

## **Revolutionary Identities: The Intersection of Individuality and Culture**

*Elizabeth A. Barrett*  
Lee High School

### **INTRODUCTION**

The search for identity manifests itself differently in various cultures and locales, but one thing remains constant: “finding yourself” can be incredibly difficult. This is certainly true for those of us living in politically tumultuous areas, where a particular affiliation can mean life or death. This unit will explore questions of identity and culture through an examination of Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis* and excerpts from related texts. The central text and related topics will encourage students to consider their personal identities in relation to the major socio-political issues of their lifetimes. Students will use the text to explore a region of the world they may have some familiarity with via television and the media but have probably not studied intensively until now. In order to understand the context of Satrapi’s graphic novel, students will need to gain some rudimentary knowledge of Middle Eastern geography, Iranian history, Islam, and American involvement in that region of the world.

The school in which this unit will be taught is an inner-city high school in Houston, Texas. Students speak over 40 languages and represent nearly 70 countries from around the world, constituting a vast range of personal experiences and cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Many students have had first-hand experiences with war, displacement, discrimination, and poverty.

This curriculum unit is designed for seniors in a 12<sup>th</sup> grade ELA class; ideally, it would be taught as a capstone unit at the end of the year, although it could be modified for other grade-levels or for other times in the school year. Given that the central text is a graphic novel, it would also be well-suited to students in an English as a Second Language course.

### **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this unit are based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for 12<sup>th</sup> grade Language Arts that will be adopted in the 2009-2010 school year. Learning objectives fall into three categories: reading, writing, and research.

#### **Reading**

The focus of the reading objectives is to develop students’ abilities to read closely, interpret text elements accurately, and support a claim or inference persuasively. Particularly in English IV, students must be able to read a work critically, considering the author’s theme, craft, and motivation. Primary reading objectives are:

- TEKS 12.9D: Interpret the possible influences of the historical context on a literary work;
- TEKS 12.11B: Use elements of text to defend, clarify, and negotiate responses and interpretations;
- TEKS 12.12A: Compare and contrast elements of text such as themes, conflicts, and allusions both within and across texts; and

- TEKS 12.13E: Describe how a writer’s motivation, stance, or position may affect text credibility, structure, and tone.

### **Writing**

Though the writing outcomes of the unit take different forms, the aim is the same: student creation of organized, insightful, and persuasive prose. The following objectives require students to consider and employ some of the same literary elements they will study in other authors (e.g. diction, text organization, thesis, etc). Writing objectives are:

- TEK 12.1C: Write in a voice and style appropriate to audience and purpose; and
- TEK 12.1F: Organize ideas in writing to ensure coherence, logical progression, and support for ideas.

### **Research**

Soon, students will encounter the demands of a college composition course, requiring them to be familiar with the conventions and structures of genres such as the research paper. This unit strives to ensure students’ mastery of those conventions and structures. Learning objectives include:

- TEK 12.14A: Generate relevant, interesting, and researchable questions;
- TEK 12.4D: Compile information from primary and secondary sources using available technology;
- TEK 12.4F: Link related information and ideas from a variety of sources; and
- TEK 12.3E: Use a manual of style such as Modern Language Association (MLA).

### **RATIONALE**

As a teacher of students from countries and cultures around the world, I see examples of cultural conflict and misunderstanding daily. The source of this conflict is usually the faulty assumptions of students who do not question what they see of other cultures on the television, in movies, and in the news. Generally, students are receptive to learning about cultures and regions of the world, but until their assumptions are challenged, they will not question the images presented to them by the media. Students frequently rely on stereotypical extrapolations to explain what they see; indeed, many students have internalized stereotypes about race and gender to the point that they believe untrue and degrading ideas about themselves. This is particularly dangerous for high school senior students: as they leave the relatively sheltered high school environment, they need to be armed with the willingness and the skills to defend their opinions, to question others’ opinions, and to engage in debate. This is reliant upon the open-mindedness to admit that our interpretation of the world is subjective and that our values and beliefs are formed as a result of outside influences and are not created in a vacuum. Therefore, the thematic goal of this curriculum unit is to push the student to examine his or her preconceptions about identity and how it has been formed in response to major social and political issues. In order to do this, students must think critically about American culture. Of late, the Middle East has featured prominently in American media and consciousness, especially with regard to oil and Islam. Satrapi’s graphic novel offers the perfect opportunity to discuss how the people and cultures of the Middle East are stereotyped by American media and how American culture is perceived by citizens of other countries.

In talking with university instructors, I have found that most high school graduates – regardless of their educational background – are not prepared for the kind of thinking, reading, writing, and research college-level classes will require of them. In particular, instructors have mentioned research and the generation of research questions as an area of concern. Thus, for the culminating writing assignment of senior year and this curriculum unit, students will write a short

research paper, incorporating at least five sources to answer an original question (as opposed to earlier research assignments, where a research question was provided) and a companion piece to their research paper in the form of a personal narrative. Just as we read narratives that address the question, “How is culture of a region relevant to me individually?,” students will answer the question, “How is this issue relevant to me individually?” Possible topics could be religion in schools, discrimination against women in the workplace, immigration policy and reform, poverty, environmental issues and pollution, urban sprawl, access to higher education, race and politics, public education reform, etc. The last piece of this project would be a brief oral presentation to the class or a section of the class on their research and narrative in order to provide an opportunity to hone public speaking skills.

## **UNIT BACKGROUND**

### **Iran in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

In order to fully grasp the significance of Satrapi’s and Moaveni’s writing, students will need some historical context of the region. The contentious and frequent transfers of power in Iran during the 20<sup>th</sup> century provide the backdrop for the Islamic revolution in the 1970s. Students will access these ideas by beginning with the questions: What are our common perceptions of the Middle East, based on the way this region is presented in the media? With what biases are we beginning? The focus during this exploration would be to compare and contrast our expectations with the realities. Thus, before tracing the history, students will respond to prompts and visuals that probe their stereotypes about the Middle East; see Lesson Plan 1 for more specifics. Students will access the following historical information through an inductive model activity; Lesson Plan 2 describes this activity in detail.

The opening of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw Iran in the midst of a decline in power and prosperity. Although the Qajar shahs were still officially in power, they had begun granting “concessions” to countries like Britain and Russia; these economic agreements allowed foreign powers to come into Iran and monopolize the oil industry and some sectors of the economy (Cleveland 144). The concessions drew Iranian materials into the European economic markets without giving Iranians control of what was being exported and allowed foreign products into the market that cut into local merchants’ profits. Furthermore, they positioned Iran as a bargaining chip in the rivalry between Britain and Russia. In fact, in 1907, although the shah was still officially in power, Britain and Russia signed the Anglo-Russian accord, a document in which the “two powers agreed to reduce their competition for influence in Iran by recognizing mutual spheres of influence in the country: Russia would be dominant in the north and Britain in the southeast” (Cleveland 134). Predictably, the shah’s concessions and the Anglo-Russian accord negatively impacted local businesses and merchants, sowing unrest and distrust among that sector of the population and eroding support the shah may have found in influential and prosperous businessmen.

These foreign machinations came in the midst of internal efforts to replace the monarchy with a constitutional government, an effort consisting of a series of revolutions and counterrevolutions (Cleveland 146). Meanwhile, the influence of the Shi’a religious establishment continued to expand, as members of the ulama (Islamic scholars, teachers, judges, etc) led public protests and eventually secured approval of the Supplementary Fundamental Laws, legislation that installed Twelver Shi’ism as the official state religion and created a committee of ulama to “review all new legislation to verify that it conformed to [the law of Islam]” (Cleveland 146). Such actions confirmed already widespread support for the religious establishment. During the Qajar dynasty, Shi’a Islam evolved to include the belief that all practicing Shi’a Muslims had the right to follow their chosen *mujtahid*, a religious scholar who applied Islamic beliefs to contemporary situations. Some *mujtahids* were recognized as being particularly learned and attained precedence over their

peers; “these individuals bore the title *marja al-taqlid*, the source of emulation,” and eventually were called “*ayatollah*, the eye of God” (Cleveland 110). Thus, religious leaders cemented their claim to power in the eyes of the general populace. Furthermore, the corruption and mismanagement of the Qajar government “enabled the ulama ... to appear as the protectors of the people from a government that was increasingly viewed as corrupt and impious” (Cleveland 113). Acting as the interpreters of God’s will and the defenders of Iranian citizens, *ayatollahs* and other *mujtahids* could effectively block the rulings of the government.

Thus, in just the first 14 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Iran experienced extreme economic and political turbulence and religious developments that set a path directly to the Islamic revolution of 1979. Perhaps if the Qajar monarchy had been replaced with a different form of government and the constitutionalists had held sway, Iran’s trajectory could have been changed. Instead, the next political development was a new monarchy under Reza Shah, an uneducated colonel who began a program of secularization after overthrowing the Qajar dynasty. Though there are parallels to Atatürk’s modernization of Turkey, Reza Shah’s reform efforts were problematic at best. His policies created an outward show of Westernization (e.g. the introduction of laws requiring men to dress “in the European manner” and banning the wearing of the veil) but never embraced democratic principles such as women’s suffrage (Cleveland 188). The shah was also quick to use violence to suppress dissenters. In his attempt to secularize Iran, Reza Shah was particularly concerned about building a new secular nationalism, which required a focus on pre-Islamic influences – specifically, the culture of ancient Persia and the Aryans. As a result, the shah “supported laws that banned the use of minority languages, outlawed ethnic costumes, and reduced the number of Arabic and Turkish words in the Persian language” (Cleveland 189). Predictably, such legislation produced conflict as people were forced to assimilate to the shah’s image of modernization. Reza Shah also focused on decreasing the economic and legislative power of the ulama, earning him the distrust and antipathy of the religious establishment, and on reducing the role of foreign powers in Iran’s economy. Although Reza Shah was able to stabilize Iran, the stabilization was short-lived: the ties he had cultivated with Germany in order to oppose Britain’s presence in Iran backfired when Germany invaded the USSR in 1941. The Soviets and the British responded by invading Iran, and Reza Shah was forced to abdicate in favor of his son (Cleveland 190-191). Iran was without national sovereignty for the second time in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

By the end of World War II, Iran had suffered 50 years of almost constant political turmoil, and the “Allied invasion [of 1941] provided postwar Iranian nationalism with a ready-made issue on which to build a case against the intentions of outside powers” (Cleveland 191). In 1950, Muhammad Reza, Reza Shah’s son, faced strong opposition from within the country by the National Front coalition, a group of organizations and interests coordinated by Muhammad Mosaddiq. Mosaddiq was a Western-educated nationalist who sought “not only to break the stranglehold of foreign interests in Iran but also to reinstate the parliamentary institutions proclaimed in the 1906 constitution” (Cleveland 291). At first, popular support propelled him into the position of prime minister, but as he continued to push for reform, the secular undertones of some of his policies alienated conservative factions of the National Front. As the party disintegrated, foreign powers including the United States negotiated with the shah for Mosaddiq’s overthrow in 1953. Two key outcomes of the coup were “the return of royal dictatorship and an intensification of US interference in the domestic affairs of Iran” (Cleveland 292). The shah immediately disbanded the National Front, tried to destroy the Tudeh (communist/Marxist) party, and, with the assistance of the US and Israel, introduced the SAVAK, an aggressive and violent secret police (Cleveland 293). Although the shah maintained a two-party system in a show of democracy, “[f]rom 1953 to 1979, political freedom did not exist in Iran” (Cleveland 293). Like those of his father, Muhammad Reza’s policies were problematic: he pushed for reform and modernization in the economic and social arenas, but would not tolerate challenges to his political

authority. One result of these contradictory policies was widespread protest which intensified in 1963 due to worsening economic conditions and the shah's interference in elections that year. The protest movement was led by Ayatollah Khomeini, who "denounced the shah for corruption, for neglecting the rights of the oppressed masses, and for compromising Iran's sovereignty" (Cleveland 294). Khomeini and the rest of the religious establishment mobilized huge numbers of people by tying the shah's controversial economic and political agendas to unpopular government policies such as the monarchy's disregard for Islam and endorsement of Western culture. Because of his participation in the protests, Khomeini was arrested and deported. The shah continued to emphasize ancient Persian culture to the exclusion of Iran's Islamic heritage, thus exacerbating Khomeini's accusations and distancing himself from an Iranian people who were primarily Muslim.

Tensions came to a head in 1978, with the beginning of a tragic cycle of protests and arrests and murders. The events began when a newspaper attacked Khomeini, who was still preaching from exile. The attack prompted his supporters to protest; the protest was broken up when the army killed several protesters. The ulama took advantage of the situation to place the protests within an Islamic framework by asking supporters to demonstrate and attend mosque services forty days after the incident, according to Islamic rituals (Cleveland 428). These demonstrations ended violently, and the cycle repeated twice more. At this point, Iran entered a recession due to the shah's failed economic policies (Cleveland 429). Protests and demonstrations continued, and the violence escalated. Finally, in January of 1979, Muhammad Reza Shah left the country; fifteen days later, Ayatollah Khomeini "arrived in triumph, welcomed by a huge crowd" (Cleveland 430). Though Khomeini at first appeared to honor the institutions of a free republic (e.g. the positions of prime minister and president), the creation of the Islamic Republic with Islamic law serving as the constitution and the Ayatollah's Revolutionary Guards oppressing dissenters firmly established Khomeini and the ulama as the new rulers of Iran.

### **Iran Since 1979**

The Islamic Republic has now been in place for 30 years, and, while various factions have occasionally made inroads on the regime's policies, the main tenets put in place by Ayatollah Khomeini have been maintained. Until the revolution, women and other historically oppressed groups such as Jews and the poor had been gaining important political recognition. Azar Nafisi, a best-selling Iranian-American author, notes that "by 1979, at the time of the revolution, women were active in all areas of life in Iran... Women were scholars, police officers, judges, pilots, and engineers – present in every field except the clergy" (Zanganeh 4). Michael Axworthy points out that literacy and life expectancy rates were on the rise due to the proliferation of educational opportunities and better health care (276).

Thus, the policies instituted after the revolution represent a complete reversal from the trajectory of women's rights before the revolution. Though women retained enfranchisement, in the first sweeps of "Islamization" in the early 1980s, "women lost the right to initiate divorce, to retain child custody, to attend school if they were married, and to study such subjects as law, medicine, and engineering" (Cleveland 437). In addition, where during the Pahlavi regime women were prohibited from wearing the veil; legal requirements to wear the veil were actively enforced by a special branch of police (Cleveland 437).

Under President Khatami, women saw some relaxation of the strict policies. The city of Tehran has recently created "Mothers' Heaven," a park where women are allowed to "cast off their Islamic headscarves and dress to enjoy the sun, jog and play," and public interactions between members of the opposite sex have been more tolerated (Nasseri). It remains to be seen if such initiatives will lead to more freedoms for women, or if they will simply bolster the repressive status quo. Unfortunately, women seem to be a particularly convenient political tool, as

concessions and prohibitions are imposed more as a sign of presidential candidates' attitudes toward the regime than as an indication of desire for more fundamental change in the status of women. Furthermore, given that restrictions on dress and behavior are policed, they provide an expedient distraction from more fundamental issues; as Satrapi pointedly comments:

The regime had understood that one person leaving her house while asking herself: 'Are my trousers long enough?' 'Is my veil in place?' 'Can my make-up be seen?' 'Are they going to whip me?' no longer asks herself: 'Where is my freedom of thought?' 'Where is my freedom of speech?' 'My life, is it livable?' 'What's going on in the political prisons?' (302)

### **Media Presentations of the Middle East**

In general, American (and Western, in general) media portrays Iran and Iranian interests as diametrically opposed to the West. This actually stems from a more comprehensive negative attitude toward Islam. A seminal source for articulating this perspective is Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations?," an essay in which the author posits that conflict between the West and the Islamic world is natural and justifiable. Huntington repeatedly emphasizes the insurmountable differences between civilizations; disparities, he claims, "are not only real; they are basic... they are far more fundamental than differences among political ideologies and political regimes." This insistence on the dissimilarities between "us" and "them" leads Huntington to conclude that "the local conflicts most likely to escalate into major wars will be those, as in Bosnia and the Caucasus, along the fault lines between civilizations." Once he has established that there are deep, fundamental differences between the West and other civilizations and that those differences must inevitably and justifiably lead to conflict, Huntington is able to underscore his primary purpose: the West – meaning specifically the US – has valid reason to exercise political and military clout in other regions of the world in order to defend its economic and cultural interests. The primary casualty of this argument is Islam, elevated from a set of religious beliefs to a monolithic mindset largely formed in opposition to the Christian West and whose purpose is the destruction of Western values. Interestingly, Huntington imbues Islam both with malevolent intent and intellectual inferiority: in defining the "fault lines" of civilizations, he draws a line through Europe; "the peoples to the east and south of this line are Orthodox or Muslim; they historically belonged to the Ottoman or Tsarist empires and were only lightly touched by the shaping events in the rest of Europe; they are generally less advanced economically; they seem much less likely to develop stable democratic political systems." These sweeping, condescending generalizations ignore the considerable artistic and scientific contributions of these civilizations while at the same time ignoring the devastating effects of British, French, and American imperialism in the region. The end result is that conflict becomes normal and natural, and Islam is framed as the usual suspect.

Unfortunately, though Huntington wrote in the early 1990s, these views are still prevalent. Consider the 2008 presidential campaign: in October, a *New York Times* columnist reported that rumors about President Obama being Muslim plagued the campaign: "the disinformation has proliferated that Mr. Obama was raised as a Muslim, educated in a madrassa, influenced by an Islamist stepfather and sworn into the Senate holding a Koran" (Freedman). These rumors had one purpose and one desired effect: to question President Obama's legitimacy by linking him to Islam, playing off fears of Islamic terrorism and fundamentalism and thus suggesting that Americans believe that Muslims can be neither "true" Americans nor representative of American interests. Given the controversy the allegations ignited, it is not surprising to find these negative views underpinning media representations of foreign countries and policies.

Iran in particular has been a primary target of biased reporting resulting from Western prejudices against Islam. Edward Said notes that Iran came to the attention of the American

media not with the Iranian revolution but with the Iranian hostage crisis (an event directly involving Americans and symbolizing a direct threat toward American interests) later that year. He suggests that even to the present day Iran has maintained its status as newsworthy through “a sustained diet of information about a people, a culture, a religion – really no more than a poorly defined and badly misunderstood abstraction – always, in the case of Iran, represented as militant, dangerous, and anti-American” (Said 83). The depiction of Iranians, and particularly Iranian leadership in the form of Ayatollah Khomeini, as violent, dangerous, and incomprehensible aligns with Huntington’s claims and allows American politicians to justify the imperialist policies that contributed to the revolution in the first place and journalists to continue reporting Islam and Iran as homogeneous, malevolent entities. This could not be further from the truth. Both Said and Michael Axworthy point out that Iranian politics and culture – before, during, and after the revolution – “is a complex polity, with different power centers and shades of opinion among those in power” (Axworthy 287). Notwithstanding, if the aim of the American government is to protect its oil interests and defend the sovereignty of Israel, recognizing the nuances of the political situation is too humanizing; the last thing those interests want is to create sympathy for Iranian citizens who, like people everywhere, can only hope that their government represents them fairly and reasonably.

### ***Persepolis: Responding to the Revolution***

After students have some exposure to the background and current issues, their next natural question should be: How do people respond to what seems like an explosive situation? Because this is an ELA class, we will study responses in writing. The question then becomes, “Why respond in writing? Why is it an appropriate format? What does this form of response allow the author? To address these questions, students will read two memoirs: Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis* and Azadeh Moaveni’s *Lipstick Jihad*.

Satrapi especially writes as an heir of the revolution. The text is her effort to explicate the problematic situation of the individual Iranian within a society often reduced to a religious bloc – indeed, she is attempting nothing less than transforming “Iranian” from a political epithet into a personal descriptor once again. In her introduction to the complete text, Satrapi asserts that since the revolution of 1979, “this old and great civilization has been discussed mostly in connection with fundamentalism, fanaticism, and terrorism...I believe that an entire nation should not be judged by the wrongdoings of a few extremists” (Satrapi “Introduction”). The novel begins in the last days of the Shah, as the young Marjane struggles to reconcile her parents’ leftist politics with the pro-monarchy rhetoric taught in school: Marjane asserts that the shah “was chosen by God... it’s written on the first page of our schoolbook” (Satrapi 49). This sets up her father’s character to tell the “real” story of Iran – one of repeated subjugations of the general population, from the empire of the Persians to British and Russian imperialism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Satrapi 11). He emphasizes the idea of resistance: to be “Iranian” is not to be a victim, but to be a rebel outcast – whether the parameters are Western vs. Eastern, Christian vs. Islamic, revolutionary vs. reformist. The first volume of the narrative is the story of the Iranian revolution, and as a child, Marjane embraces being a rebel; she is infatuated with her uncle Anoosh, participates in riots with the family maid, and indulges in hyperbolic boasts about her family’s heroism to her classmates. Her naïveté allows Marjane to celebrate the fervor and excitement of rebellion but also identify the confusing aspects as well. One example is her parent’s endorsement of the revolution but desire to maintain class status; another is the parallels in how the Shah’s and the ayatollah’s governments suppress dissension. Thus, the Iranian revolution, both for Iran and Marjane, leads not to fulfillment but to confusion and disillusionment. Her rebellious behavior continues into adolescence and early adulthood, but brings only angst and hopelessness; she is most miserable when she tries to rebel within a Western context. It is only when Marjane embraces her father’s definition of Iranian rebelliousness and rejects the perversion of Iran represented by the

revolution that she finds some satisfaction. She does not want to be Western, but to be Iranian is not fully possible within the Islamic Republic. For this reason, she names her *bildungsroman* “*Persepolis*,” a reference to Iran’s glorious past. For the moment, the West provides an alternative.

If Satrapi is writing from the perspective of an Iranian encountering and ultimately choosing the Western world, Moaveni writes through the experiences of an American-Iranian searching for a sense of belonging and identity in Iran. Her memoir covers her two-year commitment as a correspondent reporting on political and cultural developments from within Iran for *Time* magazine, a position she pursues after coming to the conclusion that “since [she] was Iranian, [she] would feel at home in the one place I was meant to belong – Iran” (Moaveni 28). Her experiences in Iran reveal this conclusion to be overly ingenuous; instead of stepping into a long-lost identity, Moaveni struggles to connect with the Iran of the regime. Her musings on identity mirror Satrapi’s struggles, though Moaveni is much more explicit about her conflict: “Maybe identity, to an extent, was an interior condition. But wasn’t it also in the eye of the beholder? It seemed delusional to go about convinced you were a peacock, when everyone treated you like a bear... What percentage of identity was exterior, what percentage self-defined?” (115). Moaveni wants to be Iranian; indeed, has transplanted herself from the United States to Tehran with the sole purpose of finding her Iranian self, yet her inability to identify with the Iranian Republic and her compatriots’ insistence on her foreignness prevents her from doing so. Just as Satrapi eventually reconciles herself to being Iranian through her personal rebellion, it is only by embracing her displacement that Moaveni finds peace. When she returns to California for her grandfather’s funeral, she realizes that “this enclave in California felt as much home as did the strange world of Tehran, the homeland itself, where our Iranian relatives lived as strangers. I resigned myself to never saying goodbye, because I now realized that I would perpetually exist in each world feeling the tug of the other” (243). She can never eject her American half, for even if she did, she still would not be completely Iranian. Her most valuable insight, especially for readers of *Persepolis*, is that this is a new Iranian identity, just as it is a new Iranian homeland.

Once students have read the graphic novel and excerpts from the memoir, we can begin to discuss the impact of form. Why respond to the traumas of the revolution and the difficulties of defining yourself in writing? Part of the answer lies in purpose and audience. Both *Persepolis* and *Lipstick Jihad* are intended to provide a Western audience unfamiliar with the “real” Iran with an explanation for what has and is happening there. Neither text is intended for Iranian audiences: Satrapi originally published in French, and Moaveni writes in English. Furthermore, given current censorship policies and the criticism both books levy at the regime, neither would be translated faithfully into Farsi.

In the unit, *Lipstick Jihad* will not be read in its entirety. Instead, students will focus on excerpts of one to two pages in length for the purposes of analyzing Moaveni’s style (which is more nuanced than Satrapi’s) and comparing her insights with the events and development of *Persepolis*. Lesson Plans 3 and 4 address how the personal narratives will be handled in class. Additional assignments to support the readings would include short (one-two paragraph) responses; topics would range from argumentative (“Defend, challenge, or qualify the following claim”), to analytical (“Describe the author’s tone in this chapter and identify the literary techniques she uses to create that tone”), to responsive (“In the author’s place, what would you have done”). Students would also be asked to keep a dialectical journal as they read in which they would identify quotes from the narratives and our supplemental texts to discuss in class.



## LESSON PLANS

### Lesson Plan 1: Examining Media Representations

**Purpose:** This lesson prompts students to think about their biases regarding Islam and the Middle East. The student will be able to make generalizations about how the American media portray Islam, Iran, and Muslim-Arab countries and about how the Iranian media portray the United States and American politics. This activity may take two class periods.

**Objectives:**

- TEK 12.14A: Generate relevant, interesting, and researchable questions;
- TEK 12.4F: Link related information and ideas from a variety of sources;
- TEKS 12.11B: Use elements of text to defend, clarify, and negotiate responses and interpretations;
- TEKS 12.12A: Compare and contrast elements of text such as themes, conflicts, and allusions both within and across texts; and
- TEKS 12.13E: Describe how a writer’s motivation, stance, or position may affect text credibility, structure, and tone.

**Materials:**

The teacher will need to find political cartoons and other images or headlines dealing with Islam and Iran. This can be done fairly easily by searching Google images. The Islamic Republic News Agency can be found online. Other sources could include newspaper archives or magazine covers. The images can be organized in a PowerPoint presentation or simply printed on overhead transparencies, as the teacher prefers. Before beginning the lesson, the teacher will also need to create an anticipation guide of five to ten “True” or “False” statements. Statements on the anticipation guide should require students to think deeply about their beliefs regarding Islam and the Middle East. For example, statements could include: “Everyone who lives in the Middle East is Muslim,” or “The people of the Middle East are against the United States.”

**Procedures:**

Students begin the 90-minute period by completing the anticipation guide. This is an individual task, and students should refrain from asking others’ opinions or discussing their answers at this point. When they finish, students list any other information they “know” about Islam, Iran, or the Middle East. As a class, debrief the anticipation guide and what else students believe they know. This could consist of simply sharing the correct answers and asking students to comment on which answers they knew and which they did not. The teacher must push students for how they “know” this information. Common answers will most likely include: hearsay, television news, the newspaper, history class, etc.

At this point, introduce or review the term “bias.” Either the teacher or a student volunteer defines “bias” and explains its role in the media (i.e. the media represents a particular viewpoint; though a writer may try to be objective, it is very difficult to completely erase bias, as it is based on past experience and subjective interpretation of information). The teacher presents the political cartoons and headlines from American newspapers that deal with Iran, Islam, oil prices, Iraq, Israel, etc. Students should discuss the following questions, either in small groups or as a class; if they begin in small groups, make sure to debrief ideas with the whole class later. Questions could include: What are common images in these cartoons? What might these images mean? What is the underlying message of each of the cartoons? Taken together, what kind of representation do Islam, Iran, and the Middle East have in the US? What kind of diction is used in

these headlines? What is the pattern? Taken together, what is the effect of these headlines on the reader? What kind of impression does the reader have of Iran, Islam, Iraq, etc?

The teacher reminds students that bias goes both ways. After, viewing headlines and images from the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) about the United States, students should discuss the following ideas: What are patterns in the images or diction? How would you characterize IRNA's representation of the US? What do you think is IRNA's purpose in doing so? If the point does not come up in conversation, the teacher should remind students that newspapers represent the views of people who write them – not necessarily the views of people who read them. Given this is the case, can anything be inferred about the Iranian population at large based on the headlines and images from the newspaper?

Finally, students generate 3-5 questions based on the cartoons, images, and headlines that could potentially be researched. The teacher could plan a one to two days of researching these questions, or students could use them later in developing their own topics of research. A third alternative would be to try using the main texts of the unit to answer students' questions.

***Assessment/Evaluation:***

The teacher could assess two distinct aspects of this lesson. First, by asking students to write down responses to the questions, the teacher could evaluate how well students support their interpretations and conclusions from the headlines and images. A simple rubric, based on three categories worth three to five points each, could evaluate the quality of the student's answer, the quality of the evidence or support, and the quality and depth of the explanation. The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Open-Ended Response rubric may be useful. Second, the teacher could assess the research questions students generate at the end of the lesson. If the teacher wishes to do so, he or she may need to expand the lesson to include discussion of what makes a good research question. Criteria could include specificity and scope.

**Lesson Plan 2: Inductive Model**

***Purpose:***

This lesson is one of the foundation lessons; it gives students the historical and religious framework to begin to analyze Satrapi's and Moaveni's memoirs. The student will be able to give a rough outline of Iranian history and to explain the main points of Islam. The activity may take as many as three class periods.

***Objectives:***

- TEK 12.1F: Organize ideas in writing to ensure coherence, logical progression, and support for ideas;
- TEK 12.4F: Link related information and ideas from a variety of sources;
- TEKS 12.11B: use elements of text to defend, clarify, and negotiate responses and interpretations; and
- TEKS 12.12A: Compare and contrast elements of text such as themes, conflicts, and allusions both within and across texts.

***Materials:***

Material preparation for this lesson is lengthier than most, so the teacher will need to begin preparing at least three or four days in advance of the lesson. Each student will need one copy of a "data set," a collection of exemplars, or very short excerpts of 4-7 sentences from various sources. Sources could include newspaper articles or headlines, magazine articles or headlines, excerpts from novels, excerpts from nonfiction texts, images, quotations from politicians, writers,

or other experts, or any other print materials available to the teacher. Sources should encompass various styles and perspectives. For this inductive model, the data set should contain information on ancient Persia and Persian culture; the colonial-style relationships between Britain, Russia, and Iran between 1900 and 1950; Iran under Reza Shah; the 1979 revolution; conditions in Iran since the 1979 revolution; and the religion of Islam. Each student will need highlighters, scissors, and envelopes or paper clips (4-5 per student) for reading and organizing the data set. Finally, each student will require one copy of an outline structure for organizing ideas and writing after reading the data set.

### ***Procedures***

The teacher distributes the data set. Students read and annotate each exemplar. The teacher leads a discussion of the data set with the class. Working together, students develop a list of possible “categories”; see list of topics in explanation of “data set” above. This is a preliminary brainstorm, so students should submit any idea that seems relevant. Students categorize the exemplars, using the brainstormed list of topics.

For each category, students write a summary statement/conclusion that synthesizes the information of the category. For example, for a category about Iran under Reza Shah, the summary statement/conclusion might read: “Although Reza Shah tried to modernize Iran, the economic disparities and suppression of political dissent perpetuated during his reign created great unrest that eventually contributed to the revolution of 1979.” This statement must be an inference about the topic based on the information in the data set; it cannot be a summary statement or a statement about a single event or action.

Students create an “outline” for each category using the outline structure handout that includes the summary statement and 2-3 quotations from the exemplars that best support the summary statement. Using the information in their outlines, students respond to the quickwrite prompt: *Describe the major factors that have influenced Iran’s development as a nation.*

The teacher should facilitate discussion of the categories and quickwrite responses. This could be done as a whole class or in small groups of three to four students. The purpose of this discussion is for students to synthesize new information about Iran; given that most of them probably have not had much exposure to these topics, students may need help synthesizing the information. The teacher could use a KWL chart, with “what I KNOW,” “what I WANT to know,” and “what I LEARNED” columns, to help students process information. The KWL chart could be implemented with the whole class or with specific students who may struggle during this activity.

### ***Assessment:***

The teacher should assess responses to the quickwrite prompt, using a similar rubric to the one used for evaluating responses to Lesson 1 (e.g. TAKS Open-Ended Response rubric). In addition or in place of the quickwrite, the teacher could assess the outline, evaluating the students’ generation of conclusions (NOT summary statements) and use of support.

## **Lesson Plan Three: Close Readings of *Lipstick Jihad***

### ***Purpose:***

Through this lesson set, students will use their analytical reading skills to understand themes of the works. The student will be able to state a claim or hypothesis and support it with evidence.

### ***Objectives:***

- TEKS 12.11B: use elements of text to defend, clarify, and negotiate responses and interpretations;

- TEKS 12.12A: Compare and contrast elements of text such as themes, conflicts, and allusions both within and across texts; and
- TEK 12.1F: Organize ideas in writing to ensure coherence, logical progression, and support for ideas.

**Materials:**

The teacher must select four to six short, thematically related passages from *Lipstick Jihad* and possibly other texts, if desired. Passages can vary in length, but should range from .5 pages to 1.5 pages. Possible selections include “Siamak’s Mustang Therapy,” page 77; “Kimia’s Friend’s Birthday Party,” pages 82-83; “Khaleh Zahra’s Discontent,” pages 84-86; “No Fasting for Ramadan,” pages 102-105; “Dariush’s Views on Azadeh’s Iranianness,” page 108; “Reza’s Views on Azadeh’s Iranianness,” page 115; “Iranians in Manhattan,” pages 234-236; and “Agha Joon’s Funeral,” pages 238-243. Students will need tools for annotation, including highlighters, post-it notes, markers, and/or pens.

**Procedures:**

Students read each passage. On the first reading, students should annotate for literary elements such as interesting or provocative diction, imagery, figurative language, symbols, syntax, etc. After allowing time for students to read the passages independently, the teacher leads a class discussion. First, the teacher reviews the definitions of “motif” and “theme”; for example, a “motif” is an image or idea that is repeated frequently in a text, while a “theme” is a central message, possibly involving a motif. Then, he or she asks students: what are common motifs in these passages? How does Moaveni use literary elements to reiterate ideas?

Students reread the passages, considering possible themes. Students should annotate each passage in a color or method different from the first reading. After reading, students write a paragraph answering the prompt, “Identify and support one theme that Moaveni develops across the passages.”

After allowing time for students to read the passages independently, discuss as a class. Students may need to review “purpose,” “claim,” and “bias”; “purpose” is the author’s stated or unstated objective in writing the text; “claim” is the argument the author is putting forth about the topic; and “bias” is the author’s subjective attitude toward the topic. Students respond to questions: what central questions is Azadeh Moaveni trying to answer? What is her perspective on the events and people she writes about? Why does she include them? Why does she respond the way she does to these events and people?

Students reread the passages, considering Moaveni’s purpose and claim, annotating each passage in a color or method different from the first reading. Then, students write a paragraph answering the prompt, “What is Moaveni’s claim? (What is she arguing?)”

In small groups, students share their paragraphs and respond to other students’ writing. This could take several forms: a. In groups of three or four, each student reads aloud one paragraph. Other students in the group ask a question or respond with a comment (not monosyllabic). Repeat until all students have read all writings; b. In groups of three or four, students rotate papers and read silently, adding questions and/or comments on post-its. Repeat until all students have read each others’ work and then open up for discussion; c. Post students’ paragraphs around the room. Have students do a “gallery walk” in groups of two or three, reading a classmate’s responses and discussing with each other.

**Assessment:**

The teacher should assess students’ responses to the prompts. Students must be able to identify and support a theme and a writer’s claim. The TAKS Open-Ended Response rubric (or a similar

rubric) could easily be adapted to evaluating this writing by making the criteria for the student's answer more specific (i.e. "Student insightfully identifies a theme of the selections" vs. "Student correctly identifies a theme of the selections" vs. "Student identifies an important idea of the selections that may not be completely expressed as a theme").

#### **Lesson Plan Four: Developing a Personal Narrative**

##### ***Purpose:***

In this lesson, students will identify how the issue of their research papers has intersected or influenced their lives. Preceding and follow up lessons for the research paper and autobiographical narrative should include: identifying reliable sources, structuring an argument, incorporating evidence, MLA citation and format, etc.

##### ***Objectives:***

- TEK 12.1F: Organize ideas in writing to ensure coherence, logical progression, and support for ideas, and
- TEK 12.14A: Generate relevant, interesting, and researchable questions.

##### ***Materials:***

Teacher preparation for this lesson is minimal. However, students must have fairly complete research notes and research paper rough drafts in order to be able to begin thinking about their personal narratives. The teacher may provide blank paper.

##### ***Procedures:***

Students discuss their research in small groups. Questions to prompt discussion could be: What is your topic? What is the most interesting information you have found? Did it turn out as you expected, or were you surprised by what you found in your research? What questions do you still have? After allowing a few minutes for each student to share, the teacher distributes blank paper to each student. Students create a timeline of how their research topic has impacted their lives. When was the first time they became aware of the issue? What are three separate incidents when the issue had an effect on them?

Students write a few sentences or a short paragraph in response to the following questions. They can add these ideas to their timeline or use the other side of the paper to brainstorm: Why did you choose to write about this topic now? Have you been "tainted" by this issue, as Moaveni describes being tainted by the Islamic Republic, or has it been a defining force in developing your personality, like the revolution was for Marjane? How would your life be different if this issue did not exist? In what ways would life be better and worse?

Students discuss their responses and timelines in small groups, and then create an outline for their narrative. Though it is a personal essay, it should still have a claim that they support with their anecdotes. Sample claims might be "Bias against immigrants has made it difficult for my siblings and me to pursue our educational goals," or "Urban sprawl and pollution have negatively impacted my family's quality of life."

##### ***Assessment:***

The research paper and the personal narrative should be evaluated as the final assessment for this unit. Teachers can use any writing rubric which they are accustomed to using, providing that they customize it for the differing purposes of a research paper versus a personal narrative.

Alternatively, the teacher could customize a rubric such as the 6-traits writing rubric for the purposes of each writing genre (for example, evaluating "voice" in a personal narrative, the teacher may look for use of figurative language, interjections, colloquialisms, etc; for a research

paper, evaluating voice would depend on a lack of personal pronouns, slang terms, contractions, etc.).

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Works Cited

- Axworthy, Michael. *A History of Iran: Empire of the Mind*. New York: Basic Books, 2008.  
A history of Iran, from the very first settlers to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century after the revolution. The author focuses on the contradictions in Iranian culture and the historical influences shaping Iranian identity.
- Cleveland, William, and Martin Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East: Fourth Edition*. Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2008.  
“Comprehensive” political history; also discusses economic and cultural developments. Chapters of interest: “The Rise and Expansion of Islam,” “Egypt and Iran in the Late Nineteenth Century,” “Authoritarian Reform in Turkey and Iran,” “Democracy and Authoritarianism: Turkey and Iran,” “The Iranian Revolution and the Resurgence of Islam,” “America’s Troubled Moment in the Middle East.”
- Freedman, Samuel. “In Untruths about Obama, Echoes of a Distant Time.” *New York Times*. 31 Oct. 2008.  
<<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/01/us/politics/01religion.html?scp=32&sq=obama%20muslim&st=cse>>.  
Describes attempts to discredit President Obama with rumors about his religious affiliation and ties those attempts to anti-Catholic sentiment earlier in the century.
- Huntington, Samuel P. “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs*. Summer 1993.  
Theory of what will cause global conflict in the future, particularly between the US and the Middle East.
- Moaveni, Azadeh. *Lipstick Jihad*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2006.  
Memoir by an Iranian-American journalist who grew up in the United States; written after two years (2000-2001) spent working in Iran. Alternately provides both a subjective and a journalistic experience of Iranian culture.
- Nasseri, Ladane. “Miniskirts, Headscarves Don’t Mix at New Tehran Park.” *Bloomberg*. 2008.  
<[http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601109&sid=aqMF7\\_gsnjMI&refer=home](http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601109&sid=aqMF7_gsnjMI&refer=home)>.  
Article by journalist reporting from Tehran on new “practical solutions” to requirements for women’s dress and conduct, such as the public park where women can go without the veil.
- Said, Edward W. *Covering Islam*. 1981. New York: Vintage Books, 1997.  
Analysis of American media coverage and representation of Islam.
- Satrapi, Marjane. *The Complete Persepolis*. New York: Pantheon, 2007.  
Graphic memoir of a girl growing up in revolutionary Iran.
- Zanganeh, Lila Azam. *My Sister, Guard Your Veil; My Brother, Guard Your Eyes: Uncensored Iranian Voices*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2006.  
Collection of essays by prominent Iranians on what it means to be Iranian; addresses politics, art, women’s rights, etc.

### Supplemental Sources

- Crossette, Barbara. “Living in a World without Women.” *New York Times*. 4 Nov. 2001.  
Describes approach of Islamic government to women; also analyzes how women fit into “modern” society and how women can impact the stability of a society.
- Majd, Hooman. “Tehran or Bust.” *Newsweek*. 1 June 2009: 28-35.  
One writer’s journey across Iran. Would be a good source of material for Lesson Plan 2.
- Nafisi, Azar. *Reading Lolita in Tehran*. New York: Random House, 2004.  
Memoir by an Iranian professor of her experiences teaching Western literature to Iranian students.

- Pellegrin, Paolo. "The Changing Face of Iran." *Newsweek*. 1 June 2009: 42-25.  
Series of portraits of Iranians taken on the street. This would be a good supplementary source for Lesson Plan 1, as it will challenge students' perceptions of who Iranians are and what they are like.
- Rick Steves' Iran*. Dir. Rick Steves. PBS, 2009.  
Travel show journeys to Iran. Along with providing an up-close view of the cities and environment, Steves also interviews many Iranians on the street, several of whom are students or young adults and most of whom demonstrate a positive attitude toward American citizens even if they dislike government policies.
- Sciolino, Elaine. "In Iran's Hair Salons, the Rebels Wield Scissors." *New York Times*. 7 Feb. 2003.  
Description of women's resistance based on beauty products and care; explains how the state responds to women's efforts.
- Sciolino, Elaine. "Radicalism: Is the Devil in the Demographics?" *New York Times*. 9 Dec. 2001.  
Analysis of populations of Middle Eastern countries and whether or not youth is a stabilizing or revolutionary component of society.
- Zakaria, Fareed. "They May Not Want the Bomb." *Newsweek*. 1 June 2009: 46-47.  
Zakaria "dispels" myths about Iran. While some sections of the article may be valuable for the inductive model in Lesson Plan 2, others would be good supplements for Lesson Plan 1 when students are analyzing bias.