

Stories of the Hajj: Yesterday's, Today's, and Tomorrow's

Author: Ralph Covino, History & Social Sciences, Girls Preparatory School, Chattanooga TN

Grade Levels: 9-12

Duration: 3 45-minute class periods (plus 2 nights' 30-minute homework plus later assessment)

Relevant Tennessee Social Studies Standards:

CI.02	Locate world regions, and explain how location affects events (<i>e.g.</i> , climate, place, resources, globalization, urbanization, cultural diffusion, <i>etc.</i>).
CI.03	Analyze how cultural characteristics (<i>e.g.</i> , language, religion, ethnicity, gender roles) link, divide, and/or define regions.
CI.05	Explain how technology and globalization shape new methods of human interaction.
CI.06	Identify how geography shapes culture, economics, politics, and history.
WG.10	Describe the importance of geospatial technologies (<i>i.e.</i> , GIS, GPS, remote sensing), and apply them in relevant contexts.
WG.12	Relate current events to the physical and human characteristics of place and regions.
WG.14	Identify physical, economic, cultural, and political factors that influence the locations and patterns of economic activities, trade, and economic development.
W.86	Describe the international importance and rapid economic development of the oil-rich Persian Gulf states.

Overview: Students of world history and world religions encounter the Five Pillars almost as soon as Islam itself is introduced. Students commit the wording, particularly that of the first pillar, and the relevant portions of the subsequent sequence to memory. Perhaps they are tested on it - perhaps not. For the remainder of their studies, however, the Hajj does not attract significant attention. This is regrettable as the sheer logistics and colossal nature of the task of accommodating the over two million undergoing the pilgrimage annually is not only worthy of study in and of itself as a global phenomenon, but also a useful on-going case study in continuity and change. This three day set of lessons, activities, and homework seeks to help students gain a better understanding of the Hajj itself as well as allow students to develop their burgeoning historical research, thinking, analysis and presentation skills.

Prior Knowledge: Students are expected to have a rudimentary sense of Middle Eastern geography and an awareness of the basics of Islam. While encounters with hajji such as Mansa Musa, the family of the noted Chinese admiral Zheng He, or even Malcolm X would be preferable, they are by no means a requirement.

Intended Audience: These lessons were designed to function in either a 9th grade Modern World History Course or an AP World History course; however, they could be adapted and extended to fit World Geography, World Religions, or Contemporary Issues courses.

Stories of the Hajj: Yesterday's, Today's, and Tomorrow's

Introductory Class Period

Phase 1: Activation of Prior Knowledge and Introduction (10m)

Giving the students around three minutes, have them type or write down the Five Pillars of Islam as best as they can remember them. Once they have completed the task, ask them to write under that the name of a single famous hajji. Use this as a springboard for discussion of the Hajj itself, and its place within Islam. (If applicable: remind students of Mansa Musa and other historical characters who completed the Hajj whom they may have encountered before in the curriculum.)

Phase 2: One View of the Hajj Experience (15m)

Watch the following 5 minute video “Hajj 2017 Emotional Scenes” together: https://youtu.be/LYx55_sSI-g

Discuss the impact of the video. How did it make the students feel? Were the scenes emotive for them? If so, why? If not, why not? Ask them to consider the video's impact on those who have left comments on the video below (though proceed with caution and pre-vet comments).

Phase 3: How Might Historians Research the Hajj and its Stories? (15m)

Ask students what sources of information exist about the Hajj and hajji and how they might access them. Which are formal? Informal? What barriers exist to gaining a full understanding of the Hajj? In the course of the discussion, include the detail that Mecca, the holiest city in Islam, is forbidden to non-Muslims and that, strictly speaking, during the Hajj, participants are actively discouraged from utilizing devices for the purposes of documenting their experience. Ask the students how this might impact our gaining knowledge of the Hajj and what possibly work-arounds might be for coming to an understanding of the phenomenon.

Phase 4: Exit Ticket Activity (5m)

Have each student write down on a notecard one question that they would ask of a hajji about the experience if they had the opportunity.

Homework: Night One

Have each student research the elements of the modern Hajj experience and utilize the Sketchnoting technique to create a one page visual summation of them of standard size; legal paper works better than standard paper as it provides sufficient room to expand on vital elements. (One of any number of basic guides to Sketchnoting may be found at <https://www.core77.com/posts/19678/sketchnotes-101-the-basics-of-visual-note-taking-19678>)

Stories of the Hajj: Yesterday's, Today's, and Tomorrow's

Second Class Period

Phase 1: Activation of Prior Knowledge (20m)

Have students create a gallery of their Sketchnotes and discuss which is the most useful at conveying the key details about the locations and activities of the Hajj and why. Compare their notes with graphics utilized by government ministry webpages or major news outlets.

Saudi Government Ministry of Hajj and Umrah: <http://haj.gov.sa/english/pages/default.aspx>

BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/galleries/hajj/>

ABC News: <https://abcnews.go.com/International/hajj-/story?id=57217149>

CBS News: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/muslims-gather-in-mecca-hajj-pilgrimage-begins-today-2018-08-19/> (N.B. pre-load as there is an advertisement that precedes 1m 32s video)

NBC News: <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/101/video/islam-101-what-is-the-hajj-531594307562> (N.B. pre-load as there is an advertisement that precedes 49s video)

Phase 2: (20m)

Introduce students to the data table at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hajj#Number_of_pilgrims_per_year. Have students utilize their knowledge of world history and current events to evaluate the number of pilgrims. Have them graph the number of pilgrims using Numbers (*vel sim.*) and predict the number of pilgrims for 25 years from now, 50 years from now, and 100 years from now.

Phase 3: Exit Ticket Activity (5m)

On the reverse of the returned hajji question notecard, have each student list the five key vocabulary words gleaned from their research into the Hajj thus far.

Homework: Night Two

Have students investigate the steps necessary to undertake the Hajj by having them research and document the practicalities - how much would undertaking the Hajj today cost? How do you get there? Where do you stay when you are there? *Etc.* Two good starting places for this enquiry are:

The 'Flying to Hajj' webpage at <https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2018/flying-to-hajj-2018/index.html>

The guidelines for Pilgrimage Travelers (Hajj and Umrah) provided by the U.S. State Department, found at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/travelers-with-special-considerations/hajj-umrah.html>

Stories of the Hajj: Yesterday's, Today's, and Tomorrow's

Final Class Period

Phase 1: Review and Homework Discussion (10m)

Open the class by discussing the most commonly encountered vocabulary terms from the previous day's exit activity. Segue from that to discussing the impact of the Hajj on the Saudi Arabian economy. (In 2016, the Hajj contributed an estimated 3% of Saudi Arabia's GDP - see <https://lawstreetmedia.com/blogs/world-blogs/commercializing-pilgrimage-hajj-impacts-saudi-economy/> .) Have the students discuss their findings from their research the previous evening. What are the main routes? Which airports are utilized? Who in the class found the most economical way to undertake the pilgrimage? The most extravagant? *N.B.* this is a good time to remind students of the provisions of the 5th Pillar regarding able-bodiedness.

Phase 2: The Modern Dangers of the Hajj (15m)

Watch the brief BBC news video of interviews with those involved in the 2015 Hajj stampede at https://youtu.be/_5e2hLyxydc

Discuss these interviewees as a source of information about the experience of the Hajj. Have students consider other possible dangers associated with over two million pilgrims being confined to a comparatively small space in a short period of time, *e.g.* communicable disease vectors or political unrest. If there is time, have students consider those interviewed for the report at <https://abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=79684&page=1>

Phase 3: The Hajj in Future (20m)

Watch the video produced by the Saudi Arabian Ministry for Hajj and Umrah at <https://youtu.be/8NldoLpjMs4>

The Saudi Arabian government believes that technology will make the Hajj safer for pilgrims. Conclude the days spent studying the Hajj with a discussion of what the key elements are which make the Hajj the Hajj and how the government is attempting to balance continuity with the potential technological change necessary to ensure the safety and security of those on the Hajj.

Optional Activity

A worthwhile activity is to take the questions from day one and arrange for them to be asked of someone who has undertaken the Hajj. Such can be achieved in person, via Skype (*vel sim.*) or asynchronously, *e.g.* via e-mail. Such obviously depend on the teacher and his/her students' connections or internet/Twitter savvy. (*N.B.* Filtering of the questions is key as student interest has, in my experience, tended to focus on issues of sanitation over most other concerns.)