Arts: Viewing – Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands/>

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Culture
 - Individual Development and Identity
 - Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
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Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the Discoveryschool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>
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