

Oral History: Storytelling with a Middle Eastern Flair

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INTRODUCTION

The command “Tell me a story!” has reverberated around the world since man could speak to others, and listen to himself! Not one group of people that inhabits the earth is without a rich and magnificent oral tradition that keeps its history alive from generation to generation. It is this entity that keeps all families close, and all members “real” from the beginnings of their histories to present day interactions. The seminar, *The Middle East: History, Geography, and Culture*, is the platform I have been waiting for to motivate my students and myself to uncover the wonder and beauty of the countries of this part of the world and all those wonderful stories that intrigue the American public.

A typical greeting of people in America is a handshake, or a smile, a nod, or just a simple hello. In Thailand, this greeting might be exhibited by a low bow with palms pressed together. Muslims do not eat pork, while in other societies, such as Hindus in India, the people do not eat beef.

These differences are differences among cultures, which is the way of life for any group of people. All people have a culture. All people have a history, a type of art, and literature. All people have folk tales, myths, fables, and stories of fiction and non-fiction. It is my intent to involve my students in all kinds of literature and storytelling, but with a “Middle Eastern Flair” as we travel that part of the world through history, art, and literature.

Middle Eastern history has always interested me, especially since I became a teacher at T. H. Rogers, and more recently after the conflicts with Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, Pakistan, and Lebanon. The people and the geography of the area fascinate me and make me want to travel to that part of the world even if I can only go there through books, films, and research. The history of the civilizations is thousands of years old, so research gathered from this region of the world is never ending and forever interesting.

My school, not located in suburbia-proper and not a neighborhood school, has a special magnet program. The students here are gifted and talented (elementary and middle school), deaf, hard of hearing, and multiply impaired, all housed on one campus. This year (2008-2009) my class is made up of fifth grade Vanguard students who are children of first and second-generation immigrants from the aforementioned countries, and other countries and continents as well.

Next year my assignment will be second graders, so my unit will have to fit both second and fifth grade populations. The lesson plans and research will be teacher-driven, and when the lessons are presented, the plans will have to be modified to use with either or both populations. Teacher instinct and experience will drive the lesson presentations for whichever grade. My 5th grade teaching partner and I have written the unit to fit our academic discipline for this year, and next year we will collaborate with our lower and intermediate grade levels and have the students complete some of the lessons together. Since we have a deaf-inclusion counterpart class, we will involve them in our lessons and activities too. Both 5th grade and 2nd grade deaf students will work together. This way, our students can practice their sign language skills, and the hearing

impaired students can work in the vanguard classroom. How exciting for all groups to collaborate for a common academic achievement!

I love to watch children (no matter what age) blossom as they apply their minds and hearts to learning because in some of their native countries, education would be sporadic, interrupted, and not always a necessity they could acquire with consistency. I beam with pride as the girls become young women who are confident and learned. It is my joy to see the young boys carefree and happy as they go about their day without the threats and pressures of war and destruction hanging over their heads. Enjoying the way these children and their parents incorporate and celebrate their “old world” customs in our American society makes me proud for them and happy that I can share these celebrations and recognitions with them.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives covered in this unit are from the Houston Independent School District’s CLEAR Curriculum. I have combined Social Studies and Reading/Language Arts, which complement each other during the studies. The general objectives are stated before each lesson plan, but are specifically included in Appendix A for exact skills by number, and discipline.

RATIONALE

There are many ideologies and beliefs that I would like to study in order to remove the stereotyping, prejudice, and misunderstandings of these countries and their people from my classroom community. The “old country” ideals and how these philosophies and beliefs impact families living in the United States and in the countries proper are good avenues to explore. Understanding brings awareness, respect, and finally peace (in my opinion), if only for a moment. Researching the people and their cultures, histories, and customs should somewhat bridge the gap between all cultures and help to make our world a better place. Family histories and the maintenance of traditions as they have immersed themselves in the American culture would be another avenue for research. I will use these criteria to develop this unit for my fifth grade and second grade vanguard students, while including our hearing impaired students in our lessons.

There are many, many questions I have. I will not get them all answered in this one unit of study, but this will be a great building block to help my students and me understand. As the students and I work our way through the research and complete our projects, I am sure all of the questions will be addressed, but it will take much more time to sort through the conclusions long after we have completed our studies for this specific unit. This work will only be a stepping stone for more to contemplate and complete in future studies. Some of these questions are:

1. What other reasons besides the wars encouraged the families of my students to come to the United States?
2. How do the students cope with the differences they are forced to face?
3. What experiences do the children have (positive and negative), when they travel back and forth between the Middle East and the United States?

The objective of teaching diversity with literature and social studies shall be covered as we go through the parts of my unit. Projects and research papers will be developed and completed as part of the studies. The students and I will be able to plot and use some of historical events of their countries, to develop intriguing time lines for learning about “us.” The list of novels the students and I will read, analyze, and study, by comparing settings, authors’ styles, artists, and life styles, will enhance our knowledge, compassion, and tolerance for others and ourselves. The culminating project will be “Celebrating our Global Roots in the West.” This occurrence will be a nighttime event held at our school, T. H. Rogers, which will consist of a tour through our Arts and Literature museum that will be set up in the school cafeteria or courtyard (depending on the

weather). With several grade levels and populations contributing, the work will be a wealth of different abilities and skills!! What an invigorating experience this will be for the parents, students, and staff!!! The students will display their stories, poems and art. Background music of songs and musical selections will be written and performed by the students, along with CDs we have used for inspiration, motivation, and creativity during our working sessions. For refreshments during this gala event, we will have A Dessert Exchange and Tea. The parents of the students will prepare desserts from their native countries. This culinary exchange idea comes from the novels *Habibi* by Nye and *Three Cups of Tea* by Mortenson.

UNIT BACKGROUND

Where Is the Middle East?

Unfortunately, there is no consensus for the answer to this question. Boundaries vary. However, according to Worldatlas.com, “The Middle East (or west Asia) sits where Africa, Asia and Europe meet. The countries of the Middle East are all part of Asia, but for clarity reasons we geographically show them as a separate landmass.” The term Middle East is a British term and not named by the people who are native to the area. This area also includes states in North Africa that are linked by ethnicity, language, and religion.

More specifically, according to William Cleveland, it refers to the region from Egypt in the west through Iran in the east, and from Turkey in the north to the Arabian Peninsula in the South.

Oftentimes, this area is referred to as the land where Judaism, Christianity, and Islam originated. Here, many conflicts between the people have evolved, been resolved and reawakened time and time again. The ghosts of combatants and inhabitants roam here, and the lands are littered with the visible and invisible ruins and weapons of war.

Americans are constantly reminded of the happenings on this side of the world and deal with the awareness that turmoil in this region can be a threat to our country. Military, political, and economic issues throughout the region affect our daily lives.

We should be very careful and not lump our studies into a category that is inaccurate. The first clarification involves the history and politics of that specific area of the world. First, we must be aware of its history and politics. Although the period of the ancient Middle East began around 3000 B.C., the birth of Islam begins the modern Middle East. Current problems in the Middle East were largely created by the British and the French, the victors of World War I (McCoy 5).

“Westerners created the term ‘Middle East,’ and now during modern times, some have adopted the term, particularly those who speak English as a second or third language” (McCoy 5).

The region is too varied to label. The people of this area live in “a region of often dramatic geographical contrasts: vast parched deserts and high mountains, some with year-round snow; stone-hard volcanic rifts and lush semi-tropical valleys] extremely dry and extremely wet conditions, sometimes separated by only a few miles; large permanent rivers and wadis, riverbeds dry as a bone until winter rains send torrents of flood from the mountains to the sea. In ancient times, a very skilled agriculture made the Middle East the breadbasket of the Roman Empire, and its trade carried luxury fabrics, foods, and spices both East and West” (McCoy 4).

This region includes 23 countries: “Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Libya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Iraq, Algeria, Somalia, Oman, Tunisia, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Yemen, Turkey, Djibouti, Mauritania, Israel, and Iran” (McCoy 5).

“Within the region of this geographical area, there are several sub-regions. One is North Africa... The eastern Mediterranean area is sometimes referred to by the old French term “the Levant.” The term “Gulf states” identifies the countries along the coasts of the Persian Gulf,

although the Arab countries prefer to call that body of water the Arabian Gulf or Arabian Sea” (McCoy, Preface).

Countries I have chosen for our unit story telling will include Iran, Iraq, India, Israel, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Lebanon. During the unit introduction, the option of choosing from this list or submitting another choice from this specific geographic area of the world will be given. Each of the afore-mentioned countries has its own unique history, so I will include a synopsis of several in this unit. Some civilizations are thousands of years old, so I will include general information for the students to get started. The students will choose one of these countries, or one of their own, use the research I have gathered, and expand on it or combine it with their own research.

The compilations of the historical information on the countries that follow are only brief summaries. As the need arises for more information about these countries and others the students may choose, I will already have the basic information for starters, and the students and I can delve deeper for more specific information. Depending upon when this unit is used in any classroom, current events are crucial. The students must be made aware of the fact that even though we have research at hand, the situations (political, economic, etc.) in these countries can change overnight.

Pakistan

Officially named the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, this country is in South Asia and borders Central Asia and the Middle East. Its coastline follows along the Arabian Sea and Gulf of Oman in the south. In the west, it is bordered by Afghanistan and Iran, in the east India, and China in the far northeast. During recent years, Pakistan has been called part of the Greater Middle East (“Pakistan”).

This region has witnessed invasions and/or settlements by many groups that include the Persians, Greeks, Arabs, Turks, and the British. “From 1858 to 1947, the area was part of British India. In 1956, Pakistan became an Islamic republic with the adoption of its constitution. In 1971, a civil war in East Pakistan resulted in the independence of Bangladesh. Pakistan’s history has been one that is characterized by periods of military rule, economic growth, and political instability” (“Pakistan”). In addition:

During ancient times, this country was a major cultural hub. Many practices and great monuments have been inherited from the time of the many ancient rulers of the region. Pakistan has a rich cultural and ethnic background. A civilization remarkable for its ordered cities, straight roads, and uniquely structured society, present day Pakistan has been invaded many times in the past. It has been occupied and settled by many different peoples, each of whom have left their imprint on the current inhabitants of the country. The region has formed a distinct cultural unit within its main cultural context from the earliest times. There are differences in culture among the different ethnic groups in matters such as dress, food and religion. Cultural origins also show influences from other surrounding areas such as Tibet, Nepal, India, and eastern Afghanistan. (“Wiki: Culture of Pakistan”)

Israel

Israel was formed as a Jewish state in 1948. The ownership or birthright is sanctioned by an ancient Jewish connection to the region since the second millennium B. C. It is a Jewish state that has been influenced by Arab and Islamic countries that have influenced its very existence because of its location, foreign relations, and demography.

This country's history is laced with wars, and when its independence was declared, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq attacked the country. In 1949, a truce ended the fighting, but not the bad feelings and hostilities.

At present Israel claims the entire city of Jerusalem as its capital. Clashes and violence are prevalent between the Israeli and the Arabs, and this nation appears to be far from a peaceful place. The government is a multiparty, parliamentary republic with its ultimate authority and governmental decisions made by the people in the legislature. There is no written constitution, so basic laws are passed by the parliament and over the many years have managed governmental operations. Some of the constitutional functions are decided by the Declaration of Establishment and the Israeli citizenship law.

Economic responsibility of the military causes Israel to depend on foreign military aid, chiefly from the United States. Because the area is often involved in political conflict, it is set economically apart from much of the Middle East. On a more positive note, the constant influx of people with many different skills and backgrounds contributes to the country's economic stability. Circumstances have motivated its inhabitants to create an economy that is industrious and can sustain infrastructure and continue services.

Today's Israel has agricultural and industrial sectors that have come to fruition over the past two decades and is pretty much self-sufficient in producing its own food. Grains, however, still need to be imported.

Lebanon

Lebanon is at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. It is a little smaller than the state of Connecticut and is bordered on the north and east by Syria. On the south side, it is bordered by Israel and the Mediterranean Sea on the west. Its coastline stretches for 140 miles.

Once a part of Syria, Lebanon has suffered many troubles that have afflicted the area. In 1975, a civil war broke out, but before this war, the country was well-known for its culture and sophistication. The history of this small, but influential state goes back to the creative and talented Phoenicians who created the world's first commercial empire.

The country's official name is Republic of Lebanon, and its capital is Beirut. It has four other major towns: Sidon, Tripoli, Tyre, and Zahle. Its government is organized as a National Assembly of 128 members elected by universal suffrage. A president is elected by the National Assembly every six years and must be a Maronite Christian. The prime minister must be a Sunni Muslim. These mandates reflect the demographics of the county.

Governing the area is quite difficult because of the different groups within the country that maintain their own armies. Most governments do not have to deal with the basic problem that different groups within the country still maintain their own armies, and the central government has no authority over them.

Iraq

Tools dating as far back as 120,000 B. C., as well as 45,000-year-old human skeletons, have been unearthed by archeologists in the country of Iraq. Once part of the Ottoman Empire, the Republic of Iraq is often called the Cradle of Civilization. Iraq became an independent nation in 1932 and has been a dictatorship since 1968.

After the downfall of its most recent dictator, Saddam Hussein, and the Iraq War, this country is still a place of unrest, but little by little is fighting its way back to normalcy.

Turkey borders Iraq's northern point, Iran to the east, Kuwait and the Persian Gulf to the south, Jordan and Saudi Arabia to the southwest, and Syria to the northwest. There are 36 miles of coastline on the Persian Gulf, which is located on its southeastern tip.

The most renowned geographical feature is that the Tigris and Euphrates rivers run through it. The original name for the area between these rivers was Mesopotamia, meaning land between two rivers. The names of these water bodies have echoed their presence in world history throughout the ages!

The history of this country is so rich that each specific period could fill pages and pages of research, so I have chosen not to mention the periods, and instead wait until the students begin their own research and guide them through the specific periods they would like to know more about as these periods relate to their research and/or compositions.

Iran

With Turkey as the north northeastern border; Iraq as the western border; the Caspian Sea as the northern border; the Persian Gulf as the southern border; India as the central southern border; and Afghanistan to the north, is the mesmerizingly beautiful country of Iran. Its history is rich and fascinating, and the historical ruins tell a story without words. The art from this country renders itself into one's existence and causes appreciation to pulsate within one's very being. Perusing websites, films, and books only touches the surface of an awareness of a country whose beauty renders one speechless. Until 1979, Iran was known as Persia. In 1979, Iran had a revolution. The country became an Islamic Republic and has a theocratic system of government. The people inhabiting the land are Persians, Turks, Kurds, Assyrians, Arabs, Baloochies, and Lors, which give another multitude of reasons for the diversity of the country.

The students and I will research this country together, basking in its beautiful history and reading and learning about the rich literature, which includes beautiful poetry. We will use some of our stories as models for our own writing collection which we will display at our culminating school activity.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is a very rich country. Oil was discovered there in 1938 by Americans, and approximately one fourth of all the oil that is known about in the world is in this country. The law is based on the Koran. The country's wealth started to grow after World War II. Before the 1970s, this country's income came from the Muslims from other countries making a pilgrimage to Mecca, but during the 1970s oil costs rose, causing huge amounts of money to flow into the country, and the Saudis were quickly rich enough to buy almost anything.

After this unexpected windfall, the country spent the money wisely, building schools, hospitals, schools of higher learning, roads, and airports. One of its cities, Jubail, is the biggest public works project in the world's history. The project employed 50,000 men to complete it.

The Saudis lived lavishly, but like any other commodity, the industry of oil had its rises and falls, and in the 1980s, the country hit hard times. Since there was less demand for oil, the prices dropped. By 1990, the country's income was about a fourth of what it had been in the 1980s.

A good result of the riches was the number of people that were able to become educated and demand changes in the government. The country is ruled by the Saud family, and until recently, those kings had almost total power. In 1992, the King Fahd succumbed to pressure for reform and set up a citizen's council, which advises the royal family.

LESSON PLANS

(The plans below can be used for early and intermediate elementary grades.)

Lesson Plan 1: Getting Started

Objective: The students will determine the purposes for listening to gain information, and to solve problems. They will analyze and evaluate a speaker's message to demonstrate effective communications skills that reflect demands such as reporting and providing information.

Introduction: The students and teacher will brainstorm the concept "The Middle East." It is important to give background information and explain to the students that we are not speaking of the mid eastern states of the United States, but those countries and continents on the other side of the world or the eastern hemisphere. This lesson can be used with a single class or with two classes, one early elementary and one intermediate elementary.

Materials: Chart paper, markers, student copies of KWL Charts, blackboard, whiteboard, chalk, pens (If an ELMO is available, the teacher can do the work here).

(The teacher should prepare the KWL charts before the lesson, or the students can copy from the one made on chart paper for student responses.)

Procedure: The students and teacher will discuss their knowledge of the countries that make up the Middle East in the Eastern Hemisphere, not the mid eastern states in the U.S. A. The teacher will record the student responses on the KWL chart. The responses should consist of: What the students already know and what they want or need to know during the first discussion. The students will copy the chart for future references and record more information as they research and learn more.

Student Practice: The students will be in groups of four and assembled at tables in the classroom. They will copy the chart and discuss it among themselves. Since some of the students have traveled to the area, they will be able to help those students not familiar. The charts should have more information recorded as the students discuss.

Assessment: The teacher will act as the coach as she goes from table to table to monitor the students' progress or to get them started if they have reached an impasse in their discussion.

Closure: After a twenty-minute session of brainstorming using the model at the beginning of the lesson, the teacher will get the attention of the students. Each group can share their lists of what they know and what they want to know. The lesson ends with the promise of setting up independent and individual research sessions in the library, or computer lab. (The time allocation for the lesson can be from 30-45 minutes.)

Lesson Plan 2: My Stories

Objective: The students will write text to recall, inform, and organize ideas. They will report responses to relevant aspects of their own life experiences and demonstrate knowledge of their own culture. They will write to express, reflect on ideas, provide information, and explain, describe, and narrate.

Introduction: The students will make a collage of their lives and write their autobiographies. They will assemble the collage to show specific events in their lives. After the collage is complete, the students will write their autobiographies and include events that are depicted, which is where the term "Mystories" comes from.

Materials: Various fabric scraps, construction paper, string, cord, sequins, glitter, glue, scissors, magazines, newspapers, notebook paper, pencils, pens, etc.

Procedure: The students will make collages using the materials mentioned above. They will organize and manipulate the materials to show certain events in their lives. The display does not have to be in any particular order of their lives. When they have glued their materials in an orderly manner, they are to write the significance of the materials as they relate to their autobiography. For example, the student might cut out a dress and glue sequins all over it to commemorate a special birthday party they had or a wedding they attended or participated in. Relating the collage to their lives, they should write their autobiography titling it “My Story.” This activity should take two 45-minute class sessions. The next day, the students should proofread, revise, and rewrite their Mystery before presenting it to the class.

Student Practice: Completing this activity will allow the student to apply the writing process Pre-writing, Drafting, Revising/Editing, and Publication.

Assessment: The composition should be in the publication stage when the student is finished.

Closure: The students will read their autobiographies and show their collages to the class. After everyone is finished, the projects should be displayed in the classroom or other designated area in the school. These presentations should also answer my previous question of the experiences the children have traveling back and forth over the borders of the United States and the Middle East. This is a great Open House project.

Lesson Plan 3: Setting the Stage

Objective

Introduction: My teaching partner and I will work with our students together in this unit. (Her students are 5th graders and mine are 2nd graders). My students will listen to the book *Listen to the Wind* by Greg Mortenson. They will draw their mind pictures while a 5th grader reads the book. After this book is finished, every day until completion, a 5th grader will read a chapter from the children’s version of *Three Cups of Tea*, by Greg Mortenson, which will give even more details of the humanitarian’s experiences in building schools for the children in Pakistan before September 11, 2001.

Materials: The books *Listen to the Wind* and *Three Cups of Tea*, by Greg Mortenson, CD’s of Middle Eastern music as background sounds, 11 ½ X 14 white art paper, and several (at least 5) sheets of 8 1/2 X 11 typing or computer paper, crayons, markers, colored pencils, pencils, and felt tip pens.

Procedure: Second graders will draw mind pictures of the scenes from the readings. Each day, they will include evidence from a different sense’s point of view: the ears (what they hear), the nose (what it smells), the heart (what emotions are evoked), the sense of touch (what the texture is of the items they draw), and, of course, the eyes (what they see). On the backs of the pictures, they will write comments about the drawings explaining the message they were trying to draw in the picture. When the book is finished and all the drawings are perfected, the students will design a cover for a booklet. The fifth graders will laminate the covers and help the students make a booklet. The booklet will also include a summary of both books and a dedication page.

The second part of the same lesson will continue throughout the nine-week period. During this time, the students will write their own stories using the research they have completed while working with the fifth grade class. Both sets of students will complete this study during the nine weeks period the teachers choose. The assignment for fifth grade will be to research a country in the area of the Middle East: Pakistan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Israel, or whichever country they choose.

Assessment: Publication of copies of the students’ (second grade) stories and imagery booklets, along with 5th grade student projects, will be on display during the Middle Eastern Culminating

Activity Celebration after the nine-week grading period. Both sets of students will vote on the date.

Closure: Both sets of students will meet and discuss the collaborative assignment. They will talk about the problems they encountered and how they can be avoided by another group that might decide to enjoy the same kind of activity. They will write letters to Greg Mortenson about their study and tell them how they were inspired by his efforts to make life better for other human beings. They will also tell him how they were inspired to complete further research on the countries he traveled.

Lesson Plan 4:

Objective: The students will write a play that depicts the putting together and completion of the my stories, *Three Cups of Tea*, the study of Middle Eastern History, and their research projects and stories, poems and booklets.

Materials: A selection of books about the countries in the Middle East, maps, globes, magazines, Middle Eastern music, art paper, notebook paper, models of stories written by children and published authors from the area, pens, pencils, dictionaries, encyclopedias, computers with Internet access, lots of enthusiasm, 5th grade partners, and the teacher.

Procedure: The teacher and students will write and illustrate stories of their choice using models of folk tales and myths already written about the area. We will read novels and pattern some of our stories after these authors' representations. We will study maps and the geography of the land, so that the scenery and time periods written about in our books will be authentic and exciting. Each day, we will set aside 45 minutes to write and discuss the parts of a story, the kinds of characters we should have, the plot, using metaphors and similes in our writings, and, of course, the kinds of illustrations we should include. Each Friday, we will have writers' conferences with the teacher or our 5th grade partners. We will ask our art teacher to help us when we run into snags trying to use different mediums or if we decide to try to recreate pottery of our own designing. We will truly complete our masterpieces with a "Middle Eastern" flair.

Assessment: Students and teacher will peruse the Internet for rubrics that we can use as guides for assessing our own stories, projects, and illustrations. After deciding which categories we will use for our grading, we will compile our rubrics during computer lab time. We will assess each others work, then our own work, and the final assessment will be completed by the teacher.

Closure: We will display our work during our finale presentation, which will be called Celebrating our Global Roots in the West.

APPENDIX A

Unit Objectives

These objectives are taken from the Houston Independent School District's CLEAR Curriculum. The objectives come from the Reading/Language Arts and Social Studies core subjects from 5th grade. These same objectives apply to students in grades kindergarten through high school. As the students progress in grades, the work is expected to become more sophisticated, but the basic objectives are the same.

ELA 5.4A Reading Language Arts

The student will connect his/her own experiences, information, insights, and ideas with those of others through speaking and listening.

ELA 5.21C

The students will use a structured process to take notes from relevant and authoritative sources such as guest speakers, informational books, periodicals, and media sources including on-line searches.

SS5.26D

The students will create written and visual materials such as journal entries, reports, graphic organizers, outlines, and bibliographies.

SS5.26

The student is expected to express ideas orally and written based on research and experiences.

ELA5.7B

The student is expected to read regularly in instructional level materials that are challenging but manageable.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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College textbook depicting the factual history of the area.

“The Great History of Iran.” *YouTube*. May 3, 2009. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zV89FNTk114>>.
This website has great photo essays set to music. They must be previewed before showing to the students so that you are familiar and able to answer students’ questions.

McCoy, Lisa. *Modern Middle East Nations and Their Strategic Place in the World Facts and Figures about the Middle East*. Mason Crest Publishers, 2004.

This book is one in a series that has current information about the “Middle East Today” and other research to explain the history of specific countries located in the area.

“The Middle East.” *WorldAtlas.com*. <<http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/me.htm>>.
This is a good website to use for maps to locate specific areas and geographical placements.

Mortenson, Greg, and David Oliver Relin. *Three Cups of Tea*. Penguin Books, 2006.

The perfect book to use that highlights the generosity of an American to the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan by building schools in both countries. The book also shows the bonding of people, friendships abroad, and the bringing together of people of different cultures and worlds.

Mortenson, Greg., and Susan L. Roth. *Listen to the Wind: The Story of Dr. Greg and Three Cups of Tea*. New York: Penguin Books, 2009.

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This website should be used with care. Back-up research should be used as the postings are not always accurate.

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Student textbook giving facts and history information about Africa and middle eastern countries.

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Children’s book with historical facts.

- McDaniel, Jan. *Lebanon: Modern Middle East Nations*. Mason Crest, 2004.
Another book in the Middle Eastern series for children which cites information in kid friendly language.
- Mernissi, Fatima. *Dreams of Trespass*. Addison Wesley Publishing Company, 1994.
Personal experiences of a childhood spent in a harem. Good first-hand accounts.
- Sheehan, Sean. *Lebanon*. Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2000.
This book printed for children gives good in-depth information that is student friendly.
- Young, Becky. "Open Sesame! Using Middle Eastern Folk and Fairy Tales to Open Doors to Understanding." <http://www.courses.unt.edu/efiga/STORYTELLING/Fall2002/544opdf/Reecca_Young.pdf>.
This resource will give the students "foods for thoughts" when they are ready to begin writing their own stories.