

## Using Literature Circles to Learn about Muslims

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### Content Objectives

#### Background

The attacks on the World Trade Center occurred during my second year of teaching. In those days, I taught at a school where 70% of our students received free or reduced lunch. Many of our students had never traveled out of Delaware. We had a significant ESL population and many kids had a family member in jail. Most students had never heard of Afghanistan or Iraq. They could not even find Delaware on a map of the United States. After the attacks, they believed that Muslims were their enemies and it was hard to convince them otherwise.

Now I teach seventh graders in a middle school in which only 9% of our students receive free and reduced lunch. Less than 0.3% of our students are English Language Learners and 73.8% of our students are Caucasian.<sup>1</sup> It is ten years after 9/11. It is interesting though. I have found that the students' perceptions of Muslims have changed very little.

Recently, a teacher in the high school into which our middle school feeds told me a story. She said that the students in her homeroom were watching profiles of students who were running for student government on their morning announcements. A girl wearing a traditional Muslim "hijab" appeared on the screen and gave a speech for student council. Several of the students started screaming at the screen, "There is no way that I am voting for that terrorist." The teacher was stunned. This was a fellow classmate. How could the kids feel this way?

Students at our middle school learn about Islam in their Social Studies class. They learn about the Arabian Peninsula and the transformation that took place in that region as Islam took form. Students are also taught the basics of Islam such as the Five Pillars, Islamic terms such as mosque and hijab as well as accomplishments from the Muslim world such as the telescope and the numeric system. It is my experience, however, that students do not transfer their knowledge of "ancient" Islam to "modern day" situations.

In English class, we read both fiction and non-fiction. There is also a component of media literacy. When students read about or see people whom they believe to be Muslim, they frequently refer to them as "terrorists". In addition, students often tell me that their parents believe that all Muslims are terrorists. Students do not see a connection

between the information that they have learned and the beliefs of all Muslims both then and now.

## Goals

As an English teacher, I have always attempted to support the other disciplines through informational literacy. There is no reason why students can not read in English what they are learning about in other subjects. It would be very exciting to have students read about modern day Muslims in order to expand their Social Studies experience. Hopefully, this would allow students to transfer their knowledge of ancient Islamic beliefs to modern day “real” people.

First, students would study the geography of Islam. They would look at maps to examine migration patterns. I want students to see that there are Muslims all over the world. Students will also understand the difference between nationalities, religions and terrorists. In addition, Muslims in different areas of the world practice differently. Similarly, there are different levels of commitment to the religion just like Jews, Christians and Hindus have different levels of commitment to their religions. Students should understand this as they read about different characters within their selected novel.

Students will access various aspects of Muslim culture in various regions through young adult literature. Despite the idea that there is no young adult literature for Muslim teenagers, this is not true.<sup>2</sup> While there is not a wide array, there are several books out there that either speaks to the immigrant experience, the experience of second generation Muslims or the experience of Muslims in America post-9/11. Several of these books are set in Canada and Australia. There are also a few books that discuss the Arab-Israeli conflict. My goal is to expose students to those works through Literature Circles. Literature circles will allow students to explore these texts throughout a number of weeks and personally respond to texts via informal discussions. First, students who have read the same book will meet and discuss their reflections on the book. Then, students who have read different books will be grouped so they can compare and contrast characters within their novels. The idea is to see that while Muslims have similar traditions and even similar traditions, not all Muslims are alike just like not all Americans are alike.

In our school, students have very little exposure to people outside of their own communities. Students have many luxuries and are involved in numerous extra-curricular activities. Most kids have two parents who have college degrees and work in professional careers. Even in the cases in which our students are the product of divorce, they want for very little because their parents have the means to support a family.

Despite having more exposure to a multi-cultural world through the Internet, Disney films that have attempted to expose kids to multiple ethnicities and having grown up with Dora, the Explorer, students still have very little understanding of cultures. They do not

understand the difference between race, religion and nationality. In addition, students make broad statements about others because of their lack of true connection to people who are different from them.

My goal for students is to have them become familiar with the lives of Muslims through realistic fiction set in modern day societies. Many of our students have been exposed to Literature Circles in elementary school. They are accustomed to the routines and enjoy having the flexibility of discussion with their peers. Literature Circles will provide a way for students to discover the challenges of Muslims and/or immigration through discussions with peers. In my opinion, this is a better venue than direct instruction.

### Common Core State Standards

The state of Delaware, along with 2/3 of the United States, has recently adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). This is the first time in United States history to standardize curriculum across the country. Delaware is at the forefront of this movement because we have won Race to the Top money and need to show how curriculum and assessment can align to improve student achievement. We hope to be a model for the rest of the nation. The Core Curriculum is being fully implemented in English classes for the first time this calendar year, 2011-2012. As I see it, this unit fits into Literature Standards as well as Speaking and Listening Standards. See below:

RL.7.2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

RL.7.3. Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).

SL.7.1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.
- Follow rules for collegial discussions, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.
- Pose questions that elicit elaboration and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant observations and ideas that bring the discussion back on topic as needed.

- Acknowledge new information expressed by others and, when warranted, modify their own views.

## **Teaching Strategies**

### Why Literature Circles

When students learn about Islam in Social Studies, most of the teaching strategies include direct instruction. Students either view PowerPoint presentations with many visuals or they read from a textbook and fill out worksheets on what they have learned. The Social Studies teacher on our team is very engaging. She creates interesting worksheets including pictures and unique graphic organizers. It is hard to do simulations though because the content is dense and does not lend itself to hands-on learning. Students find it hard to connect to a time period and a culture that is foreign to them.

The idea behind Literature Circles is to get students talking. One problem that English teachers encounter is that students fear being wrong. Because many questions about literature are open-ended, students often fear being incorrect or giving a “stupid” answer. Although English teachers repeatedly profess that students are not incorrect as long as they can provide textual evidence to support their answer, many students remain hesitant to raise their hand.

Kylene Beers suggests that we must give students the confidence to respond. She suggests that “forming relationships with peers become more valuable than stickers on homework papers or nods of approval from the teacher.”<sup>3</sup> Beers goes on to suggest that if participants in a classroom or workshop setting share in small groups first, they will have more confidence to share in the larger group later on.<sup>4</sup>

Being that students will already have learned the basics of Islam, my goal is to get them talking about Muslims in modern day times. I want them to connect to the characters in the literature.

### Introduction to the Unit

The introduction to the unit will consist of three components. First, students will activate their prior knowledge about Islam. This unit will be taught after they have learned about Islam in Social Studies. Students will hopefully be able to locate the Arabian Peninsula. We will compare it to modern day Saudi Arabia and the surrounding areas. In addition, students will access their knowledge about the five pillars, mosques and any other rituals that they remember.

In the second part of the lesson, students will look at the geography of modern day Islam. Students will explore how Islam has grown throughout the world with a focus on the locations of Muslims outside of Asia and Africa. There will be a specific emphasis on Muslims in America, Australia, Canada and Israel/Palestine.

Finally, students will be exposed to the books that they will be reading throughout a six week period or so. I will give a short synopsis of each book holding up the novel so that students can see the title and the size of the book. Students will then have an opportunity to select two of the books on a Post-It note. Throughout the following week, I will create Literature Circle groups based on student selection.

### Weekly Literature Circles

“Schools have traditionally favored convergent, objective questions-tasks in which the answers are fact-based and verifiably ‘correct.’ In literature circles, while we are always interested in the details of what we read and always take care to build our interpretation on a close reading of the text, we begin our conversations with personal response. We connect with one another around divergent, open-ended, interpretive questions – questions of value.”<sup>5</sup>

Students will work in Literature Circles once a week. This gives time for students to read a section of their book, think about it and bring their ideas to discussion. At the beginning of each session, I hope to build students’ knowledge of Islam based on questions that have occurred throughout the previous week’s discussion. In this paper, I will discuss possible mini-lessons that can be used prior to Literature Circle discussions, but teachers should be open to creating instruction based on students’ desires.

The following are mini-lessons ideas to begin each Literature Circle session:

- How are women portrayed in your novels? Do they wear a hijab? Do they have equal rights? What does the Koran say about a woman’s role in society?
- Jihad – What does the Koran say?
  - What do other religions say about war? What does the bible say?
  - Is war ever justified?
- Should a mosque be built near 9/11? (Readings about the mosque that existed in the World Trade Center have been included in the Resources section.)
- How were Muslims treated in the U.S. after 9/11? Were the Post-9/11 Anti-Terrorism Laws justified?
- How do the characters in your book reflect the ideals of Islam that you learned in Social Studies? Is modern day Islam different than the Islam of the ancient world?

After the mini-lesson, students will gather in groups containing students who have read the same book. Discussion should be based on student reflections throughout the week. As I circulate the room, I will ask students to elaborate on their thoughts and opinions. In addition, I will ask students about their ideas pertaining to characters' identities. What makes the main character unique? What problems does this character face and why? How does a person's environment affect their circumstances? How would you feel in similar circumstances?

After students have had time to share their reflections with students who have read the same book, students will discuss their findings in a whole group setting. The kids will share their discoveries and converse about the story the elements within their books explaining their characters' particular situations. Then, students will attempt to find common ground between their books.

On the last week of Literature Circles, students will be grouped with others who have read the same book. They will discuss the end of their books. Was the end appropriate? Expected? Surprising? Why or why not? Then, there will be a whole group discussion. As a class, I would like students to discuss their views on Muslims now that they have read a contemporary novel about a Muslim character. I would like know if they felt a connection to the protagonist in their book and if it has changed their world view.

Hopefully, by the end of the unit, students will stop making generalizations about Arabs and Muslims. They will have used literature to explore another culture and expand their views on the world around them.

## **Lessons**

Sample Lesson – Introduction to Literature Circles

*Review Rules of Literature Circles*

For students who have never completed Literature Circles, these following are rules for good discussion. Attempt to elicit responses from students. Create a T-chart. In one column, write "What Discussion Looks Like" and on the other side, write "What Discussion Sounds Like". Here is an example of the final T-chart:

What Discussion Looks Like

|

What Discussion Sounds Like

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Eyes on the speaker</li> <li>○ Square shoulders</li> <li>○ Students have their books</li> <li>○ Students sitting in a circle</li> <li>○ All people participating</li> <li>○ Rereading/ Referencing the book</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Indoor voices</li> <li>○ Focused discussion around the book</li> <li>○ Questioning of people's ideas</li> <li>○ Elaboration of other's responses</li> <li>○ Polite disagreement</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

### *Set-up of the Unit*

The teacher will explain that literature is a way for people to understand other cultures. Books allow readers to open themselves to new worlds and new situations. In a Post 9/11 world, there has been much talk and strong feelings about Muslims. Many people believe that all Muslims are terrorists and believe that this is what the religion preaches. The goal of the unit is to have students judge for themselves.

The teacher will create a K-W-L chart. This will help guide the next few weeks of Literature Circles. First, the class will write down all that they know (K) or think that they know about Muslims/Islam. Then, students will write down what they want (W) to know about Muslims/Islam. In some cases, what they “think they know” may lead to questions that become “what they want to know”. As the weeks pass, the class will fill in the “L” column – what they have learned.

### *Practice of Literature Circles*

Before beginning novels, students should have practice with a small piece of text. Being that students will be reading books including Muslim characters, the teacher should select a small piece of text that all students can read to practice their discussion skills. The teacher may select either a few Islamic poems so students could practice on two pieces of literature or the teacher may select a meaningful chapter from one of the Young Adult selections that will not be used in this unit. One idea is Chapter 11 from the book *Does My Head Look Big In This?* by Randa Abdel-Fattah.

Text will be given out to students along with sticky notes. The teacher will read the first section of the text with students. Everyone will write a sticky note containing initial thoughts. Those thoughts will be discussed as groups. If the teacher feels comfortable about the notes and the discussion, students can proceed through the text independently writing sticky notes as they go. If not, the teacher may want to do one more group practice.

After taking notes, students will begin to discuss their thoughts, feelings and insights about the text. The teacher will circulate to make sure that discussion is on-task and

proceeding at a deep level. Comments should include inferences and conclusions drawn based on textual evidence.

Finally, there will be a whole group discussion. Students will share discoveries and insights that were discussed in the smaller groups. Before ending the class, the teacher will refer back to the K-W-L chart. Students will check to see if any prior knowledge has changed and/or if anything new has been learned.

### Sample Lesson – Disseminating Books

Muslims are located all over the world. To introduce the books, it would be good to use maps and statistics to show that, while Islam began in the Middle East, migration has occurred and now, Muslims can be found all over the world. Two websites has been included on the Resources Page: <http://www.pewforum.org/Mapping-the-Global-Muslim-Population.aspx> and <http://www.muslimpopulation.com/World/>

Besides showing students that Muslims are located all over the world, it is important to note that customs have been modified and Muslims have varied ways of participating in their religion.

For a class of approximately twenty-eight children, it is a good idea to select five books. The list of titles that has been included with this unit contains books about Muslims from all over the world. There are second generation Muslims in Australia, immigrants in America, Canadian Muslims, American Muslims who emigrated back to Israel and characters set in Israel/Palestine. To give the class a comprehensive perspective, it would be good to choose books from each category.

It is best to have group consisting of four or five students. If you only choose five books, some groups will be discussing the same books. This works well for your lower students and it helps when group members are not always working effectively. It is for this reason that you may want one book for every two groups. The teacher must decide what works best for his/her class.

For each novel, you will want to be prepared to give a small book talk. Use the maps provided on the websites above to give students a mental picture about their characters' settings.

Students will then write their top two choices on a sticky. The teacher will quickly put students into their groups and distribute books.

Students should have the opportunity to read their first chapter and create sticky notes pertaining to their first impressions. Groups will then have time to discuss their first impressions.

Finally, groups will share and discuss the expositions of their books. The teacher may decide to have small mixed groups of five or six in which students who have read different books discuss their expositions and their initial reactions. The teacher may also decide to have one large group discussion with the whole class. Students will quickly perceive that each Muslim experience is different. Hopefully, they will also see the characters in their story are average people who happen to be Muslim.

At the end of each Literature Circle, the teacher should check in with the K-W-L map that was created on the first day. Students will add anything that they learned. Before students leave, students must decide how many chapters they will read prior to the next meeting. It is a good idea to have students read 30-35 pages so that they have enough to speak about the following week.

### Sample Lesson – Jihad

The lesson would be good as students near the middle of their books. Most of the books have been written after 9/11. Even the ones that have not been written after 9/11 refer to some terrorist attack that has occurred that make non-Muslims suspicious of Muslims. Being that one misperception is that “all Muslims are terrorists” and that “Islam preaches terrorism”, it is important to have discussion about jihad.

A good opening to this lesson would be to discuss the characters that the students have encountered in their books:

- What words would students use to describe the main characters in their books?
- Can the main characters be compared to their own families? How? Do the parents work? Do the children compete in social activities?
- What types of fears and worries do the families have?
- How do these people practice their religion?
- Do these people seem like terrorists? What do terrorists seem like?

Next, the teacher should introduce the idea of “jihad”. Jihad means “struggle” or “striving”. There are two types of jihad – the internal and the external.<sup>6</sup> The internal is considered the greater jihad while the external is considered the lesser jihad. The internal jihad is the daily struggle to live as a good Muslim. Chapter 3, verse 172, of the Koran: "Of those who answered the call of Allah and the messenger, even after being wounded, those who do right and refrain from wrong have a great reward." This Muslim should fulfill the Five Pillars and be a good person who “submits to the will of G-d”. If a review of the five pillars<sup>7</sup> is needed, they are:

- The Testimony of Faith – There is no G-d, but G-d and Muhammed is G-d’s Messenger.
- Daily Prayers (Salat)

- Paying Alms to the Poor (Zakat)
- Month long fast of Ramadan
- Pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj)

The external jihad deals with war. This is where the Koran gets a little tricky. The Koran was written over Muhammed's lifetime. Many people interpret quotes of the Koran out of context. One must understand that there were times that messages were revealed to Muhammed when he was at war with neighboring tribes. Therefore, there were times when Muhammed was told to go through with war in order to defend his people. However, the idea was never to annihilate people or complete full conversions.

The overall message about war that Allah sent to Muhammed shows that the Koran does not preach unjustified war, but self-defense. Here is one quote from the Koran that can be used with students: "Fight in the way of G-d those who fight you but do not begin hostilities; G-d does not like the aggressor" (2:190).

Kids should have an opportunity to discuss the quotes that have been shared with them in light of what they know about the world as well as in the context of the stories that they are reading. This should be the springboard for this day's small group and large group discussions. It may also be a good idea to discuss the question: is war ever justified? This may also be a good time to discuss the difference between an act of war and an act of terrorism. Kids may determine that there is no difference. The discussion is important. However, at the end of the day, kids should think about the characters in their novels and determine if "all Muslims are terrorists".

This day should end like any other:

- There should be a whole group discussion to enlighten others about small group discoveries.
- Refer to the K-W-L chart – should anything be changed and/or filled in?
- Set an amount of pages to be read for the next time.

### Sample Lesson – Final Days of Literature Circles

Students should discuss their final thoughts about their books in small group discussion:

- Was the ending appropriate?
- Did they like the ending? Why or why not?
- What did students learn about prejudice and making judgments about people?
- How does geography and culture influence a person's experience?
- Would they like to read another book about Muslims?
- Did one of the other books seem interesting to them based on large group discussion?

In large group discussion, students should complete the K-W-L that they began during the initial lesson:

- What have we learned about Muslims?
- What have we learned about Islam?
- Think about some of the specific concepts covered: immigration, jihad, hijab, five pillars, degrees of practice, geography, etc.
- Did their views change about Muslims and/or Islam?
- What did students learn about terrorism?
- Did students further their knowledge about Muslims beyond what they learned in Social Studies class?
- Have our perceptions changed?

Teachers can end Literature Circles here. However, if they would like each group to create a presentation about their experience, that would be acceptable as well. The goal would be for students to show either their new knowledge of Islam and/or prejudice. In addition, the goal should include how students' views have changed after reading their Literature Circle book.

Students could use [glogster.com](http://glogster.com); Animotos, PowerPoint, posters or other creative materials to create their project. Here are some possible project ideas:

- A compare and contrast piece on the main character's life and their own life
- Once I thought... and now I know
- Write a poem about the character showing the character's true identity
- A thorough description of prejudice using pictures and words
- Have students create a script where one person interviews the "characters" in the book. Students can act this out.
- Have students create a book talk about the book describing what can be learned from the book without giving away the ending.
- Create a quilt about the book and Islam depicting what the students have learned.

### **Possible Titles for Literature Circles**

Bapsi Sidhwa, *An American Brat* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Milkweed Editions, 1995)  
Sixteen year old Feroza Ginwalla is sent away from a fundamentalist Pakistan when her parents fear that she is becoming too conservative. Her new home is far different from her old one as she is forced to live with her uncle, an MIT student. Feroza becomes immersed in American ways – fashion magazines, freedom and boys.

Daniella Carmi, *Samir and Yonatan* (New York: Blue Sky Press, 2002)

Samir, a Palestinian, has fallen on the way to market and needs surgery on his knee. Unfortunately, this means going to an Israeli hospital where an American doctor will perform the operation. At first, Samir is suspicious of the Israeli patients around him, but soon he forms friendships with many of them especially one boy named Yonatan who changes his view on the world.

Deborah Ellis and Eric Walters, *Bifocal* (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2007)  
This book tells the story of two boys who are suspected of being conspirators in Toronto 18, a terrorist plot in Canada. One boy is Muslim and the other Christian. The story is told in both voices and attempts to seriously discuss racism against Muslims.

Marina Budhos, *Ask Me No Questions* (New York: Simon Pulse, 2007)  
After 9/11, the U.S government cracked down on illegal immigration. Muslim men now had to register. Unfortunately for Nadira Hossain, this would mean the end of life as she knew it. Her father had never renewed his visa and now, he is on the run. Nadira and her sister spend the novel attempting to build a case for their father and their family to stay in America, their home.

Na'ima B. Robert, *Boy vs Girl* (London, England: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, 2011)  
Farhana and Faraz are 16 year old Muslim twins living in Britain. Faraz tries to maintain her Muslim identity by donning a hijab for the first time, while her brother appears to be more concerned with fitting in with certain unsuitable characters.

Naomi Shihab Nye, *Habibi* (Simon Pulse, 1999)  
Liyana's life changes when her father decides to move the family from St. Louis (the only home that she has ever known) to Jerusalem. Liyana is embraced by her Palestinian relatives, but feels uncomfortable because she knows very little about her Arabic heritage. To make matters worse, Liyana falls for a Jewish boy.

Pnina Moed Kass, *Real Time* (New York, Clarion Books, 2004)  
This story is told from multiple perspectives. The setting is Israel and begins with a suicide bombing on a bus. Multiple narratives are given leading up to the attack and after the attack. Characters include people of all religions with multiple purposes for being in Israel.

Randa Abdel-Fattah, *Ten Things I Hate About Me* (Australia: Pan Macmillan, 2005)  
This is the story of a girl who is torn between her Lebanese-Muslim heritage and her current Australian living situation. Jamilah Towfeek loves her single father despite his strict, traditional ways but attempts to hide her heritage from her friends at school so that she can fit in and be one of the girls.

Randa Abdel-Fattah, *Where the Streets Had a Name* (Australia: Pan Macmillan, 2008)

Hayaat and her family live in Bethlehem just a few miles from Jerusalem, except they are barred from entering the Holy Land. Since the Separation Wall (dividing Palestinians and Israelis) has been erected, Hayaat's family has been among the numerous Palestinians who have been dislocated from their homes. This story teaches how war can affect innocent people who are simply trying to conduct an average life working and supporting their family.

Rukhsana Khan, Dahling, *If You Luv Me, Would You Please, Please Smile* (Toronto: Stoddart Kids, 1999)

This is the story of a young girl, Zainab, who wants to remain to the tenets of her religion, but finds it difficult in a secular Canadian public school. Unfortunately, the only other Indian in her school is Hindu who does not understand her either. Zainab finds herself wanting the popular brand name clothes that other students wear. She only wants acceptance.

### **Resources for Teachers**

*American Muslims: A Journalist's Guide to Understanding Islam and Muslims* (CAIR, 2009)

This was a guide put together by the Council on American-Islamic Relations for journalists so that journalists can learn to interact with Muslims better. There are some very basic explanations on Islamic culture and Islamic tradition. In addition, this guide describes how to interact with Muslims on a basic level. Being that the idea of the unit is to get kids thinking about Muslims as people first, some of the tips may be very useful during classroom discussion.

"American Muslim Voters: A Demographic Profile and Survey of Attitudes," Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), accessed November 13, 2011, [http://www.cair.com/pdf/American\\_Muslim\\_Voter\\_Survey\\_2006.pdf](http://www.cair.com/pdf/American_Muslim_Voter_Survey_2006.pdf)

This survey was conducted by the Council on American-Islamic relations. American Muslims from twelve states were surveyed about their daily life as well as their feelings about the war. This could be an introduction to one day of Literature Circles to get kids thinking about the average American Muslim.

Aslan, Reza, *No G-d but G-d* (New York: Random House Trade Paperback Edition, 2006)

This comprehensive book on the history of Islam is for the reader who wants to have a full knowledge of Islam within the context of history from its inception to a modern day period. Although the material is dense, any teacher will be well-prepared to answer student questions.

Dilara Hafiz, Yasmine Hafiz and Imran Hafiz, *American Muslim Teenager's Handbook* (New York: ginee seo books, 2009)

This wonderful book was written by a family that felt there were no books out there for Muslim teenagers who were trying to navigate growing up in America. Each chapter is a quick explanation of an Islamic tradition or a topic that is pertinent to all teenagers' today. Within chapters, there are textboxes to enhance the reader's experience. Textboxes include surveys about teenagers, poetry and fun facts about famous Muslims.

Kylene Beers, *When Kids Can't Read, What Teachers Can Do* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003)

Kylene Beers is a renowned reading specialist in America. She has many tips for getting students to comprehend what they are reading. If teachers find that students are struggling through their reading, Beers' book contains strategies that teachers can build in while students are reading.

Henry Blodget, "There Was Already a Ground Zero Mosque – On the 17<sup>th</sup> Floor of the World Trade Center", *Business Insider*, September 10, 2010, accessed November 12, 2010, [http://articles.businessinsider.com/2010-09-10/news/30067735\\_1\\_ground-zero-mosque-prayer-room-muslim-americans](http://articles.businessinsider.com/2010-09-10/news/30067735_1_ground-zero-mosque-prayer-room-muslim-americans)

This short article would be appropriate to use at the beginning of a Literature Circle discussion. Many students do not realize that Muslims worked at the World Trade Center and that there was a place of prayer for them. This could be a short conversation starter especially if students brought up prior knowledge about the debate about a mosque being built at Ground Zero. This article could be paired with the one below, "Muslims and Islam Were Part of Twin Towers' Life".

"Israel-Palestinian Conflict", *The History Guy*, accessed January 7<sup>th</sup> 2012, [http://www.historyguy.com/israeli-palestinian\\_conflict.html#.TwnZ\\_m-0zwm](http://www.historyguy.com/israeli-palestinian_conflict.html#.TwnZ_m-0zwm)

Three of the books take place in Israel and depict the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It might be good to give students a brief history of the conflict so that they have background knowledge either before they read or after they have read a couple of chapters.

Peter Standring, "Koran a Book of Peace, Not War, Scholars Say" (*National Geographic Today*, September 25, 2001) accessed January, 6<sup>th</sup> 2012, [http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2001/09/0925\\_TVkoran.html](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2001/09/0925_TVkoran.html)

This is a short article written after September 11<sup>th</sup>, discussing the Koran's point-of-view on war. The article discusses both war and jihad. If the teacher would like to do more than simply discuss this topic, the article is short and easy enough to read for kids to read and digest.

"Mapping the Global Muslim Population: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Muslim Population," (*The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, ANALYSIS October 7, 2009), accessed on January 6, 2012,

<http://www.pewforum.org/Mapping-the-Global-Muslim-Population.aspx>

This website has both interactive maps and reports about Muslims throughout the world. It is a great visual for students to see. Unfortunately, Oceania is not really depicted and two of the books suggested are set in Australia.

Muslim Population in the World (updated December 2011), accessed January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012, <http://www.muslimpopulation.com/World/>

This website has maps and chart depicting Muslim populations around the world. In addition, there are videos of ordinary Muslims living within their environments. This website could be used throughout the unit.

N.J. Dawood, trans., *The Koran* (Penguin Classics – Paperback), (Penguin Classics, 2004)

The Koran is considered Muslim's holy scriptures.

Samuel G. Freedman, "Muslims and Islam Were Part of Twin Towers' Life", *New York Times*, September 10, 2010, accessed November, 12, 2011,

<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/2587711/posts>

This short article discusses a few Muslims who worked and prayed at the Twin Towers. It can be paired with the article above, "There Was Already a Ground Zero Mosque – On the 17<sup>th</sup> Floor of the World Trade Center".

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> "State of Delaware: The Official Website of the State of Delaware", Alfred G. Water Profile, last modified Summer 2011,

<http://profiles.doe.k12.de.us/SchoolProfiles/School/Default.aspx?checkSchool=23&districtCode=29>

<sup>2</sup> Dilara Hafiz, Yasmine Hafiz and Imran Hafiz, *American Muslim Teenager's Handbook* (New York: ginee se dooks, 2009) xv-xix

<sup>3</sup> Kylene Beers, *When Kids Can't Read, What Teachers Can Do* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003) p. 259

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 264

<sup>5</sup> Harvey Daniels, *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in Book Groups and Reading Groups* (Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers, 2002), pp. 22-23

<sup>6</sup> Aslan, Reza, *No G-d but G-d* (New York: Random House Trade Paperback Edition, 2006), p. 81

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, pp 146-151

# Student Learning Map

**Key Learning:**  
To use literature as a springboard for discussion about attitudes towards Muslims in a post 9/11 society

**Unit Essential Question:**  
How does literature reflect various cultures and lead to understanding of people in different situations than one's own?

<b>Concept:</b> Communication & Effective Discussion	<b>Concept:</b> Prior Knowledge and Realistic Fiction	<b>Concept:</b> Literature as a means to understand people of different circumstances
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<p><b>Lesson Essential Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do students prepare themselves for effective discussion of a text?</li> <li>• How does discussion enhance reader's understanding of text?</li> <li>• What is the difference between a rich discussion and a surface level discussion of a text?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Lesson Essential Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is realistic fiction?</li> <li>• How does our prior knowledge affect what we read?</li> <li>• Why is it important to question a text?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Lesson Essential Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does a person's geography (setting) and culture affect their experience?</li> <li>• How does literature enhance a reader's understanding of the world around them?</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Vocabulary:</b></p> <p>Discussion Collaboration Probing Reflecting Inference Textual Evidence Analysis Paraphrase</p>	<p><b>Vocabulary:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Islam</li> <li>• Geography of Muslims around the world</li> <li>• Immigration</li> <li>• Preconceptions/Misconceptions</li> <li>• 5 Pillars of Islam</li> <li>• Mosque</li> <li>• Jihad</li> <li>• Hijab</li> </ul>	<p><b>Vocabulary:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prejudice</li> <li>• Terrorism</li> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Making Judgments</li> <li>• Generalizations</li> <li>• Race</li> <li>• Religion</li> <li>• Nationality</li> </ul>
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**Additional Information/Resources:**  
Literature Circles should be flexible. Students lead the discussion based on the week's reading. The idea is for the teacher to elicit student's perceptions about Muslims and provide some background knowledge about Islamic culture when students begin their reading. As students progress through their books, the teacher should discuss topics based on student interest. Topics included on the map are simply a suggested list.  
A K-W-L may be a wonderful tool to use on the first day of unit to confirm what students know about Islam and it should be used again at the end of each Literature Circle session to determine if students have new questions and/or if new information has been learned.