Integrating the Muslim Student into the American Classroom

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INTRODUCTION

Muslims live all over the world: in fact, Indonesia has the world's largest Muslim population. That fact is a surprise to many people who assume that Muslims live only in the Middle East. Such misconceptions in the Western world can lead to prejudices. The purpose of this unit is to dispel those prejudices by introducing the reader to young Muslim students and by recounting their experiences upon entering the United States and American schools. Although religious information will be provided, that is not the main focus. It will be important, however, to include a study of Islam and its relationship to Christianity and Judaism. Students will learn not to confuse the basic teachings of any religion with what extremists do in the name of a religion. No religion is free from misinterpretation. The point of this is to help the students realize that they have much more in common with the followers of Islam than they may have imagined. The acquisition of this knowledge will enhance the ability of American teachers and students to aid new immigrants in their integration into American life and schools. That is the principal aim of this unit. That adjustment will not be an easy one if the newcomers are greeted with a lack of understanding concerning the situations which brought them here and preconceived notions of prejudice.

My curriculum unit also intends to give American students a present-day sense of what it is like to be an immigrant and/or refugee. The second purpose of this unit is to provide lessons about Muslim immigrants and refugees who make the United States their new home. Students study the immigration of the early 1900s and other historical periods. In considering the present influx of people from all over the world, it is important to remember that lessons from the past are relevant to our own times. Lessons comparing past immigration to that of the present will enable my classes to see history in more human terms.

Some of the lessons for this unit call for study of the current wave of Muslim immigration and how it compares to people who have immigrated to our shores in the past. I plan to interview students about the conditions in their homelands and their reasons for coming here. They will be asked to give their first impressions of life in this country. They will be asked to suggest how teachers and other students could help make their adjustment an easier one. By the end of this study it is hoped that the reader will see that the stories of the Muslims are no different from those of other immigrant groups. I could have chosen to focus on any group. The experiences would be the same. The world's immigrants and refugees move to new countries for similar reasons and experience the same hardships.

Of course, Muslims are not the only immigrant students in our school. At Jane Long Middle School, in Houston, Texas, the majority of our student body comes from immigrant families. While most of our students are Hispanic, we usually have between forty and fifty countries represented every year. I have chosen to focus on our Muslim population because they are one of our fastest growing groups and their customs and experiences are not as well known to their fellow students or teachers.

Because so many of our students in Houston are immigrants, they do not always see the experiences of others as unique. This was brought home to me at a meeting of refugee high school students and parents that was held on our campus two years ago. An 11th grade Bosnian girl told us that she was surprised at how unfriendly Americans were. She had expected people to show some type of interest in the experiences she had endured to come to this country. She thought she would be welcomed into the American community. I was shocked by this until I realized that she was attending a school which, like ours, held a large immigrant population. How could they look at her experiences as unique, or welcome her, when they too were new? As teachers in these multinational schools we often become so overwhelmed with the normal requirements of our jobs that we forget that our students are still trying to adjust to the American way of life.

BACKGROUND

The Muslim community in North America is a diverse one. "It includes immigrants who chose to move to the United States for economic, political, and religious reasons from over sixty nations of various ethnic, racial, linguistic, tribal, and national identities" (Haddad 22). Some Muslims in the United States are refugees who have been forced to leave their homes. Among these groups there is a strong sense of allegiance to the homeland and a desire to return there and help restore order and peace (22). This diversity is reflected in the student body on my campus. Muslim students have come to us from Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, Mauritania, Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Egypt, Senegal, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Kuwait, Bosnia, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Lebanon, Croatia, Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria and the Philippines.

Ignorance is the foundation of most prejudices. For some, the idea that Islam is different from their own religion is enough to create fear, hostility, and prejudice. Therefore, a brief description of Islam, Muslim culture, and the background of each is necessary. Islam is the third largest religion in the United States. "Even if Muslim immigration and the rate of conversion were not to grow, birth rate alone ensures that in the first part of the twenty-first century, Islam will replace Judaism as the second largest religion in the United States" (3). Muslim parents who are new to the country are concerned with the "question of whether their children and grandchildren will be accepted in the United States, and whether Islam can ever be recognized as a source of enlightenment, a positive force contributing to a multicultural, pluralistic America" (22). It is hoped that by studying some of the similarities between the world's major religions, prejudices will be dispelled. I always preface any discussion of religion by telling my

students that they have the right to freedom of religion in this country. This does not mean, however, that they can tell their parents that they will or will not attend their church, mosque, temple, or synagogue. The Bill of Rights actually guarantees that the government will not tell the citizenry that they must follow the tenets of a particular faith. Since the public schools are governmental institutions supported by tax dollars, I explain that no teacher has the right to tell a student to adhere to any type of religious upbringing. Having explained that, I make it very clear that we are studying religion as it pertains to history and culture. Understanding the similarities between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam should lead to a better understanding of the Muslim culture and help to dispel distrust and/or prejudice.

Islam and Muslims

For believers, Islam is not an entirely new religion. It was revealed to the Prophet, Muhammad, through the sacred scripture of the *Qur'an* between 610 and 632 CE. According to belief, Muhammad was not the author of the *Qur'an.* He was the transmitter of God's (Allah's) revelations (Wheeler, *Teaching Islam* 17). Islam is a monotheistic religion representing "the last reiteration of the primordial message of God's Oneness, a theme found in earlier monotheistic religious traditions" (1). Therefore, Islam is seen as the continuation of earlier religions. This is an important point to understand. "In Islam, the prophets are seen as spiritual brothers one to another" (10). Muslims see Muhammad as the prophet who finally presented God's complete message to his followers. "For Muslims, belief in the original scriptures revealed to Abraham (*Scrolls*), Moses (*Torah,* including the *Ten Commandments*), David (*Psalms*) and Jesus (… original *Gospel*) is an essential component of faith" (16). It should be noted that Jesus is regarded as a prophet, not the Son of God. "One cannot be considered a Muslim unless one believes in the teachings of the previous scriptures and prophets and their historical role in the spiritual development of humankind" (16). All humanity is to be viewed as an extended family to be treated with justice and equality. "Respect for the environment and natural resources also follows from the Muslim view of God" (8). The following are a sampling of the teachings, or *Hadith,* of the Prophet Muhammad which are distinct from the divine words of the *Qur'an*:

- Seeking knowledge is a duty of every Muslim.
- Cleanliness is half of the religion.
- The most perfect in faith amongst Muslim men is he who is best in manner and kindest to his wife.
- Powerful is not he who knocks the other down. Indeed powerful is he who controls himself when he is angry.
- If one of you sees something evil he should change it with his hand. If he cannot he should speak out against it, and if he cannot do even that than he should at least detest it in his heart.

- Modesty and faith are joined closely together and if either of them is lost, the other goes also.
- He who eats his fill while his neighbor goes without food is not a believer. (Wheeler, *Teaching Islam* 14)

These teachings are to be regarded not just as a religious view, but as a blueprint for the way one lives one's life. The tenets of Islam should not be confused with cultural or political actions of individuals or groups. The same could be said of Christianity or any other religion. Some will follow the true teachings of a faith and others will develop their own interpretations. One only has to watch the Christian televangelists to know that some are sincere followers and others preach fear and hatred of groups different from themselves.

Who are the followers of Islam? Muslim refers to anyone who submits to God and the teachings of Muhammad. In addition to their faith, Muslims embrace a lifestyle in accord with Islamic principals (Wheeler, *Teaching Islam* 2). "Since Muslims the world over try to implement Qur'anic and prophetic guidance, it may be said that Muslims share a common Islamic culture, focusing on shared principles and values. Muslims throughout history have been able to retain in large part their own distinct cultures, discarding only those elements contrary to the basic moral and ethical principles of Islam" (5). "As a result, Muslims typically feel at home among their co-religionists anywhere in the world" (3). The same could be said of Christianity and Judaism. To refer to a person as Islamic is incorrect. Islam is the religion and Muslims are the followers of the faith. "Anyone may be or become a Muslim, regardless of gender, race, nationality, color, or social or economic status" (2).

Practices and Festivals

Salat

Salat is the formal ritual of worship and prayer which is practiced five times a day. The first prayer is at dawn and is continued at various other times during the day. In Muslim countries the faithful are called to prayer at the local masjid (mosque). The call comes from a mueddhin who calls from the top of a manarah (minaret) or through the use of a loudspeaker (Wheeler, *Teaching Islam* 21). Worship is allowed anywhere if a masjid is not nearby. According to Muhammad, "the whole earth is a masjid…The only requirement for a location used for worship is that it must be clean, dignified and provides sufficient space for the worship movements" (22). For students enrolled in public schools this is not always possible. For special celebrations and the main Friday salat (worship), parents of our students often check them out at lunch time and return them to their afternoon classes. At this point I recommend reading the appendix found at the end of this unit which gives a substantial outline of Islamic religious terms and practices.

Ramadan

Ramadan is held throughout the ninth month of the lunar calendar. It usually falls during November and/or December. It was during this month in 610 C.E. that the first verses of the *Qur'an* were revealed to Muhammad. Fasting during the month of Ramadan allows Muslims to demonstrate their "commitment to God in the face of temptation and difficulty" (Wheeler, *Teaching Islam* 24).

> Sawm, fasting for a period ranging from dawn to sunset, teaches Muslims self-restraint, patience, endurance, and obedience to God. Moreover, it puts into perspective the plight of those unable to obtain regular nourishing meals. When fasting, Muslims often discover a calm, inner peace which helps them become even closer to God. In physical terms, fasting means not eating any foods, drinking any beverages (including water), or engaging in marital sexual relations from dawn to sunset. On the spiritual and moral level, it means struggling to develop self-restraint, God-consciousness and piety. Muslims strive in this month to curb all detrimental desires and negative or uncharitable thoughts, and to nurture love, patience, unselfishness and social consciousness. (Wheeler, *Teaching Islam* 24)

The family rises before dawn and eats a nourishing meal followed by the pre-dawn salah (prayers) and reading from the *Qur'an*. If one feels hunger or thirst during the day it serves as a reminder of the gifts from God. At sunset the fast is broken with a snack of dates, fruits and appetizers (Wheeler, *Teaching Islam* 25). This light meal is followed by evening worship either at home or at the masjid (mosque) after which a large meal is enjoyed with friends and family. The evening usually includes a form of worship called Tarawih. One-thirtieth of the *Qur'an* is recited. By the end of the month all 6,000 verses of the book are heard and their message reinforced (25). Persons unable to fast due to medical reasons may make up the fasting days at a later date. If unable to do that, then they must arrange to feed two people for every day of the fast which was missed (24).

Where Do Muslims Live?

Muslims are found all over the world, not just in the Middle East. People who inhabit the countries of the Middle East are referred to as Arabs. Not all Arabs are Muslims. The distinction between these two terms is important. After 9/11 Christian Arabs were the target of discrimination by people who assumed they were Muslim. The perpetrators of the 9/11 attack called themselves Muslims while their actions went against Islamic teachings. Over 1.2 billion, or one out of every five persons on earth, are Muslims (Wheeler, *Teaching Islam* 2). Islam is practiced by people living in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Central, East, South and Southeast Asia, Japan, Australia, and North and South America. "While Islam is often associated almost exclusively with the Middle East, Arabs comprise only about 15 – 18% of all Muslims" (2).

Muslims in the United States

Arabs and Muslims have been immigrating to the United States for the last 150 years (Wheeler, *Teaching Islam* 5). Muslims and Arabs from various cultures live in every state of the union. The ten states with the largest Muslim populations are California, New York, Illinois, New Jersey, Indiana, Michigan, Virginia, Texas, Ohio, and Maryland. These states contain 3.3 million Muslims – 50% of the American Muslim population (5).

The world's Muslims exhibit numerous styles of clothing, different tastes for food and drink, diverse languages, and varying traditions and customs. American Muslims fall within this panorama. Yet in many ways they are culturally distinct from Muslims living in other societal contexts (Wheeler, *Teaching Islam* 5). "Little League baseball, apple pie, and jazz music are as natural to American Muslims as they are to other Americans. Even so, certain aspects of popular American culture (such as premarital relations, consumption of alcohol, and certain styles of dress) do not accord with Islamic Principles" (4).

WHY DO PEOPLE IMMIGRATE?

There can be a variety of reasons why people wish to immigrate to the United States. An *immigrant* is someone who voluntarily wishes to come due to a desire to further education, secure medical aid, join family members, or seek employment. *Refugees* wish to immigrate because of natural disasters such as drought, disagreement with one's government, or the danger and oppression of warfare which makes relocating a matter of life and death. Returning home is not an option.

> The United Nations defines a refugee as a person who is unable or unwilling to return to his or her country because of a well-founded fear of persecution. These claims of persecution must be based on race, religion, nationality, or membership in a particular social group or political party. Refugees are resettled in a third country when they are unable to return home and cannot stay in the camp or country in which they were granted asylum. (Pipher 18-19)

When refugees are granted asylum in the United States they are assigned a destination. As a result the various branches of a family can often end up in different cities. They are provided with a furnished apartment, a temporary food and money allotment, and a social security card. A quick orientation is provided. Many refugees are from third world countries, followed by years in refugee camps. Within three or four months they must be able to adjust to their new environs, learn English, and find work. This all needs to be assimilated while still dealing with the emotional and physical results of their experiences (Pipher 56). The World Refugee Survey 2001 estimated that there were 14.5 million refugees and asylum seekers and more than 20 million internally displaced persons. About 40 percent of the refugees coming to Lincoln, Nebraska had been tortured (56). *The Middle of Everywhere: The World's Refugees Come to Our*

Town, by Mary Pipher, recounts the experiences of refugees resettled in Lincoln, Nebraska. She relates their lives previous to immigration and the travails of adjusting to life in a new culture and country. I feel that this book is necessary reading for all American teachers. Pipher retells the stories of several refugee families. If you have immigrant or refugee students, including Muslims, in your classroom, they may have endured similar situations.

Zeenat, a Kurdish village girl, was born in Iraq and entered an arranged marriage at age fourteen. She and her husband led a "prosperous and Europeanized" life in Baghdad, raising ten children (Pipher 25). During the 1980s, the father came into the disfavor of Saddam Hussein, and after learning of the disappearance and torture of friends, it was decided that the family should escape to Iran. They walked north at night and hid under bushes during the day (26). One of the sisters broke her leg during the journey. They finally made it to a refugee camp in Iran where they spent one year. The camp leaders enforced strict rules. All women wore heavy robes and scarves. "One young girl wearing makeup [was] stopped by a guard who rubbed it off her face. He had put ground glass in the tissue so that her cheeks bled afterward" (26). The family left the camp and walked towards Pakistan. They were eventually resettled in the frontier town of Quetta by a relief agency (27). The men of the family could no longer take the stress and abandoned Zeenat and the children. Since single women were not allowed to leave home unescorted by a male, the girls were hostages in their hut. At night stones were thrown at their windows and they were threatened with rape. They were robbed of the little money they had. "The Pakistanis tested a nuclear bomb nearby and they all got sick" (27). The girls studied English and waited. After ten years, the family went on a hunger strike. The relief workers finally provided paperwork for them to move on to Islamabad where they endured a year of interviews and paperwork before being allowed to immigrate to Lincoln (28).

Shireen, the youngest, enrolled in high school. The older sisters had lost their opportunity for an education while on the run. They found jobs in a local factory (Pipher 29). Money was tight. They had arrived with nothing and had to find an automobile and care for neglected medical and dental problems. The United States government expected to be reimbursed for their airfare (35). Mary Pipher became their friend and cultural broker or mentor. Their driving lessons illustrate the type of everyday problems encountered by immigrants and refugees. Ms. Pipher recalls that "Meena became anxious whenever we passed a speed limit sign. Finally, I asked her what made her upset when she saw these signs. She explained that it was hard to drive the car at exactly the speed limit, not one mile faster or slower" (34).

Adjusting to American life was difficult. The family had led a "modern" life in Iran. They rejoiced in being able to again wear modern clothing and hairstyles. Yet they were still different from everyone around them. "To the sisters, one meaning of freedom was the freedom to wear American clothes. I reflected that while their clothes were sexy, their intentions were innocent" (Pipher 43). Dates were surprised when the whole family

wanted to come along as chaperones (38). Zeenat, the mother, struggled to learn English and was bored and lonely. As hard as life had been in Islamabad, she wished to return to that familiar culture where she had felt useful (39).

Firoozeh Dumas's family immigrated to the United States from Iran in 1972 when she was seven years old. Her father, an engineer for the National Iranian Oil Company, came to the U.S. to accept a consulting position (Dumas 3). While the family did not suffer the trauma of refugees, they did encounter puzzling experiences concerning language which are common to newcomers. "Moving to America was both exciting and frightening, but we found great comfort in knowing that my father spoke English" (8). Her father had studied in the U.S. as a young man, but the family became concerned with his understanding of the language once they arrived in this country:

> Judging from the bewildered looks of store cashiers, gas station attendants, and waiters, my father spoke a version of English not yet shared with the rest of America. His attempts to find a "vater closet" in a department store would usually lead us to the drinking fountain . . . . Asking my father to ask the waitress the definition of "sloppy Joe" or "Tater Tots" was no problem. His translations, however, were highly suspect. Waitresses would spend several minutes responding to my father's questions, and these responses, in turn, would be translated as "She doesn't know." Thanks to my father's translation, we stayed away from hot dogs, catfish, and hush puppies, and no amount of caviar in the sea would have convinced us to try mud pie. (Dumas 8-9)

More confusion occurred when the family went to a hardware store looking for "elbow grease" after a plumber recommended it for the removal of a stain. And her father insulted a family friend by suggesting that the daughter was homely; a compliment in Iran meaning she would make a good housewife (Dumas 12). Names also became a problem. Her brother met the insensitivity of American children when his name Farshid, which means "He Who Enlightens," became "Fartshit" (62). Firoozeh, whose name means "Turquoise" in Farsi found that in America her name meant "Ferocious." It also meant "Unpronounceable" or "I'm Not Going to Talk to You Because I Cannot Possibly Learn Your Name and I Just Don't Want to Have to Ask You Again and Again Because You'll Think I'm Dumb or You Might Get Upset or Something" (63). By the sixth grade she had adopted the name Julie. All went well until the Iranian Revolution broke out. Because she did not speak with an Iranian accent, she was often present when people made uncomplimentary comments about Iranians. "It dawned on me that these people would have probably never invited me to their house had they known me as Firoozeh" (65). In college she returned to her real name, but found after graduating with honors that she could not find a job. She went back to using "Julie" on her resume and by coincidence began receiving job offers. She commented, "Perhaps it's the same kind of coincidence that keeps African Americans from getting cabs in New York" (65).

Kareem and Mirzana came to Lincoln, Nebraska as a result of the fighting in Bosnia. Serbian soldiers invaded their village and put all of the men in a concentration camp where many were tortured. They were later forced to fight. The family escaped to Croatia, was later joined by their father, and eventually made their way to Germany. They were lucky to be reunited with their father. Many men were never heard from again. Women from other families were raped. In 1998 they were told to leave Germany and were accepted into the United States (Pipher 79-80). Our students seldom mention these experiences. Yet the emotional and physical trauma of what brought their families to American still has an impact on their lives.

Muslim parents, especially from the Middle East, are often shocked at the casual interaction between the sexes in our country. One father and daughter drove through Lincoln, Nebraska and observed women on the streets wearing shorts and tank tops. The father told his daughter to "Cover your eyes; cover your eyes." Neither of them had ever seen women in public without head covering (Pipher 61). Some traditional women become suspicious when American women speak to their husbands in stores or at work (61). Parents find other things shocking in America. Ritu from Afghanistan said it was a sin to waste food. She became upset when her child brought home a piece of art made from uncooked macaroni and pinto beans. "I have many relatives who are hungry. It is disrespectful of the school to use food so foolishly" (239).

Mohamed was born in Sierra Leone. When civil war erupted "two of his brothers were stabbed with machetes and his two sisters were raped to death" (Pipher 269). He described a battle in Freetown where "hundreds of houses were burned. Six thousand people, including children, had their limbs chopped off . . . . 'We are a nation of amputees'" (271). His children disappeared in the upheaval and were never found. Mohamed escaped to Ghana where he lived in a refugee camp in a hut filled with scorpions and snakes (268-271). He and his wife now live in the United States and send money back to orphans in the camp (271).

INTERVIEWS

As a teacher, it is difficult to assess when it is appropriate to ask a student about his or her past. Some students and parents may take our curiosity as an invasion of privacy. Others may fear we will relate what we have learned to immigration authorities. Yet, there are those who think we do not care because we show no interest in their experiences. I have found it wise to wait and establish a rapport with my students. I let them know that I care about them and that I understand if they do not wish to speak of events that may be painful. I have also encouraged them to write down their stories, not for me, but for themselves and the future generations of their families. Teachers need to be sensitive to this issue when using the lesson plans in this unit and when making class assignments. In her book *The Middle of Everywhere: The World's Refugees Come to Our Town,* Mary Pipher provides valuable insight into this matter and how it can affect a student's performance:

> Shireen [a Kurdish refugee from Iraq] told of a lesson in writing class. The students were asked to make a life map, a time line with ten significant events. She said the American kids had no trouble, but she had a terrible time. The Americans listed birthdays, vacations, and maybe their grandparents' deaths. But all of her events were sad - escapes, family members being murdered, and things she couldn't write down because they were too painful to tell. She said, "I didn't do the assignment." (Pipher 46)

The following are accounts of my own students' experiences. These interviews have given me insight into what it was like to live in and escape from the troubled spots of the world. While all of the accounts come from my Muslim students, it should be noted that their experiences are shared with people from all walks of life. One student told me about going to school in the Congo where it was typical to see bodies floating in the river every day. These types of experiences are not always discussed at home. The student who related this story to me was having problems adjusting to his new surroundings and wanted to talk about the trauma he had experienced. Because the family had been on the move, he really did not know how to make friends. His constant pushing and shoving was just an attempt to get close to the others. When this failed, he spent a lot of time around his teachers which resulted in other students calling him the teacher's pet. He would always stand about two inches from a person when talking to them. This did not go over well with anyone. He was truly appreciative of the talks his teachers had with him about cultural body language and inappropriate behaviors. His extreme neediness resulted from what he perceived as a lack of attention from his mom who spent long hours in English classes and at work. He seemed to view this as neglect rather than as her desire to provide him with a better life.

I have spoken with parents who were professionals in Afghanistan and came to this country for safety and the opportunity of continuing their children's education. Other families have come to take advantage of much needed medical expertise. One student is from Mauritania. Her family escaped to a refugee camp in Senegal where they lived for about ten years. She suffered from cataracts which made reading very difficult. She has been a true inspiration: enriching my ability to deal with any future adversity as a result of making her acquaintance. Because of her poor vision, she always brought an old scratched piece of glass from a broken magnifying glass to class. She would bend close over her reading material so that she might read her assignment. I was so impressed by her extraordinary sense of responsibility and determination when it came to her desire to complete her school work. She cared nothing about the reaction of the other students. She also bought her own workbooks to help improve her English. Our school provides free exams and glasses for those who need them. I have had many students who would lose new pairs of eyeglasses as soon as they got them because they did not want to wear them. She has since had eye surgery and is now wearing eyeglasses. For such students, observing other students not appreciate the things given to them is a puzzling experience. As for her reaction to the United States, she thought the houses in America were unusual

when she arrived and she did not like the smell of the cleaning solutions in the family's new apartment. The food was strange, she prefers rice and okra. For the first time she saw elevators and escalators. The YMCA was very helpful to the family when they arrived. Her father was a doctor at home, but must go back to school if he wishes to practice in this country. Education is very important to this family. She hopes to return to her country, perhaps as a social worker. She would like to help students see why it is important to learn and share her experiences in America. When she becomes an adult she will decide if she wants to wear the *hijab*; she does not at this time.

Another child from the Senegal camps thought America was "cool and fun." The parents were afraid to go outside their new apartment because everything was so strange. There were lots of white people. Her father had been a school principal at home. She was surprised that lunch was served at school. Of course, none of the students, new or old, are overly impressed with the food. For Muslims, however, choices are even more limited. They do not eat pork or pork products and some are vegetarians. Last year I sponsored a club attended by Muslims from India, Pakistan, and Indonesia. Providing snacks was always difficult. They would carefully study the ingredients for animal by-products and chemical additives and dyes. Needless to say, many snacks were rejected. While food is plentiful in this country, it is not always healthy or *halal* (approved).

When Muslim students began enrolling in our school, no one was prepared for accommodating them during the fasting period of Ramadan. They now spend their lunch time in the library to keep from seeing and smelling the food. They are allowed to sit out of activities in PE classes. I have found that all of my Muslim students celebrate Ramadan in the same manner. The following information was given to me by students from Croatia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Congo, Mauritania, Iran, Senegal, Bosnia, India, and Somalia: They rise before dawn for prayers and breakfast. During the day they neither drink nor eat. At dusk they eat a snack, pray, and then have an evening meal. The three days of Eid at the end of Ramadan are for celebration. Houses are cleaned, everyone wears new clothes, and food is enjoyed with family and friends. All of the groups spoke of sacrificing a cow or goat. According to several of my students, in Pakistan they sometimes sacrifice a camel. In this country they usually pay someone who butchers the animal at a special place on designated ground. A part of the animal is sent to those who are less fortunate. If you drive past markets catering to Muslims you may see the term halal in reference to food products. It means the food is approved, in much the same way that Jewish people serve Kosher food. Gifts are given to children. Money is the most typical gift and seemed to be the one preferred by everyone. The African students told me how they would pool their money while in the refugee camps to buy sodas and other treats and have a party. Children from Pakistan said they usually received clothing which is why they preferred cash – more fun. If you wish to greet your students during this holiday period say "Eid Mubarak" or "Ramadan Mubarak" which will translate into "Best Wishes."

Our school enforces a dress code: blue pants and a white shirt. Due to religious considerations, Muslim girls are allowed to wear their *hijad* (head scarves). It has been interesting to observe that on field trips the scarves sometimes come off on hot days. Some families require their daughters to wear the *hijad*. For others it is a choice. I have met with mothers who did not wear a hijad and wore western clothing while the daughter always wore the hijad to school. The wearing of the scarf provides a loophole in the dress code which allows them a type of cultural self-expression. For others it may help in the adjustment of enrolling in schools with both boys and girls. I have observed that several of my former students dropped the *hijad* once they enrolled in high school. One student from the Congo said her mother still wears the hijad and that she is not required to do the same. But at age eighteen she may decide to wear it as a respectful adult. A young lady from Bosnia finds that other students are confused when they see her going to the masjid. They want to know why she isn't wearing the *hijad*.

A young man from Afghanistan thought there would be lots of big buildings in the USA and also thought there would be war. He assumed that everyone would carry a gun. A student from Somalia also reported that he thought everyone would carry guns in America. As a young child, the Afghan student had witnessed the Taliban breaking into his home and expected the same thing here. The family traveled to Iran, Pakistan, and finally Houston. He remembered the streets of Pakistan being piled high with garbage. He played hide-and-seek with his friends after school. At school, boys who misbehaved were hit with a ruler or a stick with thorns. His American teachers do not do that, which may account for his sometimes sweetly disruptive nature. He was surprised that everyone here seems to have an automobile.

Although this student studied English in Pakistan, he needed assistance when he enrolled in an American elementary school. As a 7th grader, he feels that he still needs assistance with reading and writing. His family was confused because they expected all Americans to speak English. They moved into an apartment complex where the majority of the neighbors spoke Spanish. This is an interesting point. Most of the students at our school speak Spanish. Newcomers, therefore, often pick up that language in their newcomer and bilingual classes and from their friends. It is not unusual for students to speak their native languages from West Africa, the Middle East, Bosnia or Indonesia, in addition to English and some Spanish.

If a child is coming from a war zone they may have been told to "always attack first" as was the case with one student from Bosnia (Pipher 138). That makes for a rough transition into the American school. One of my students was born in Croatia but had to leave for Serbia at the age of six, due to war. After staying there for one year with an uncle, the family moved to Kosovo for three years and then on to the United States. He spoke of his school where the students from Kosovo and Croatia were kept on separate floors to prevent fighting between the two groups. It was not uncommon to find this charming young man in the principal's office. He tended to react first and think about the consequences later.

Pakistanis of the Sunni and Shi'ite sects of Islam often become great friends here in the United States. Over the past several years, I have been told by various students that they would be enemies in their home countries because of the animosity between the two groups. Warfare can take its toll on a person's ability to mature. "Some kids were precocious from war experiences but had missed kid experiences. Some children cared for younger siblings, cleaned and cooked, or even did factory piecework at home. A few had no play in their lives" (Pipher 123). For such students school can provide a safe cocoon, a place to try to interact with other children for the first time; a place to play. Obvious problems ensue. For those who were previously schooled in another country, corporal punishment was common. There are some students who do not take their teachers seriously because they are not rapping their hands with rulers or hitting their legs with branches. No matter what the age, children who have heard bombs exploding, seen people killed, or been driven from their homes may see your classroom as the place to finally attempt to play with other kids their own age.

Other students will react in a different manner. For them, school represents an opportunity to change their lives. As the young lady from Mauritania who had her vision corrected once told me, "If you don't try, you will go nowhere." Others have attended private schools and are shocked at the lack of interest in education by some of their fellow students. A young man from Pakistan said he is surprised that the students in our school think the work is hard. To him it is very easy. He is a very bright and considerate person. I explained that being a largely ESL (English as a second language) school, we tend to slow things down. When he arrived at the airport he was confused by the "rest rooms." He thought the room would be full of beds. It was a surprise to find seat belts in the cars. In his country he was not used to seeing women drive cars. They could become doctors, but they couldn't drive cars. He had been concerned that there might not be *masjids* (mosques) in Houston. There are: in fact one is a block from our school. When asked how we could make it easier for a new student entering our school, he suggested three things. The students in the school should have good behavior, and act in a kind and friendly manner. Tell the students the rules and how they will be dealt with if they are broken. Tell students to be nice to everyone. The students in our school know the rules, but usually ignore the consequences. He also felt that it was rude when the other students spoke Spanish in front of him. They would ridicule him the few times he spoke Urdu, but could not see that he felt left out if they spoke Spanish. This young man could not understand the poor behavior of his classmates. He enjoys and appreciates his educational opportunities. As for the future, he would like to go back and do something good for his country.

Another student from Kabul said that in Afghanistan he only went to school two hours a day. He did know some English when he arrived here because the Taliban allowed its study. However, the Taliban would not allow his sister to go to school, which was one of the reasons the family left. He misses the clear air and the snow. He does not miss hearing bombs from his apartment. He stated that it is hard to adjust to a new school when there are fights and people are using bad words. He too was surprised that

so many people spoke Spanish. Another student from Pakistan was one of our top students this year. The family moved from Pakistan to Saudi Arabia, back to Pakistan, and then finally to the United States. He too thought the work was too easy compared to what he had studied at home in a private school. He expected Houston to be big and busy with a lot of traffic. In Pakistan he said it was noisy and polluted. There were more bikes than cars. He did not expect to see boys with their hair in spikes. In his school in Pakistan a student with hair that was too long was given three warnings. After the third warning the teachers tied a pony tail on top of the offenders head. He was surprised that children are not allowed to sit in the front seat of a car here. His suggestion for making school easier for newcomers was to let a student sit next to someone from their own country. As for behavior, he said girls and boys should be in separate classes. He felt that the boys acted up just to impress the girls.

DEALING WITH CURRENT WORLD EVENTS AND LIFE IN AMERICA

"I was lucky to have come to America years before the political upheaval in Iran. The Americans we encountered were kind and curious, unafraid to ask questions and willing to listen . . . . On the topic of Iran, American minds were *tabulae rasae*. Judging from the questions asked, it was clear that most Americans in 1972 had never heard of Iran (Dumas 31). "When my parents and I get together today, we often talk about our first year in America . . . . We remember the kindness more than ever, knowing that our relatives who immigrated to this country after the Iranian Revolution did not encounter the same America. They saw Americans who had bumper stickers on their cars that read "Iranians: Go Home" or "We Play Cowboys and Iranians" (36). "The Americans they met rarely invited them to their houses. These Americans felt that they knew all about Iran and its people, and they had no questions, just opinions. My relatives did not think Americans were very kind" (36).

During the Iranian Revolution a group of Americans were taken hostage and held in the American Embassy in Tehran. Dumas remembers:

> Overnight, Iranians living in America became, to say the least, very unpopular. For some reason, many Americans began to think that all Iranians, despite outward appearances to the contrary, could at any given moment get angry and take prisoners. People always asked us what we thought of the hostage situation. "It's awful," we always said. This reply was generally met with surprise. We were asked our opinion on the hostages so often that I started reminding people that they weren't in our garage . . . . Sometimes I'd just say "Have you noticed how all the recent serial killers have been Americans? I won't hold it against you." (Dumas 39-40)

This demonstrates an important lesson for our students to learn. The people immigrating to our country are trying to get away from the events they hear about in the news. This should lead to a greater understanding of human nature and an ability not to pre-judge

others or blame members of a group for what individuals do. Newcomers to our country are not going to feel welcome or secure if Americans show a lack of sensitivity to their situations. Professor Mohsen M. Mobasher, an Iranian-American, spoke to a group of Houston teachers who were attending the seminar "The New Houston: New Immigrants, New Ethnicities, and New Inter-Group Relations in America's Fourth-Largest City" in March of 2004. He discussed the lack of sensitivity he experienced after 9/11. He was asked by his colleagues if "he knew who did it."

Saad Saleh spoke at a symposium entitled "What it Means to be an American" on March 27, 2004, at the Houston Holocaust Museum. His parents were forced to leave Palestine in 1948. From there they went to Syria and on to Kuwait. Because of discrimination in Kuwait the family came to the United States in 1980. Saad became an electrical engineer and noting the kindness he found in the U.S., he became an American citizen in 1999. He was happy that his children would not have to suffer the discrimination and uncertainty that he had as a child. September 11 changed everything. His family felt grief and anger like everyone else. But, they also felt fear. Crimes of hate were being reported across the United States. Would the family suffer reprisals? Theirs did not. Unlike Professor Mosbasher, they received offers of help. Saad's fellow employees offered their homes if the family did not feel safe at theirs. He traveled often for his job and was never searched. After 9/11 he was searched and detained often, sometimes for as long as three hours. "My wife and I are pretty thick-skinned. This energizes us to protect our rights. But do we want to put our kids through this? We do not want them to feel that they are the enemy within." His statement illustrates the purpose of this unit, to prevent prejudice based on a lack of knowledge.

CONCLUSION

The students sitting in our classrooms have been eyewitnesses to the events we watch on the evening news. Three years ago a father from Yemen who was working and living with his family in Kuwait during the Gulf War taught my class about the events surrounding Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and his family's escape to Jordan. Our students are striving to adjust to new challenges and the stress of learning a new language. For some, they are still dealing with the trauma of the past. When they leave our classrooms they are celebrating festivals which we are unaware of, spending time at the masjid, and taking classes in Arabic and the *Qur'an.*

Because of recent world events this unit has focused on the experiences of Muslim students. But the lessons are relevant for all peoples moving to our country. According to the 2000 census "America is on the way to becoming a microcosm of the entire world. We have 28 million foreign-born residents, or one out of every ten people. One out of every five school children is foreign-born or has foreign-born parents" (Pipher 55). It is hoped that this unit will provide American teachers with tools to enhance not only their students' world view, but also their own. In her book *The Middle of Everywhere: The World's Refugees Come to Our Town*, Mary Pipher asserts that "identity is no longer

based on territory. The world community is small and interconnected. We are all living in one big town. [The tragedy of 9/11] has provided us with the most significant teachable moment in our history. We can learn from this to be kinder and more appreciative of life. And we can learn the importance of understanding the perspectives of all our neighbors in our global village" (xvii). Dennis Banks of the American Indian Movement best sums up the purpose of this unit: "What you know you don't fear."

LESSON PLANS

Lesson Plan I – Integrating the Muslim Student into the American Classroom

Objectives

Compare and contrast cultural traditions. Create a blueprint to assist new students who are integrated into the American classroom.

Procedure

In this lesson the students will begin by acquainting themselves with the various Muslim cultures around the world. They will then compare those cultures to what they think defines American culture. Finally the students will plan ways to assist new students with their adjustment to life in a new country and a new school.

1. Assign students a particular country and ask them to describe the cultural practices of Muslims in that country.
2. Ask students to report on the cultural and religious practices which tie all Muslims together, no matter where they live, such as Ramadan and the call to prayer.
3. If there are Muslim students in your classroom, they could report on their families' cultural traditions. Ask them if they have adopted any new American traditions since coming to this country. Ask them to describe which American traditions seemed new and unusual to them. This kind of revelation can help Americans see themselves as others do.
4. Ask those students who are not from immigrant families to describe American culture. Is there one set answer to that question? Does it change from state to state, region to region, city to city, or neighborhood to neighborhood? Does it change with time? How?
5. After contemplating how the rest of the world views the American culture, ask the students to form groups and discuss how they might help immigrants feel comfortable in a new land. Immigrant students can contribute to the discussion by relating what might have made their adjustment easier when they first arrived. Each group should present a blueprint for success, i.e. tips on how to assist new students in their adjustment to the United States and the American classroom.

Lesson Plan II – Relating the Past to the Present

Objectives

Analyze the effect geography has on peoples lives. Compare and contrast.

Procedure

This lesson will require the students to compare an event from the past to one from their own lifetime. The following is an example. The format can be used with any number of contemporary issues. The drought which caused the American Dust Bowl during the 1930s will be compared to the drought in the Sudan in the 1980s. It should be noted that the farmers of the Central American Plains were referred to as refugees, even though they were migrating rather than immigrating. Their experiences were more similar to those of foreign refugees than to those of fellow Americans.

Part One

1. The students should research the causes of drought and what efforts can be made to prevent it.
2. Study the Dust Bowl years in the United States. Why did this happen? What were the consequences for the farmers in that region? Describe the people of this region. Many of those farm families migrated to California. Describe the migration to California. What type of landscape did these refugees encounter? Each of these questions will be researched by groups of four to five students and reports made to the class. Written reports will be turned in.
3. What geographical changes did these Dust Bowl Refugees encounter during their journeys to California? This topic will be addressed through a classroom discussion based upon the information obtained in #2 above.
4. Essay question: Why wasn't there a drought in California? Give geographical reasons for the answer.

Part Two

1. Study the drought in Sudan in the 1980s. Why did this happen?
2. What is the geography of the area? How did people in this region make a living? Describe the people of this region. What happened to the local communities as the drought progressed? Did the citizens receive any type of governmental humanitarian aid? What happened to the people of the Sudan? Each of these questions will be researched by groups of four to five students and reports made to the class. Written reports will be turned in.
3. The class will hold a discussion based on the above research.
4. View the video *The Lost Boys of the Sudan*. Students will be asked to write their impressions in an essay format. The essay should also address how they might help people who find themselves in similar circumstances. A follow-up discussion will follow. *The Lost Boys of the Sudan*, presented by the television program "Sixty Minutes", is a moving depiction of what happed to the homeless children of the Sudan. The experiences they endured are a real eye-opener as to what refugees endure before reaching a new homeland.
5. Compare the experiences of the Sudanese to those of the Americans during the Dust Bowl years. This final comparison could be done orally, in essay form, or as a test.
6. The above example does not involve Muslim refugees. It gives an example of how to present a lesson linking the past to the present. Try to find a contemporary issue to

use in your classroom. As of this writing one might compare the religious reasons which lead to the immigration of Puritans in the 1600s and Afghans in the 2000s to North America. Escaping current revolutions in West Africa might be compared to the Jews who tried to escape from Nazi Germany prior to World War II. Lessons could also compare fugitive American slaves running away to Canada and Mexico with the experiences of Iraqis escaping the rule of Saddham Hussien. The point of this lesson is to make the students aware of a shared human experience.

Lesson Plan III – Why Do People Immigrate?

Objectives
Understand the reasons people immigrate to the United States. Learn the procedure for immigrating to the United States.

Procedure
1. Choose a contemporary news source with a reading level appropriate to your age group. Choose a story. Ask the students to read and outline the reasons they might have for wanting to leave a particular region of the world. Those reasons might be natural (drought), economic (lack of jobs), political (disagreement with your government poses a threat to your life), medical (lack of services), or the danger and oppression of warfare.
2. Form family groups and decide how you will leave your country. Will you be in danger? Decide if you will have money. Will you be able to take your possessions with you? Are you leaving family behind? Research the procedures you must follow when applying to immigrate to the United States. Will people from your country be allowed to enter right away or will you spend time in another country? Considering your circumstances, is it possible you could end up in a refugee camp? What do you know about the United States? Do you know anyone in the United States? What part of the country would you like to move to? Do you think you will be allowed to move there? What type of work did you do in your home country? Will you be able to find that type of work in the USA? Many people with college degrees must return to school in order to practice law, medicine, or engineering in the United States. Will you be able to afford that expense? How will your family support itself while the major breadwinner is in school? What type of adjustments do you think you will have to make when immigrating to the United States? Present information in a panel discussion.

Lesson Plan IV – Learning Cultural Tolerance

Objectives
Compare and contrast cultural traditions.

Lesson Background
For this lesson I will use the following books written by Roger E. Axtell: *Gestures: The Do's and Taboos of Body Language Around the World*, *Do's and Taboos Around the*

World, and *The Do's and Taboos of International Trade: A Small Business Primer.* We will also use the *Culture Shock* series written about various countries published by the Graphic Arts Center Publishing Company. These books illustrate how a gesture or remark in one culture might be very offensive to someone from another culture. As future business people in the international marketplace it will be necessary for my students to learn cross-cultural communication.

I remember reading years ago about a female journalist's impressions of her visit to Saudi Arabia. She described entering an office building and stepping into an elevator with several business men. They did not seem happy to have her there. In our gender mixing society we do not consider this as an offense. In fact, our only objection would concern the safety of a woman against possible criminal attack. The journalist later learned that it was extremely inappropriate for her to have been alone with men on the elevator. Only a woman of very low class would place herself in such a situation.

The *Peoples Guide to Mexico* by Carl Franz relates just how bad cultural misunderstandings can become. Americans have often traveled to Mexico and adopted the dress of the indigenous peoples. *Huicholes* are beautifully woven garments, the designs often identifying the village a person is from. They are slipped over the head. Some are fairly short, others reach to about mid-thigh. During the 1960s and 1970s, mini skirts were the rage in the United States. Mayans were horrified and offended to see American women who went out in public with only a top on. To the Americans, the *huicholes* were great short dresses; to the Mayans they were a blouse.

My students tell me that the misadventure of my librarian aunt who traveled to Thailand is one of their favorite stories. Like the above story, it illustrates the importance of understanding the cultural mores in different societies. Aunt Charlotte was a bibliographer for the UCLA library. Her area of expertise was East Asia and the South Pacific. As a result, she was sent on a trip to several countries to visit university libraries. At this time, my Aunt was in her early 60s, and while an attractive lady, did look her age. After a long day at a library on the outskirts of Bangkok, she attempted to hail a taxi cab for the return trip to her hotel. It was a very hot day, and she sweated profusely as her hair fell in strands across her face. She kept waving her arm in the air every time a cab flew by. It was almost an hour before one stopped. When she related this incident to an acquaintance the next day, she was told that the only people who flag down cabs in the American style are prostitutes.

Procedure

Cross-cultural awareness and etiquette are very important. In today's global economy many Americans travel and work all over the world. Because Houston is home to the petroleum industry, workers travel to, and work in, Muslim countries. Americans should look at how they are viewed as they work and travel abroad. Innocent mistakes in etiquette do happen. This awareness can lead to a better understanding of what it is like to immigrate to the United States and help dispel misunderstandings with recent

immigrants. The following exercises are meant to encourage cross-cultural understanding.

1. The students will form groups and brainstorm how they might prepare for a business or vacation trip to designated country. Their conversations should focus on cultural and business etiquette, dress, language preparation, a study of how punctuality is viewed, and how one relates to people of the opposite sex.
2. The students will role-play various situations which might be deemed awkward in Muslim countries without prior knowledge of local cultural mores.
    - In Turkey, people shake hands. They also might hold the hand of an old friend and kiss both cheeks. Imagine if you made a business call and a person younger than you kissed your hand and pressed it to his forehead (Axtell, *Gestures* 158). How would you react if you were not familiar with Turkish etiquette?
    - In Egypt the spatial relationship between males is much closer than Americans are accustomed to. Men stand very close to each other and moving away is thought to be a sign of aloofness (164). People of the opposite sex are expected to stand further apart than Americans do (164).
    - In the United States a businessperson might make the thumbs-up gesture to indicate that all is going well. In Iran it is a vulgar gesture (166).
    - In Saudi Arabia women may not drive vehicles. A Saudi man will not introduce a veiled woman who accompanies him (171).
    - In many Muslim and/or Arab countries the left hand is used for bodily hygiene. It would be extremely rude to use it for eating, handshaking, or handing over business cards (172).
    - In Bangladesh men and women often dine separately (176).
    - In Indonesia it is rude to eat while walking down the street. It is also considered impolite to talk while dining (186-187).
    - At a Muslim funeral, flowers would indicate that a person was happy about the death (Pipher 342).
3. After role-playing some of the above situations, the students will discuss times when they may have been misunderstood, or maybe misunderstood someone else, due to cultural differences. This would be a good time for new students to ask questions about customs they have not understood.

Lesson Plan V – Comparing Holidays and Festivals

Objectives

Compare and contrast. Appreciate the cultural diversity of the United States.

Procedure

1. As a homework assignment, ask your students to list all of the Muslim holidays and festivals.

2. In class, ask the students to write a short paper about the holidays and festivals that each student's family participates in.
3. Using poster boards, have pairs of students compare and contrast Muslim holidays to those practiced by the rest of the class. If there are Muslim students in your classroom, then pair a Muslim and non-Muslim for this project.
4. Some of the students could work on different topics. For instance they could compare how different cultures celebrate marriages. For those who wish a better understanding of Islam, a study of the *Hajj* pilgrimage to Mecca could be undertaken.

Lesson Plan VI – Contributions of Muslims, Arabs, and Other Immigrants

Objectives
Recognize the contributions of a specific group to American civilization and culture.

Procedure
1. Ask the students to research the contributions of various Arab and Muslim leaders in the United States and around the world. Topics to consider would be medicine, astronomy, music and literature. A study of Moorish Spain would provide a connection to Mexico and our southwestern culture. A good source for information and future traveling exhibits is *The International Museum of Muslim Cultures* in Jackson, Mississippi. They can be contacted at <http://www.muslimmuseum.org>.
2. Ask the students to find out the demographics of their community or that of the closest large city. Has the community changed? Are there new types of restaurants, styles of dress, religious institutions such as masjids or temples, festivals, radio stations or grocery stores? After an absence of fifteen years, I returned to Houston to discover several masjids and Buddhist temples, an area of town with streets signs in Vietnamese, many new ethnic festivals, and an incredible array of restaurants to choose from. By studying their own community the students will see that they are a part of an historic change.

Lesson Plan VII – Legislating Prejudice

Objectives
Compare and contrast. Understand how the passage of a law can either encourage or discourage prejudice.

Procedure
Compare the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, to the Patriot Act of 2001. The USA Patriot Act (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) "provided a legal framework for much of the Administration's war on terrorism and raised immediate alarms within the civil rights and civil liberties communities. This act gave the government broad new investigative powers as well as the power to detain and deport,

based on little or no information, those who are believed to pose a special threat" (Lee 18). Provide the students with a copy of all three documents.

1. Ask the students to study the first two documents and compare them to the policies of the *Patriot Act*.
2. Have the students write an essay about their reactions to the *Patriot Act*. On an emotional level, do they agree or disagree with the act? These papers should be read by the teacher and a general report of the feelings expressed given to the class. Since they are expressing personnel reactions, I do not feel it would be appropriate to single out any individual response.
3. Have the students write an essay discussing the constitutionality of the *Patriot Act*.
4. The students should then form groups and compare their notes from #3 above. What are the implications for the future of targeting one group? For higher level students the following questions could be researched and discussed. Have similar laws been passed before in American history? Why were they passed? Are they still in effect? Did these laws encourage discrimination? Was there justification for these laws at the time they were written? Were these laws constitutional?
5. Examples of laws to discuss would be:
    - *1798 Sedition Act* – Prohibited spoken or written criticism of the government, Congress or the President.
    - *1922 Cable Act* – American women who married aliens ineligible for citizenship would loose their own American citizenship.
    - *1942 Executive Order 9066* – Japanese-American citizens and aliens were incarcerated in military camps for the duration of World War II.

APPENDIX

Reading through this glossary of terms will provide a basic understanding of Islam and terms which have come into common usage. They were taken from a larger glossary found in *Teaching About Islam and Muslims in the Public School Classroom: A Handbook for Educators.*

Adhan – The Muslim call to worship. It consists of specific phrases, recited aloud in Arabic prior to each of the five daily worship times. In Muslim countries the call comes from the top of a *manarah* (minaret) or a loudspeaker at the *masjid* (mosque). Upon hearing the *adhan*, Muslims discontinue all activity and assemble at a local *masjid* for formal communal worship.

Allah – God.

"Allahu Akbar" – This familiar phrase means "God is Greatest" and is uttered by Muslims at various times. Most often it is pronounced during the daily worship, but Muslims also use it to express happiness, surprise, regret, thankfulness, fear, or approval, thereby reinforcing their belief that all things come from *Allah*.

Arabic – The language of the *Qur'an*. In Muslim civilization, *Arabic* became the language of learning and scholarship.

Ayatollah – A term used within the *Shi'ah* sect of Islam. It is an honorific title for highly learned and pious religious authorities (30).

Black Muslims – A term designating African-Americans who adhere to the teachings of the organization known as the Nation of Islam. This nationalistic organization is not to be confused with the mainstream, universal world religion of Islam.

Dome of the Rock – Name of the famous *masjid* in Jerusalem built around 691 C.E. by the *khalifah* (caliph) Abd al-Malik. The rock within the *masjid* is believed to be the point from which Muhammad was miraculously ascended to Heaven in 619 C.E.

Du'a – Personal prayer, supplication, and communication with *Allah*, as distinct from *salah* (formal worship). Muslims make *du'as* for many reasons and at various times, such as after *salah*, before eating a meal, before sleep, or to commemorate an auspicious occasion such as the birth of a child. Personal *du'as* can be made in any language, whereas *salah* is performed in *Arabic.*

Eid – Festivity or celebration. Muslims celebrate two major religious holidays, known as *Eid al – Fitr* (which takes place after *Ramadan*), and *Eid al – Adha* (which occurs at the time of the *Hajj*). A traditional greeting used by Muslims around the time of *Eid* is *"Eid Mubarak*", meaning "May your holiday be blessed." A special congregational *Eid* worship, visitation of family and friends, new clothing, specially-prepared foods and sweets, and gifts for children characterize these holidays.

Five Pillars of Islam – The five core religious practices incumbent upon all Muslims, and which demonstrate a Muslim's commitment to Allah in word and deed. They are as follows: *Shahadah* (declaration of faith), *Salah* (formal worship), *Zakah*

(mandatory alms-giving tax), *Sawm* (fasting during Ramadan) and *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Makkah).

Hadith – Unlike the verses contained in the *Qur'an, Hadith* are the sayings and traditions of Prophet Muhammad himself, and form part of the record of the Prophet's *Sunnah* (way of life).

Hajj – The pilgrimage (journey) to Makkah (Mecca, in modern-day Saudi Arabia) undertaken by Muslims in commemoration of the Ibrahimic roots of Islam. The *Hajj* rites symbolically reenact the trials and sacrifices of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), his wife Hajar, and their son Isma'il over 4,000 years ago. Muslims must perform the *Hajj* at least once in their lives, provided their health permits and they are financially capable. *Hajj* is a time of turning away from the world in order to turn towards Allah and sincerely seek His forgiveness for past sins and errors. The *Hajj* is performed annually by over 2,000,000 people during the twelfth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, *Dhul-Hijjah.* Upon reaching the Holy Land, pilgrims enter a state of consecration (solemn dedication) known as *ihram*, and don the *ihram* attire, comprised of several sheets of white, unstitched, seamless cloth. Donning the *ihram* symbolizes for a Muslim the leaving behind of the material world for the sake of God, and also reminds him or her of their mortality, since the white cloth evokes the image of the death shroud Muslims use to wrap the deceased. The collective sea of white created by millions of pilgrims also serves to reinforce Islam's egalitarian and universal ethos, reminding Muslims that all people are created as spiritual equals, and that only faith in Allah and righteousness in this life differentiates one from another (27).

Halal – That which is deemed lawful in Islam, based on the two authoritative sources, the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad. An example would be signs outside of Muslim markets advertising *Halal* meats.

Haram – that which is deemed unlawful or forbidden in Islam, based on the two authoritative sources, the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad. Muslims must refrain from all things or actions designated *haram*.

Hijab – Commonly, the term *hijab* is used to denote the scarf or other type of head-covering worn by Muslim women throughout the world. However, the broader definition of the term refers to a state of modesty and covering that encompasses a woman's entire body, excluding hands and face.

Ibn – Arabic term used in names meaning "son of". Examples: Ibn Khaldun (a historian), Ibn Sina (a physician), Ibn Rushd (a judge and philosopher), and Ibn Battuta (a world traveler).

Ibrahim – Abraham, a prophet and righteous person revered by Muslims, Jews, and Christians alike as the patriarch (father-figure) of monotheism. Muslims commemorate Ibrahim's devotion, struggles, and sacrifices during the annual *Hajj* rites.

Ihram – State of consecration into which Muslims enter in order to perform the *Hajj* or *Umrah* (lesser pilgrimage). The term also refers to the specific dress, made of white, unstitched, seamless cloth, donned by pilgrims while in this state. During

the *Hajj*, the *ihram* worn by pilgrims serves to reinforce a sense of humility and purity, and human equality in the eyes of *Allah*.

Imam – A religious leader, one who leads congregational worship or performs services such as marriages. *Imams* are not ordained clergy.

Islam – The name of the religion whose final Prophet was Muhammad, and simply means a state of peace achieved through submission to *Allah* (59).

Jum'ah - The congregational worship performed on Fridays in place of midday worship. On this special day, Muslims make an extra effort to go to their local *Masjid* to listen to the *khutbah* (community address) by the *imam* (worship leader) and to perform the formal worship with their fellow Muslim brothers and sisters.

Khalifah – Caliph. Refers to the rightful successor of Prophet Muhammad as leader of the *ummah* (worldwide Muslim community**).** The *Khalifah* is not a prophet, rather, he is charged with upholding the rights of all citizens within an Islamic state and ensuring application of the *Shari'ah* (Islamic Law).

Makkah – Mecca. An ancient city where Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ishma'il built the *Ka'bah*. Muhammad, a member of the Quraysh tribe, which traced its lineage back to Ibrahim, was born in Makkah in 570 C.E. After migrating to Madinah (Medina, where Muhammad was later buried) to further the message of Islam, Muhammad returned to Makkah in 629 C.E. with fellow Muslims to reinstitute the age-old monotheistic *Hajj*. In 630 C.E., after the Quraysh violated a peace treaty, Muhammad marched on Makkah and gained control of the city peacefully, thereafter clearing the *Ka'bah* of idols and reintegrating the city into the fold of Islam.

Manarah – Minaret. A tower-like structure from which the *mueddhin* (caller to worship) calls out the *adhan* (call to prayer). It is usually located adjacent to the *masjid*.

Masjid – Mosque. The term means "place of prostration." The *masjid* is a building where Muslims congregate for communal worship.

Muhammad – The prophet and righteous person believed by Muslims to be the final messenger of *Allah*, whose predecessors are believed to include the Prophets Adam, Noah, Ibrahim, Moses, David, Jesus and others. Born in 570 C.E., Muhammad grew up to become a well-respected member of Makkan society. In 610 C.E., he received the first of many revelations that would eventually form the content of the *Qur'an*.

Muslim – One who submits to *Allah*. Any person who accepts the creed and the teachings of Islam.

Qiblah – The direction Muslims face during *salah*, the formal worship. The *qiblah's* focal point is the *Ka'bah*, the house of worship located in the city of Makkah. Depending upon where one is at any given time upon the earth, the *qiblah* direction may vary. From North America, the direction is roughly northeast, and worship halls in local *masjids* are oriented accordingly.

Qur'an – Koran. The word *Qur'an* means "the recitation" or "the reading," and refers to the divinely revealed scripture of Islam. It consists of 114 *surahs* (chapters) revealed by *Allah* to Muhammad over a period of twenty-three years.

Rak'ah – Designates one complete cycle of standing, bowing, and prostrating during *salah* (formal worship). Verses from the *Qur'an*, special prayers and phrases are stated in these different positions.

Ramadan – The ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. *Ramadan* is the month in which the first verses of the *Qur'an* were revealed to Muhammad. Thus it is considered a blessed and holy month. Furthermore, *Ramadan* is the month in which Muslims fast daily from dawn to sunset to develop piety and self-restraint.

Sahur – A light meal taken by Muslims before dawn prior to beginning the daily fast of *Ramadan*.

Salah – The prescribed form of worship in Islam, and is one of the "five pillars" of Islam. Muslims perform the *salah* five times throughout each day as a means of maintaining God-consciousness, to thank Him for His blessings and bounty, and to seek His assistance and support in one's daily life.

Sawm – the daily fast Muslims undertake during the month of *Ramadan*, and is one of the "five pillars" of Islam. For Muslims, fasting means total abstinence from all food, drink, and marital sexual relations from dawn to sunset. Muslims fast for many reasons including to build a sense of will-power against temptation, to feel compassion for less fortunate persons, and to reevaluate their lives in spiritual terms.

Shaykh – Leader or chief. A term used as a title of respect for learned and respected individuals.

Shi'ism – A sect of Islam comprising about 10% of the total Muslim population. In *Shi'i* Islam, Ali ibn Abi Talib is believed to have been the rightful successor to Prophet Muhammad. Moreover, *Shi'ahs* believe that Ali was granted a unique spiritual authority, which was passed on to certain of his descendants given the title of *Iman* (leader).

Sufism – A particular spiritual approach and lifestyle adopted by some Muslims. It is not a separate sect. *Sufis* seek an inward path of communion with Allah through purification and perfection.

Sunni – Those Muslims who recognize the first four successors of Prophet Muhammad as the "Rightly-Guided" *khalifahs* (caliphs), and who attribute no special religious or political function to the descendants of the Prophet's son-in-law Ali ibn Abi Talib. *Sunnis* comprise the majority of Muslims, numbering about 90% of the total.

Umrah – The "lesser" pilgrimage to Makkah. This journey to worship at the *Ka'bah* and offer prayers can be performed by Muslims at any time during the year, unlike the *Hajj*, which takes place during a specified period in the twelfth month of the Islamic lunar calendar.

Zakah – *Zakah* means "purification," and refers to an almsgiving tax, roughly 2.5% of one's accumulated wealth, that eligible Muslims pay annually. This tax helps to establish economic justice, by maintaining a minimal standard of living for the least fortunate members of society. *Zakah* is one of the "five pillars" of Islam. (Wheeler, *Teaching Islam* 103-117)

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Supplemental Resources

Books

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