Targeted at Home

Islamophobia in the Post-9/11 United States

Introduction
This case study focuses on a contemporary tension related to the theme of belonging in America. Students identify stereotypes about Muslims and misconceptions about the Muslim faith, reflecting on the harm those biases do to the Muslim community in the United States. The goal of this lesson is for students to develop empathic attitudes toward the victims of Islamophobia and to become informed, so that they are able to debunk stereotypes. General knowledge of the events of 9/11 is recommended prior to teaching this lesson.

Note to Educators
This lesson addresses sensitive topics related to religion and terrorism. Consider what pre-teaching and personal reflection you need to do in order to deliver instruction in a way that is both sensitive and meaningful for all students.

Essential Questions
- How have arguments about national identity, security, and patriotism been employed in the targeting and “othering” of Americans from certain racial, ethnic, religious, or linguistic identity groups?
- What impact do xenophobia, forced migration, and deportation have on individuals, families, and communities?

Key Terms and Concepts
- Muslim
- Islam
- Islamophobia
- 9/11
- stereotype
- xenophobia

Standards
CCSS English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
• **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

• **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**NCSS C3 Framework**

• D1.2.9-12 Explain points of agreement and disagreement experts have about interpretations and applications of disciplinary concepts and ideas associated with a compelling question.

• D2.His.5.9-12 Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people’s perspectives.

**Materials**

*Texts*

• “Muslim ‘Twoness’: Fearful of Some, Feared by Others”
• “Muslim Students in America”
• “American Muslims: Fact vs. Fiction”
• What is the Truth About American Muslims?
• “Small Truth: Muslim Americans”
• StoryCorps Oral Histories
• “9 Devastating, Revealing Stories of Being Muslim in Post-9/11 America”

**Objective**

Students will use active listening and critical viewing skills to engage with a variety of multimedia texts and practice speaking and listening skills during a range of conversations to write fact-based explanations about Muslim practices in America.

**Agenda/Class Outline**

• Warm Up
• Class Discussion
• “9 Devastating, Revealing Stories of Being Muslim”
• Interviews
• Exit Ticket

**Procedure**

*Warm Up*

1. Listen to “Muslim ‘Twoness”’ (3:25). As you listen, jot down a list of words to describe how the speaker seems to feel and how that makes you feel.
2. Ask if students can relate to Beenish Ahmed’s experience of “twoness” of what W.E.B. Du Bois calls “simultaneously seeing the world and seeing how the world sees you.” If they have not felt this personally, can they give other examples of the phenomenon? Help students relate the ideas and feelings from the podcast to their own lived experiences and/or make empathic connections to others. How can all of this be related back to the theme of belonging?

Class Discussion

1. Watch: Show the short film “Muslim Students in America” (4:02) and then add on to the conversation by asking what students learned from the student voices in the video.

2. Arrange students into groups of three or four, and tell them to discuss the following questions within their groups:
   a. What is a stereotype?
   b. What makes stereotypes harmful and hurtful?

3. Briefly bring the groups back together to check in and to clarify the meaning of stereotype. A stereotype is an oversimplified or biased assumption or belief about an individual, based on a group to which they belong. Explain that stereotypes about Muslims are often associated with a form of hate or bias called Islamophobia, which the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) defines as, “a close-minded hatred, fear or prejudice toward Islam and Muslims that results in discrimination, marginalization and oppression. It creates a distorted understanding of Islam and Muslims and transforms diversity in name, language, culture, ethnicity, and race into a set of stereotyped characteristics.”

4. Back in their small groups, have students discuss:
   a. What are some common stereotypes about Islam? Make a list.
   b. How might American Muslims be hurt or harmed by those stereotypes?

5. Bring the class back together. Ask volunteers to name one stereotype about Muslims from their group’s list. Create a class list on the board. Explain that accurate information about Islam can help debunk these stereotypes. Watch “American Muslims: Fact vs. Fiction” (11:15).

6. Back in their small groups, have students discuss the film and what stereotypes from the list were addressed. How have facts debunked the stereotypes? Allow time for students to research remaining questions they have about Islam by consulting the publication, “What is the Truth About American Muslims?”

7. Another critical aspect of combatting Islamophobia is to center the voices and experiences of those most affected – Muslims. As a class, watch the short film “Small Truths: Muslim Americans” (3:52). If time permits, listen to these StoryCorps Oral Histories about Arab Americans and racial profiling in the post-9/11 era.

8. Have students read “9 Devastating, Revealing Stories of Being Muslim in Post-9/11 America” in which reporter Jenée Desmond-Harris interviews nine Muslim Americans about how Islamophobia has affected their lives in the years since 9/11.

Interviews

1. Select one of the nine Muslim Americans who were interviewed. Choose a person with whom you would like to have a conversation. Please develop five questions that you would like to ask that person to get to know them better and what their life is like in the U.S.
Exit Ticket

1. Have students list three new things they learned about Muslim Americans of the Islamic faith.