

## Once There Was, and Once There Was Not

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### INTRODUCTION

T. H. Rogers is a unique school that incorporates a student body that is physically, culturally, and intellectually diverse. We have four distinct populations: Vanguard/Gifted and Talented, the profoundly deaf, the oral deaf, and those with multiple disabilities: therefore, we have the exceptional opportunity to interact with each other. This year, my teaching partner and I teach forty-eight inquisitive, challenge-seeking, fifth grade Vanguard students from dissimilar international backgrounds. Some of the home languages include Chinese, Russian, Vietnamese, Spanish, Korean, Tagalog, Hebrew, Arabic, Pashtu, and Hindi. Many of our students are bicultural and bilingual as well. They take classes in their native languages as well as cultural arts. Their after-school activities include chess club, robotics, violin, cello, piano, dance, art lessons, as well as sports, such as soccer, baseball, football, swimming, and competitive diving.

Each year our student population becomes increasingly diverse with students representing many Asian and Middle Eastern countries. It is for this reason that we choose the Houston Teacher Institute seminar, *The Middle East: History, Geography, and Culture*. Not only do we want our students to recognize and value these different backgrounds; as teachers, we feel we need to become more informed as well.

### OBJECTIVES

My focus is to create a research unit that will embed Mathematics and Science objectives within the study of the Middle East. The following objectives will support the independent research segment of the unit.

**SCI. K-5 (b) (3) (D)** - In elementary science the student is expected to: “connect grade level appropriate science concepts with the history of science, science careers, and contributions of scientists.” Therefore, in this unit the student may choose to research the history of scientific discoveries and connect scientists, including mathematicians, to their origins in the Middle East.

**SCI. 112 A (12) (B)** - The student is also expected to describe the processes in “the formation of coal, oil, gas and minerals.” To meet this objective, for example, the students may choose to research the origins of their birthstones, as they relate to minerals within their chosen region, or to those gems associated with the artifacts of ancient Middle East Cultures. Perhaps they may choose to research the origins of fossil fuels in the country of their choice and relate how this is important to that country.

**MATH 5.14D; 15A; 16A; 16B** - In Mathematics the elementary student is expected to use technology to solve problems as well as be able explain and record observations using technology. The student is expected to be able to make generalizations from their observations and be able to justify their answers.

The students, who are researching the origins and production of oil could then be asked to find the market price for a barrel of oil, determine how many gallons are in a barrel, and how much gasoline is selling for at the present time. This would entail ascertaining the federal and

state taxes and perhaps determining how much it costs to bring a barrel of oil to market (the gas pump), and deciding where all the profits are realized?

## **RATIONALE**

Our district's curriculum for Vanguard (G/T) students, *Scholars & Knowledge*, requires our students to engage in a research assignment. Therefore, my teaching partner and I decided to create a research unit for our students based on the Middle East. It is our intention to have the students become more aware of a part of the world that is often neglected in textbooks for elementary students, yet that is repeatedly referred to in the daily headlines and news articles, as well as have them learn to appreciate the history and contributions of this region.

We will look at the geography, history, and culture of the Middle East. In my unit I will focus on Mathematics and Science. At the conclusion of the unit the students will be required to submit a "product" of their choosing and an essay reflecting how that product represents their country, as well as describe what they have learned over the course of their research.

I look forward to exploring the Middle East's contributions to Mathematics and Science and researching the history of Algebra, Geometry, or Astronomy as it pertains to the Middle East. Perhaps this would lead to investigating topics such as the history of cuneiform script invented by Sumerians, or the designs and patterns of ceramic tiles. Discovering that Islam is the predominate religion of most of the countries in the Middle East and that figurative art is not used on mosques or religious monuments, students could create their own pattern based on ones they found in the mosaics and ceramic tiles associated with the distinctive architecture of Middle East. Tessellating or repeating geometric designs are studied in fourth and fifth grade mathematics. Persian carpets may no longer fly; however, the types of fibers and dyes used as well as the unique or specific designs woven tell their own legends. I am reminded of the Mysterious Mamluk Carpets of Egypt and the amazing 2,940 square foot Persian Garden carpet woven with silk, threads of gold, and precious gems.

How many precious jewels originated in the East? Perhaps students could research their birthstones and the minerals and unique crystals that create them. I recently had my students research their own birthstones, and they were excited about what parts of the world produced them. By chance, while visiting the Houston Museum of Fine Art, our boys were able to see the *Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul*, exhibit of jewel encrusted crowns, goblets, and jewelry. They delighted in finding "their" birthstones in the different pieces. Crystallography or the study of naturally forming minerals entails understanding three dimensional geometric shapes, a natural combination of Earth science and mathematical objectives.

The search for spices, amber, and silk evokes images of the legendary caravans that connected the east to the west. Perhaps researching spices may lead students to candies (Turkish Delight) or other foods, and unique cooking tools such as the Moroccan Tajine. Connecting spices to certain foods and following or creating recipes certainly involves measuring and possibly converting measurements from metric to standard units. In this instance the student might choose to make or bake a certain dish indicative of a specific country or region and discuss the origins of the ingredients.

I think it would be exciting for students to learn about amber, and to follow the Amber Road. Does it include Middle Eastern influences? Perhaps accounts of the Silk Road or Routes and the secret of silk would interest some of my students. I was told that Italians brought the silk fabric from the east, unraveled the cloth, and then wound the thread onto spools to convince their customers that they had discovered the secret to spinning silk. (At the time they didn't know about the silk worms' part.) This school year a teacher raised silkworms in her classroom. I plan

to do the same next year. Fortunately we have mulberry trees on our campus, as silkworms turned out to be rapacious eaters.

Following Scheherazade's example of telling fascinating tales to solve a problem, I believe I can inspire my students through brief stories or "infomercials" to pique their curiosity about related topics. I have discovered that Turkish fairy tales often begin "Once there was, and once there was not..." (Greenblatt 71). I could use this phrase to introduce some topics for their research. For example, "Once there was, and once there was not a flying carpet," followed by reading them Czernecki's *Zorah's Flying Carpet* and then asking them what can they discover about carpets made in Middle Eastern countries. This may lead to discovering the geographic areas of the world that produce the carpets and the names of the different designs. They might discover that children younger than themselves are used to weave the carpets. The topic of silk could be introduced with, "Once there was, and once there was not, a Silk Train in Canada"...and ask for their opinions... followed by reading Lawson's *Emma and the Silk Train*, an historical fiction account that highlights the importance of silk in modern (1880-1940) times.

Our students love to research interesting and obscure facts; they love to "go find out." My greatest challenge will be to collect enough appropriate topics and suitable references to keep fifty students stimulated.

The most enlightening aspect of our Middle East studies course is reading the literature of native writers, such as Abouzeid, Mernissi, and Satrapi, and experiencing life through their eyes, while their countries shed colonist rule, or as they manage under Taliban or Islamic Law. I find many pre-conceived notions dissolving, and a bit of a jolt when faced with the fact that there is more to consider about Egypt than King Tut!

## UNIT BACKGROUND

I am torn between what I thought I knew and what I have learned in our seminar, *The Middle East: History, Geography and Culture*. Initially I learned that even the term "Middle East" is a dubious expression coined by Western thought, and does not necessarily describe a specific set of countries. The physical area defined by this term may or may not include Afghanistan, the Sudan, Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya. Often it refers to predominately Islamic countries, to those whose importance is measured in barrels-per-day-oil, to those which border the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea, or to countries whose main language is Arabic. In Cleveland's preface to his *History of the Modern Middle East*, he states, "I concentrate on the central Middle East and therefore have eliminated from this edition (3<sup>rd</sup>) the section on the independent Islamic republics of Central Asia," and he has also chosen to exclude "Arab North Africa, the Sudan, and Islamic Afghanistan" (xiii). For this unit I have decided to let my students research the term Middle East, and based on the prerequisites they discover, let them choose a country on which to focus their research.

Next I needed to understand what the term "Orientalism" means, and how this view colored my earlier readings, which included Kipling and translations of the tales of Scheherazade and Omar Khayyam. Bahri, in a critique of Edward Said's book, *Orientalism*, describes the first 'Orientalists' as "19<sup>th</sup> century scholars who translated the writings of the orient into English based on the assumption that a truly effective colonial conquest required knowledge of the conquered peoples."

Rao, in his book *Rudyard Kipling's India*, feels that many of Kipling's characters portray Indians as an inferior race, and that although Kipling knew the country well, he did not use his influence to promote good feelings between the races (adapted from the fly leaf). This attitude is further exemplified by Burton, as he warns in his preface of *The Arabian Nights*, "England is

forever forgetting that she is at present the greatest Mohammedan empire in the world” (xxxvi). One has to wonder what the Muslims of the time thought about that concept.

It is jarring to learn that Amir Faysal (Faisal), in 1921, “received the crown of Iraq to the strains of the British anthem ‘God Save the King’” (Cleveland 210). Even more astonishing is the fact that Faysal was actually chosen by the British to rule Iraq, due to the influence of a rather indomitable Victorian British lady, Gertrude Bell (Wallach).

Yet another example of the colonial mindset is the Dinshaway incident of June, 1902, in Egypt, wherein fifty-two villagers were charged with premeditated murder in a clash stemming from an occurrence in which five British Officers wounded the wife of a prayer leader and set fire to a threshing floor during a pigeon shoot in their village. This incident also demonstrates “that Britain was not a benevolent protector but an alien occupier” (Cleveland 108).

Basically this means that most of the stories and books I previously read were written from a “colonizer’s” point of view. In our seminar almost all of the books we studied and films we saw were produced by those “conquered people” raised in “occupied” lands. So now I begin to understand events from a different point of view: from the inside looking out, as opposed to being on the outside looking in.

Although my purpose is to create a unit suitable for ten-year-olds, I find the women’s and human rights issues addressed in several of the readings very disturbing and provocative. After reading Ayaan Hirsi Ali’s book *Infidel*, one cannot easily dismiss the issues raised, and I wonder if these could even be addressed by high school age students. Yasmina Khadra’s book *The Attack* is unsettling in the sense that solutions to the deeply rooted conflicts raised between Israelis and Palestinians seem to be without resolution and leads one to better understand some of Said’s viewpoints in his book *Covering Islam*. Nye’s book, *Habibi*, addresses the Israeli/Palestinian conflict from a child’s point of view and is a suitable book for upper elementary or middle school students.

Perhaps older students could address the pros and cons of “America as a melting pot.” Early immigrants purposely put their native languages and cultures aside and did all they could to become “assimilated Americans.” Conversely, current immigrants focus on perpetuating and preserving their cultures and languages.

Our government now recognizes and funds secular education. What consequences lay ahead if the United States, like the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, decides to fund religion-based schools as well? Do we really want “separate but equal” government funded schools for individual religious or cultural entities? And, most importantly, could we raise these issues in our classrooms without appearing racist?

This brings to mind a recent article in the *New York Times*, entitled “To Protect Ancient City, China Plans to Raze It.” The article is accompanied by a photograph whose caption reads, “China plans to demolish and redevelop the Old City section of Kashgar, a city that for centuries was an oasis on the Silk Road.” The photograph catches my attention; the three women do not appear to be native Chinese. They are wearing long black robes, scarves, and covered faces. They are accompanied by a young male as they walk along what appears to be an alley or very narrow road between brick faced buildings. They look like Muslim women in any one of the countries we have recently studied. The article states that the Old City residents are being moved to protect them from the dangers of earthquakes. Kashgar is described as a possible United Nations World Heritage site, “a major tourism city in China,” and a major Silk Road landmark. “The city wall, a 25-foot-thick earthen berm nearly 35 feet high, has largely been torn down. In the 1980’s, the city paved the surrounding moat to create a ring highway” (Wines A4). I am not surprised to read that “many of the 13,000 families destined to be relocated are Muslims, from a Turkic ethnic group

called the Uighurs” (A1). I like to think that Said would approve of this reporter’s front page article, wherein Muslims are not being castigated, and I believe my fifth graders would take issue with the obvious events taking place in Kashgar.

I do want to address a world view social awareness within this research unit, a view that will open our students’ eyes to conditions that exist in other countries without placing blame or faulting particular religions or governments. In order to get a feel for how this unit may flow, we are reading Mortenson’s Young Readers edition of *Three Cups of Tea* to our students; I feel that this book could become a touch stone for the unit. It is a fascinating account of how one person can make a huge difference in the lives of many, in this instance, changing lives, one school at a time. Basically it deals with educating children in Pakistan and Afghanistan by building schools for children (especially girls) in remote villages. It began as a one-man project in 1993 and is now supported by the Central Asia Institute and by children through the *Pennies for Peace* initiative, which “is a service-learning program of the Central Asian Institute in which students...across the country and around the world, learn about Pakistan and Afghanistan through *Pennies for Peace* and discover that they can create global change” (Mortenson, information following the Readers Guide).

For my “Philosophy” segment of the unit, tolerance will be the driving force for social awareness. Questions for philosophical debate based on the Young Readers edition of *Three Cups of Tea* will be used. Many paradoxes exist throughout this book, and understanding paradoxes is part of our gifted/talented curriculum. Identifying events that are simultaneously good and bad make great topics for discussion. For example, “Should girls have access to education? Why? Why not? How does educating the girls have an effect on the village? Is this a good thing? In what way could it be a bad thing? What could be some of the other consequences? How did building the bridge impact the village? How did it affect the education of girls?”

The opening and closing of schools is mentioned throughout Cleveland’s *History of the Modern Middle East* as he relates how different regimes sought to control their people through educational systems. Likewise the Taliban, in their quest to control, closes secular schools and forbids the education of females. Accordingly, I believe the subject of education will provide depth and complexity to this unit.

For the Science segment of the unit, I plan to focus on ecosystems and biomes. This will include students locating their countries on a world map, and locating physical features of their chosen country on a map of that country. We should be able to compare climates with Houston’s and compare biomes to those found in Texas. It will be interesting to see how the plants and animals (biotic features) compare with those in Texas, and if the non-living or abiotic features are similar.

For the Mathematics segment of the unit, I plan to reinforce the skill of having students plot points on coordinate planes by having the students identify the latitude and longitude of their countries’ capital cities through the use of maps. Additionally I plan to include geometry by having the students create unique geometric designs they will then tessellate over a specific area. Terms such as symmetry, asymmetrical, translations, reflections, rotations, and the names and attributes of polygons and terminology for coordinate systems, e.g. x-axis, y-axis, points of origin and intersection, will be introduced or reinforced during mapping exercises or creating patterns.

Because my students enjoy researching interesting facts, we often access the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) *World Factbook* on line. The information is updated every two weeks. My students have used this website to collect data for any number of different uses. It includes maps and geographical, as well as demographic, information. My students enjoy reading about the literacy rates of different countries, as well as reading about populations broken down into age and sex segments, birth and death rates, major languages, religions, and types of government

([www.cia.gov/library/publications](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications)). For current maps and information it is a very useful website for students.

## THE LESSONS

### Introduction: to ascertain previous knowledge

Without explanation or introduction, ask the students to write a brief essay (three to five paragraphs) on what they know about the Middle East. (I field tested this question and several of the replies described the geography and agriculture of the Middle Eastern United States.)

Share some of the more “on target” responses, and then ask the students to research the Middle East and list the countries that are part of the Middle East. Ask the students to include the search engines and web addresses they used.

Collect books on Middle Eastern countries from the library, and have them available for the students to use them in class.

I will begin to read the young readers edition, of *Three Cups of Tea* to the students, one chapter a day, at the beginning of class. The story will create a “setting” for this unit.

### Lesson One

#### Objectives:

**MATH 5.14D; 15A; 16A; 16B.** In Mathematics the elementary student is expected to use technology to solve problems as well as be able explain and record observations using technology. The student is expected to be able to make generalizations from their observations and be able to justify their answers.

Create a chart, similar to the following one, using all the countries that the students have discovered. Use maps and student input to include those that were not mentioned. Discuss how and why these countries were chosen.

Give the students the CIA website ([www.cia.gov/library/publications](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications)) to help them collect the data. Our students came up with 26 countries.

**MATH 5.9A** Locate and name points on a coordinate grid. (e.g. map)

For Latitude and Longitude coordinates, students can go to the following web site:  
[www.infoplease.com/atlas/latitude-longitude.html](http://www.infoplease.com/atlas/latitude-longitude.html)

COUNTRIES OF THE MIDDLE EAST				
COUNTRY	Capital City	Location (Lat/lon Capital city	Language (s)	Religions
Afghanistan	Kabul	32 16'N, 69.34'E		
Algeria	Algiers	36 46' N, 33' 0	Arabic, French	Sunni Muslim
Bahrain				Shia Muslim
Egypt	Cairo	30 3' 0 N, 31 15E		
Iran	Tehran	35 30'N, 51 30'E	Persian	Muslim, Coptic Christian
Iraq	Bagdad	30 3'N, 44 23' E	Arabic, Kurdish	Islam
Continued...				
Yemen		15 30'N, 47 30'E	Arabic	

The students can pair up and share their data. Any inconsistencies can be addressed and corrected. They can then work in small groups (6) and finally as a whole class discussion, to make sure the data is consistent.

Have the students make generalizations about the information, such as major languages, religions, and perhaps climate with regard to the coordinates they found for the capital cities. Perhaps they can find a capital city on the same latitude as Houston. They can justify their response based on their collected data.

**Lesson Two**

**Objectives**

**SCI . 5.2C** Analyze and interpret information to construct reasonable explanations from direct and indirect evidence.

The students will compare and contrast weather and climate. They will need to define each term and determine how they differ.

The students will compare and contrast Houston’s weather conditions with a Middle East capital city of their choice. Have them account for the similarities and/or differences.

Pick one date and time, to collect your data. Fill in the following chart.

City	Country	Lat	Lon	Date	Temp	Precipitation	Wind	Humidity
Houston	USA	29° 58’ N	95° 21’ W					

Answer the questions.

What are the differences (similarities), and what accounts for these differences (similarities)? Are there obvious or obscure reasons? Explain. (e.g. would time zone differences account for the difference in temperatures?)

**Lesson Three**

**Objectives**

**SCI . 5.5B** Describe interactions that occur in a system such as energy transfers in food webs.

The students will define a biome. They will need to know the biotic and abiotic factors of a biome. Using their textbooks or the Internet, they will need to find a Biome in Texas and a similar one in their country of choice. They will then compare and contrast the two biomes. For example, if they choose a desert or saltwater biome in Texas, then they will have to find a desert or saltwater biome in one of the Middle East countries. They will fill in the required information for each of the biomes, and then create an Energy chain for the Middle East Biome.

The chain begins with the Sun, next a producer, followed by a herbivore, or omnivore, then carnivore, and ends with a decomposer.

Name and description of the biome
Sun
Producer

Herbivore
Omnivore
Carnivore
Carnivore
Carnivore
Decomposer

The description of the biome must include: Type of biome; Location (Lat/ Lon); Climate; Soil type; and written examples of biotic and abiotic factors.

The “Sun” strip should be yellow construction paper; the other strips should be white.

Each strip should be 12” long (the width of the 18 x12 construction paper) and 5cm wide.

The students may draw each of the organisms, or use cut and paste pictures from other sources. They will cut each strip and staple them, in order to form a chain

Students present their Energy Chains to the class.

The following rubric was created with the help of Rubistar, a free online aid for teachers:

Creating an Energy Chain Rubric				
Category	4 (WOW)	3(Right On)	2(Getting There)	1(In progress)
Scientific Knowledge (includes correct sequence)	Links indicate a clear and accurate understanding of scientific principals underlying the construction	Links indicate a relatively clear and accurate understanding of scientific principals underlying the construction	Links indicate some misunderstanding of scientific principals underlying the construction	Links do not indicate much understanding of scientific principals underlying the construction
Information Gathering	Accurate information taken from several sources in a systematic manner	Accurate information taken from a couple of sources in a systematic manner	Somewhat accurate information taken from a couple of sources but not systematically	Information taken from only one source and/or not accurate
Construction – Care Taken	Great care taken in construction process so that the chain is neat, attractive and follows plans accurately	Construction was careful and accurate for the most part, but 1-2 details could have been refined for a more attractive product	Construction accurately followed the plans, but 3-4 details could have been refined for a more attractive product	Construction appears haphazard or careless. Many details need refinement for an attractive or strong product



Plan	Chain is neat with clear measurements, and labeling for all components	Chain is neat with clear measurements and labeling for most components	Chain provides clear measurements and labeling for most components	Chain does not show measurements clearly or is otherwise inadequately labeled.
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For this rubric, 1= 25 points, 2 = 23 points, 3 = 20 points, and 4 = 15 points

#### Lesson Four: Tessellating a design

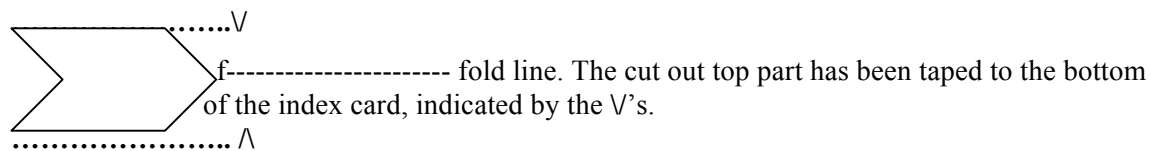
##### Objectives:

Literacy connection: Developing academic vocabulary

Geometric Terms: tessellation, symmetry, rotations, reflections, translations, transformations, the names and attributes of assorted polygons, the names of angles, lines, etc.

Copy one of the designs from one of the *Ultimate Coloring Experience* books. Or Washburn's ...*Pattern Analysis*. Look at examples of Middle Eastern tile designs with the students, and notice that no religious buildings have figurative designs, only intricate geometric designs. Choose two colors for the class to use, e.g. yellow and blue. Have the students find different repeating patterns within the black and white designs. Color the pattern you see. This produces a great variety of patterns using the same basic pattern and only two colors. Directions for creating tessellated designs are often found in the math textbooks.

Have the students notice the arabesque (Arab like) shapes, the pointed arches, etc. and show them how to make a design from a 3 x 5 index card. Fold the card lengthwise for symmetry, and draw a pointed curving line from top to half way down the side. Carefully cut along your line. You will tape the cut out part to the bottom of the card, creating a design that can be repeated vertically and horizontally on a 24 x 18 or 12 x 18 sheet of white construction paper. One can see how this (simple) shape, repeated, will fit together.



These lessons are designed to acquaint the students with the different Middle East countries. I will be reading the different story books mentioned earlier, and perhaps have all the students research their birthstone, as an introduction into minerals.

They now have enough information to choose a country for their research project. They will write a letter of intent, telling what country they are choosing for their independent research project, and why they chose that particular country. After the letters are read by the teacher, the students will be given binders in which to keep all their maps, notes, and previous lessons.

At the conclusion of the unit the students will be required to submit a "product" of their choosing, and an essay reflecting how that product represents their country, as well as describe what they have learned over the course of their research.

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Works Cited

- Abouzeid, Leila. Trans. *Year of the Elephant*. Trans. Barbara Parmenter. Austin: U of Texas P, 1989.  
The author describes the work of the nationals in overcoming both French and Spanish colonial rule in her native Morocco. The author states that the United States' declaring independence from Britain served as their model; however, that split was between members of one race and language -- internecine, as opposed to rebelling against different races, different cultures, and different languages. How sad that the French could not be "displaced" as "neatly" as had been expected. How sad that education (for girls especially) could not be more universal.
- Bahri, Deepika, and Danielle Sered. *Orientalism*. Fall 1996. Emory University web site. 6/3/2009  
<<http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Intro.html>>. or  
<<http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Orientalism.html>>.  
A discussion of Edward Said's book/ term Orientalism as it relates to postcolonial studies, as well as a further source of books, film, and theory on the topic.
- Burrows, Roger. *Images 1: The Ultimate Coloring Experience*. Philadelphia: Running Press, 1982.
- . *Images 2: The Ultimate Coloring Experience*. Philadelphia: Running Press, 1982.  
Both books of black and white designs intricate as spider webs allow students to create additional unique patterns within each design using colored pencils. Good for tessellations, symmetry etc.
- Burton, Richard F., Sir. Trans. *The Arabian Nights: Tales from a Thousand and One Nights*. NY: Random House, 2001.  
Burton states in his preface "the student will readily and pleasantly learn more of the Moslem's manners and customs, laws and religion that is known to the average Orientalist." Burton is upset that the scholars of the time (1885) are more "devoted to Hindu and Sanskrit literature than to "Semitic" studies"... and warns, "England is ever forgetting that she is at present the greatest Mohammedan empire in the world" (xxxvi). There is a lot of political punch in his preface. His translation of Shahrazad's tales contain far more "adult" sequences than those tales of Ali Baba and Sindbad I remember hearing as a child, although I understand that there are editions suitable for children available.
- Cleveland, William L. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004.  
A comprehensive history of the Middle East that begins with the origins of Islam and continues through the Ottoman and Egyptian reforms, Western imperialism, the Iranian Revolution, and Gulf War. I found this book very informative. The Glossary, Index, and selected Bibliography are also very helpful.
- Czernecki, Stefan. *Zorah's Flying Carpet*. NY: Hyperion, 1995.  
An enchanting tale of a Moroccan woman's beautiful hand crafted carpet that takes her on flights of fancy. She visits the Ukraine, India, and China, and we learn of native celebrations and cultural customs in these countries as well as in Morocco. The lovely illustrations are by the author.
- Greenblatt, Miriam. *Suleyman The Magnificent and the Ottoman Empire*. Tarrytown, NY: Benchmark Books, 2003.  
The author "provides an overview of the lives of Suleyman I and his subjects in the Ottoman Empire of the sixteenth century, and includes excerpts from poems, letters, and stories of the time" (flyleaf). I intend to use his book to introduce the "once there was, and once there wasn't" motif in my lessons. Found this book in our school library.
- Hirsi Ali, Ayaan. *Infidel*. NY: Free Press, 2007.  
A riveting account of the author's life and her struggle to survive as well as come to terms with her Muslim upbringing. From Somalia, to Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, the Netherlands, and then the United States. She writes a provocative and troubling account of women's rights under Islamic law.
- Khadra, Yasmina. *The Attack*. Trans. John Cullen. NY: Random House, 2007.  
Khadra is the pen name of Mohammed Moulessehouli, a former Algerian army officer who used the pen name to avoid military censors. A truly gripping account of an Arab- Israeli citizen, a respected

doctor in Tel Aviv, whose life as a surgeon is impacted daily by the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. When his lovely wife is killed in a suicide bombing, his life really gets turned upside down. An unsettling and memorable look at life on both sides of the conflict.

Lawson, Julie. *Emma and the Silk Train*. Toronto: Kids Can Press, 1997.

The background for this story is the legendary “Silkers,” trains that traveled from Vancouver, Canada to New York City at record breaking speeds. The silk arrived by ship from the Orient, then by train in especially built cars to New York. In 1927 there was a derailment which is the setting for this story. I think of the “silkers” as a sidebar to the ancient silk caravans.

Mortenson, Greg. *Three Cups of Tea*. NY: Penguin, 2007.

What I found most interesting about this story, is that I was completely engrossed in the narrative about those who seek mountains to conquer and that Mr. Mortenson started out to be a cumbersome and ineffectual mountain climber that got in the way of that story. Next the rural people of Afghanistan and Pakistan and their different yet similar cultures had my full attention, and finally Mr. Mortenson emerged as an honorable and as dedicated a man as I have ever read about! In retrospect I find this an interesting progression, as well as an inspiring story.

---. *Three Cups of Tea. Young Readers Edition*. NY: Puffin, 2009.

This edition is adapted by Sarah Thompson for younger readers and includes notes and pictures written by Amira, Mortenson’s twelve year old daughter who has traveled to Pakistan with her parents. Our fifth grade students loved this book. My unit relies heavily on this edition.

---. *Listen to the Wind* NY: Penguin, 2009.

Coauthor and illustrator Susan Roth chose collage as her medium to illustrate this picture book for younger students. It is written from the viewpoint of the children of Korphe, Pakistan. It includes photographs and an interesting explanation of why the artist chose collage. Our fifth graders enjoyed this book as well. They could read it to younger children.

Mernissi, Fatima. *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 1994.

This autobiography is a moving and insightful record of growing up in a “domestic harem” in Fez, Morocco, circa 1940s. Breaking the bonds of French Colonial Rule in this book, does not reflect the conflicts and problems faced by Zahra in Abouzeid’s *the Year of the Elephant*. I wonder if the difference lies in the social status of the two women, Ahra and Fatima, or in the cities in which their stories take place?

Nye, Naomi Shihab. *Habibi*. NY: Simon Pulse, 1997.

The story of a young girl whose doctor father decides to move his American family back to his roots – Palestine. A current look at Arab, Armenian, and Jewish life inside Palestine and Jerusalem, as well as life in the “settlements.” Suitable for students. It reminds me of the stories being told in the movie *Promises* or the setting for Khadra’s *The Attack!*

Rao, K. Bhaskara. *Rudyard Kipling’s India*. Norman: U of Oklahoma Press, 1967.

Rao presents Kipling’s influence on British imperialism and felt Kipling could have cast his Indian based characters in a more favorable light. On one hand Kipling writes a poem embracing the British Viceroy’s wife, Lady Dufferin’s aid to the women of India, yet in his novel *Naulahka*, the female protagonist, is viewed by the natives as a sorceress, implying that “East and West cannot meet”(57). Rao looks at Kipling through the eyes of a native. Because Kipling was born in India, he was considered an “expert” in the field; Rao could not disagree more. His book brings to light the Imperialistic attitude of the British, attitudes aided and abetted by Kipling’s writings.

Said, Edward W. *Covering Islam*. NY: Vintage Books, 1997.

Said discusses how the term “Islam” is covered in the press. He argues that “exaggerated stereotyping and belligerent hostility” toward Muslims, has led to practically grouping all Muslims into the category of Islamic extremists (xiii). He is particularly harsh on those with neither background nor credentials who pose as authorities on the subject.

Satrapi, Marjane; *Persepolis: The Story of Childhood*. NY: Pantheon, 2003

---. *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return*. NY: Pantheon, 2004.

These autobiographical Graphic Novel genre books are written and illustrated in black and white

comic book format. The author was born in 1969 in Rasht, Iran and she presents the schizophrenic lifestyles of the behaviors within the confines of home and in public during the Islamic Revolution. She was able to attend school in Austria, and I expect had many freedoms and opportunities to avoid serious consequences due to the position or perhaps wealth of her family. One can only imagine what became of others in similar situations.

Wallach, Janet. *Desert Queen: The Extraordinary Life of Gertrude Bell*. NY: First Anchor Books, 1999. Bell learned Arabic and became an adviser to King Faisal, she was also a contemporary of Lawrence of Arabia. A highly educated woman, who had no place or function in England, she found a reason to exist in the Middle East. I found this biography to be an astounding account of a Victorian lady's influence on the creation of present day Iraq.

Washburn, Dorothy K., and Donald W. Crowe. *Symmetries of Culture: Theory and Practice of Plane Pattern Analysis*. Seattle: U of Washington P, 1988.

Although this book is designed to help students and researchers classify pattern designs according to a mathematical formula, I found it a good resource of interesting and unique examples of tessellated designs and motifs in both fabric and tiles.

Wines, Michael. "To Protect Ancient City, China Plans to Raze It." *New York Times*. 28 May 2009.

This article with accompanying photographs describes how China plans to raze the ancient oasis town of Kashgar, an important waypoint for caravans on the Silk Road. Many of the 13,000 families are Muslims from a Turkic ethnic group called the Uighurs. The article suggests that it is the Muslim community that is being targeted for removal.

### Supplemental Resources

In addition to what is listed below, I found many titles by native writers, listed under postcolonial literature associated with university websites.

Demi. *One Grain of Rice: A Mathematical Folktale*. NY: Scholastic, 1997.

A delightful story of how receiving double the amount of rice as the day before, quickly grows from one grain to 536,870,912 grains in 30 days. Beautifully illustrated by the author in the manner of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century traditional Indian miniature paintings.

Khayyam, Omar. *The Ruba'iyat of Omar Khayyam*. Trans. Avery, Peter and John Heath-Stubbs. London: Penguin, 1981.

This book includes a 33 page introduction explaining the history of ruba'iyat, Persia, and the Sufi influence. It contains beautiful illuminated illustrations and Appendix 3: "Background to the Illustrations" gives a history of this type of Persian art and how it perished and yet survived throughout the various conquests.

Hosseini, Khaled. *The Kite Runner*. NY: Penguin, 2007.

The story of how a young boy's life changed in turbulent times. Depicts a class system that seems very "foreign" to my way of thinking. It took me a long time to like this young man and appreciate his struggles.

---. *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. NY: Penguin, 2007.

This book portrays 30 years in the life of several generations of different families living in one Afghanistan (Kabul) neighborhood. Both books tell the stories of life before and under Taliban rule. Holocaust repeated?

Lacey, Robert. *The Kingdom: Arabia & the House of Sa'ud*. NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981.

A look at the history of Saudi Arabia and how the Sa'ud family continues to rule country that contains the two most holy cities (Mecca and Medina) in Islam, and maintains economic relations with the rest of the world due to its vast oil resources. An interesting balance between religion and the market place.

Meyer, Karl Ernest, and Shareen Blair Brysac. *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Central Asia*. Washington: Counterpoint, 1999.

An intriguing history of the race for dominance in Central Asia between the British and the Russians. The background this book provides helps to explain current issues in this part of the world. I found the

role of indomitable Victorian women who followed their military husbands into the front lines of conquest fascinating. The epitaph of Lady Florentina Sale, wife of Brigadier Sir Robert Henry Sale, reads: "Underneath this stone reposes all that could die of Lady Sale." She led an extraordinary life.

Nafisi, Azar. *Reading Lolita in Tehran*. NY: Random House, 2004.

Nafisi tells of her life as a young professor of Literature at the University of Tehran, during the Islamic revolution and the effect this had on the lives of her family and students. They read in secret to avoid the police and arrest. *Lolita*, *Gatsby*, *James*, and *Austen* are all skillfully woven into this turbulent setting.

Seierstad, Asne . *The Bookseller of Kabul*. Trans. Ingrid Christophersen. Boston: Back Bay, 2004.

A Scandinavian reporter lives with a local family and reports on the current conditions of women inside Afghanistan and their struggle to become educated and productive.

Rubrics: For help in quickly producing effective rubrics go to this free web site.

<<http://rubistar.4teachers.org/>>.

For "facts" about the different countries go to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) *World Factbook*, at

<<http://www.cia.gov/library/publications.>>

For Longitude and Latitude coordinates of the different capital cities, I used the following link:

<<http://www.infoplease.com/atlas/latitude-longitude.html>>.

A search for Iznik pottery, (Ottoman Ceramics) yields excellent reference books, posters and examples of Islamic design examples when investigating geometric patterns, symmetry, and tessellations.