



DUKE-UNC CONSORTIUM FOR MIDDLE EAST STUDIES
OUTREACH PROGRAM

Strategies for Teaching about Terrorism

Terrorism is not only a topic present in the North Carolina Essential Standards, coverage of terrorist attacks around the world consistently appear in the media. Students will continue to have questions about terrorism as our world is ever-changing. Of course, combatting terrorism is hard and uncertain, and this issue has become extremely politicized. We need to focus on *terrorism* rather than Muslims in general, and remember that terrorism is not a clash of civilizations between 'the East' and 'the West,' but between the vast majority of humanity and the extremist few. The ideas below can be used to teach NC State Standards on terrorism, or can be integrated into units on current events or Islam.

Applicable NC Social Studies Essential Standards:

WH.H.8.2: Explain how international crisis has impacted international politics (e.g., Berlin Blockage, Korean War, Hungarian Revolt, Cuban Missile Crisis, OPEC oil crisis, Iranian Revolt, "9-11", terrorism, etc.).

WH.H.8.7: Explain why terrorist groups and movements have proliferated and the extent of their impact on politics and society in various countries (e.g., Basque, PLO, IRA, Tamil Tigers, Al Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, etc.).

Use Statements from Islamic Leaders Condemning Terrorism

The majority of Muslims condemn violence. It is important to remember that the people who commit terrorist acts represent a very small percentage of one of the world's largest faiths. As of 2010, there were 1.6 billion Muslims in the world. The main objective of this activity is to remind your students that a very small number of Muslims are involved in extremist activities.

- **Have your students analyze examples of Islamic statements against terrorism:** Provide two or three Islamic Statements against terrorism to each student (or to each pair/group of students), instruct students to read these statements), and discuss (as a class or in pairs/small groups):
 - Who is the author of each statement?
 - For what audience were the statements written?
 - List two things from each statement that you think are important.
 - Do you notice any repeated vocabulary words or phrases in your statements?
 - What is the tone of each statement?
 - Is there anything about these statements that surprise you?

Teachers might provide additional questions that are typical of analyzing primary source documents. A good worksheet to use, authored by the National Archives can be found here: https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/written_document_analysis_worksheet.pdf. Assign readings from the compilation curated by UNC Professor Charles Kurzman, or look at the compilations listed at the bottom of his webpage: <http://kurzman.unc.edu/islamic-statements-against-terrorism/>.

- **Turn to Twitter: Research the #NotInMyName Campaign:** Dawood Masood, Head of Administration at the Al Hira Educational and Cultural Centre, along with a number of other young people have launched the local #NotInMyName campaign in England. The campaign encourages

British Muslims to speak out against ISIS by saying that they do not represent them and that they reject their ideology. Muslims around the world have been invited to join the campaign. Have students look up the #NotInMyName hashtag. Examples of tweets can be found here:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/notinmyname-paris-attacks_us_56494ef7e4b045bf3defbf7a. As a class, discuss the following:

- What is the purpose of this campaign?
- What statement do you find most powerful?
- What are the benefits of using social media to communicate ideas? What are the drawbacks?



In small groups or as a class, have students create their own hashtag (or contribute to an existing one) that corrects a misperception or promotes social justice. Have students come up with a handful of tweets that represent the hashtag. An example could be “We agree with Nelson Mandela that ‘Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world’ #EducationMatters”. Consider teaching the relevant [Digital Literacy and Citizenship](#) skills if you include social media in your lessons.

Recognize the Diversity of Victims of Terrorism

All deaths caused by terrorism are tragic. However, media often leaves out non-Western victims of terror groups. Remind your students that the majority of Muslims are victims of ISIS themselves. This can aid in illustrating that most Muslims do not support violence.

Define Jihad

The meaning of jihad in the media can be misleading, and misperceptions can feed fears or stereotypes. Though this word is often translated as “holy war,” sanctioned military jihad is extremely rare.

- As a warm-up activity, ask students to write down what they think “jihad” means. Invite students to share their definitions, and acknowledge recurring themes and any differences in meaning. Then, define jihad for your students. The Islamic Supreme Council of America has a good definition of what jihad is, and what it is not: <http://islamicsupremecouncil.org/understanding-islam/legal-rulings/5-jihad-a-misunderstood-concept-from-islam.html?start=9>. Explain that certain extremist groups in Islam, just like in other religions, have used religious philosophies to justify their actions throughout history. Terrorist groups often shorten Qur’anic verses that outline Islamic rules of engaging in conflict, and “take them out of context to justify their agendas, spread hate, and recruit resistance,” says Maher Hathout, author of *Jihad vs. Terrorism*. Read more in the article, “What Does “Jihad” Really Mean to Muslims?” here: http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/10/1023_031023_jihad.html.
- In a purely linguistic sense, the word “jihad” means struggling or striving, and it refers to an internal or external struggle that accompanies religious devotion. Jihad is often used to describe striving to be a better Muslim. Muslims also have social campaigns to end poverty and hunger which they call jihad. Ask students to come up with examples of jihad in the sense of “struggling or striving” to expand their understanding of this word.

Address Stereotypes

Unconscious misunderstandings or prejudices about the Islamic faith or people from the Middle East may arise in conversations about terrorism. There are several productive and healthy ways to address stereotypes and encourage culturally responsible teaching and learning in your classroom. Turn to lessons such as “Breaking the Muslim Monolith: Exploring Stereotypes” by the NC Civic Education Consortium (<http://civics.sites.unc.edu/files/2012/05/MuslimMonolith9.pdf>), or “Debunking Stereotypes about Muslims and Islam” by Teaching Tolerance (<http://www.tolerance.org/lesson/debunking-stereotypes-about-muslims-and-islam>). The Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies also provides handouts on “Dispelling Common Misconceptions and Stereotypes about Islam” and about the Middle East (<https://worldview.unc.edu/files/2014/12/Common-Misconceptions-about-the-Middle-East.pdf>).

Film Clips: My Fellow American

Show clips of the film project, My Fellow American (<http://myfellowamerican.us/>)- an online film and social media project that calls upon concerned Americans to pledge and spread a message that Muslims are our fellow Americans. It asks people of other backgrounds share a real life story about a Muslim friend, neighbor, or colleague that they admire. Using the power of social media, My Fellow American seeks to change the narrative - from Muslims as the other, to Muslims as our fellow Americans.

Compare ISIS to Pirates

In November 2015, Professor Juan Cole (University of Michigan) published an article comparing ISIS to Pirates titled “Is Daesh/ ISIL a modern Raiding Pirate state?” Though imperfect, this analogy will help your students relate ISIS to something a familiar concept. Read the article here:

<http://www.juancole.com/2015/11/modern-raiding-pirate.html>. Either assign your students this article as reading (beginning with the seventh paragraph, and ending just before the last paragraph), or share the key similarities from this article with your students via PowerPoint or direct instruction.

- Pirates and ISIS rely on ports.
 - Pirates and ISIS both conduct raids for loot.
 - Pirates and ISIS both take hostages for ransom.
 - Modes of transportation are important for pirates and ISIS.
 - ISIS takes control of towns, similar to island settlements of pirates.
- **Have Students Create a Venn-Diagram or other Graphic Organizer of Your Choice:** Ask students to create and fill in a Venn-Diagram comparing and contrasting ISIS and pirates. Successful Venn-Diagrams will
 - Use specific examples
 - Address the ideas of ports, loot, and transportation
 - Contain at least one original difference and one similarity that is not mentioned in the article
 - **Compare/Contrast Essay:** Assign your students an essay prompt to further the analogy. For example, “Write an essay in which you compare and contrast historical conceptions of pirates with the militant group, the Islamic State. Refer to your Venn diagram to help you organize your essay. Remember to use specific examples and concrete details to support your ideas.”



A good guide to writing Compare/Contrast Essays by the Santa Barbara City College Writing Center can be found here:

<https://www.sbccc.edu/clrc/files/wl/downloads/WritingaCompareContrastEssay.pdf>

Deepen Understanding of Syrian Refugees

Remind students that Syrian refugees represent a humanitarian crisis, not a terrorist threat. Read about the national security debate over Syrian refugees in this Article in The Atlantic, “Can Terrorists Really Infiltrate the Syrian Refugee Program?”: <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/11/can-terrorists-really-infiltrate-the-syrian-refugee-program/416475/>.

- **Have Students Research Famous Refugees:** The United States has a history of welcoming refugees from around the world! Steve Jobs’ birth father was a Syrian Immigrant! Ask students to research refugees from American history to remind us all of the value of welcoming global citizens in times of need. There are lists of famous refugees online, such as the one generated by the UNHCR here: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c74-page4.html>. As individuals or in small groups, have students answer the following questions:
 - Who are you researching?
 - Where is this individual from (country of origin)? Which country did they migrate to?
 - Why and when did he/she leave their home country?
 - What have they contributed to society since leaving their country of origin?
 - Why is it important for countries around the world to accept people who are fleeing violence or persecution?
- For more ideas about teaching about the Arab Refugee Crisis, see these activities created by the Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies here: https://ncmideast.org/files/2011/07/TeachingIdeas_ArabRefugees1.pdf. This curriculum contains different activities such as incorporating stories of refugees, analyzing the global response to the crisis through political cartoons, evoking empathy, and more, to foster an atmosphere of broadened perspective of the crisis in the classroom.

Put Islamic Terrorism into Context with Other Forms of Terrorism

Muslims are not the only group of people who have used terrorism to pursue political aims. For example, ‘Basque Country and Freedom’, the Irish Republican Army, Revolutionary Struggle (Greece), and the Tamil Tigers are all defined by the Secretary of State as Terrorist Organizations (<http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>).

To make connections to the United States, UNC Professor Charles Kurzman compares Islamic terrorist data with data from Right-wing American terrorists. In his article co-written with Duke Professor David Schanzer in the New York Times titled “The Growing Right-Wing Terror Threat” http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/16/opinion/the-other-terror-threat.html?_r=2, he explains that the main terrorist threat in the United States is not from violent Muslim extremists, but from right-wing extremists. Professor Kurzman’s website (<http://kurzman.unc.edu/islamic-terrorism/>) has several good additional articles on terrorism, such as this one: “America is Holding Itself Hostage to Terrorism”: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/charles-kurzman/america-hostage-to-terrorism_b_8814088.html.

Data is another way to help your students put the danger of terrorism into perspective. Here is one basic pie chart putting deaths from terrorism in context with other causes of death. Several people have compared the issue of gun violence in America with terrorism, such as this article (<http://www.cnn.com/2015/10/02/us/oregon-shooting-terrorism-gun-violence>) and this infographic (<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/deaths-from-gun-violence-vs-terrorism-in-one-chart-20151002>). As a class, discuss why certain acts are defined as terrorism, while others are not.

Expanding your students' notion of terrorism will help them respond to the media with a more informed perspective.

Links for Additional Resources for Teaching about Terrorism

- Article: What You Need to Know about Terrorism, ISIS, Islam, Refugees, and Paris: This article is a compilation of commonly asked questions by young people on these topics: <https://blog.dosomething.org/terrorism-answers/>
- At Risk of Prejudice: Teaching Tolerance about Muslim Americans: This article written for the National Council for the Social Studies addresses common misperceptions about Islam. The author answers questions about the Muslim faith, community, and beliefs, and includes teaching ideas at the end: <http://downloads.ncss.org/lessons/650603.pdf>
- Lesson Plan: How do we define terrorism? From PBS Newshour Extra: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/lessons_plans/how-do-we-define-terrorism/

For questions regarding these ideas or additional information, contact Emma Harver, Program/Outreach Coordinator for the Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies (<http://ncmideast.org/outreach/>): harver@email.unc.edu, or Paul Bonnici, Special Projects Coordinator for the UNC Civic Education Consortium (civics.org): bonnici@unc.edu.