**Stereotypes of the Islamic World**

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**Subject(s):** World History

**Topic or Unit of Study (Title):**

Unit: World of Islam – Stereotypes of the Islamic World

**Grade Level:** 9

***Materials:*** whiteboard, expo markers, paper, pencil, printouts on main stereotypes, graphic organizer handouts

**Summary (*and Rationale*):** On their own, students will take brainstorm stereotypes they know about the Islamic World and as a class we will categorize the stereotypes and label each category. We will then do the same thing with stereotypes about American life. Afterwards, the students will work in groups looking at the printouts about some major stereotypes of the Islamic World, and then as a class we will look again at the stereotypes and try to come to some conclusions about Islamic stereotypes and stereotypes in general.

**I. Focus and Review (Establish Prior Knowledge):** [5 minutes] At the beginning of class, students will jot down stereotypes of the Islamic World that they can think of on their own.

**II. Statement of Instructional Objective(s) *and Assessments*:**

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| **Objectives** | **Assessments** |
| Objective 1: When students are placed in groups they will brainstorm as many stereotypes about the Islamic World, and then about American society, as they can think and then categorize the stereotypes.  | The students will fill out a blank graphic organizer with the categories and labels we decide on based off of the master list they help create. |
| Objective 2: When presented information on common misconceptions about the Islamic World, students will be able to answer three questions about at least one of the stereotypes we discussed.  | Individually, the students will pick one stereotype that interested them most and answer three questions about it. |

State the objective: [5 minutes]

Assessment: [45 minutes]

**III. Teacher Input (Present tasks, information and guidance):**  [50 minutes]

1. The teacher will ask students to jot down stereotypes about the Islamic World that they know. These stereotypes can me about Islam, Muslims, the Middle East, etc.
2. Then the students will be separated into small groups of 3 or 4 where they will brainstorm stereotypes together.
3. As a class, we will categorize the stereotypes and then label the categories accordingly.
4. Each label given for categories will be justified by the students.
5. As we do this, the students should fill out the graphic organizer with the new labels and the stereotypes categorized under those labels.
6. Then the teacher will ask the students to brainstorm stereotypes about American society in their groups from earlier.
7. As a class, we will categorize those stereotypes and label the categories accordingly. Students will also fill out the same kind of graphic organizer for American stereotypes
8. Students will compare the two graphic organizers and make conclusions about the nature of the stereotypes and stereotypes in general
9. Afterward, the teacher will handout the sheet on misconceptions about the Islamic World which students will look over in their small groups.

**IV. Guided Practice (Elicit performance):** [25-30 minutes]

Each student will choose one of the stereotypes about the Islamic World and write a short essay answering the following questions on it:

1. What stereotype did you choose and would you agree that it is a common misconception about the Islamic World?
2. Why has this stereotype become commonly accepted by many?
3. Is this an accurate stereotype? Why or why not? Please use the informational printout and/or the textbook as a reference when answering this question.

***V.* Closure (Plan for maintenance):** [10 minutes]

A short class discussion on what myths the students held to be true were debunked because of this activity will take place.

***VI.* Independent Practice: [**5 minutes**]**

Students will finish the essay on the three questions for homework if they did not during class.

**STANDARDS:**

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| **WH.2** | 2.5: Eastern and Western Religions |
|  | 2.9: Achievements of ancient civilizations |
| **WH.3** | 3.1: Religious influence on political power and cultural unity |

**Plans for Individual Differences:**

**Flexible grouping** – Students will be placed in groups so that each group is culturally diverse since the lesson is on stereotypes and different cultures view common stereotypes differently.

**References (APA style):**

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Learn NC. *World History North Carolina Essential Standards*, from <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/3432?ref=search>

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Excerpts from:

TOP TEN MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ISLAM

By Huma Ahmad

MISCONCEPTION #1:

Muslims are violent, terrorists and/or extremists.

This is the biggest misconception in Islam, no doubt resulting from the constant stereotyping and bashing the media gives Islam. When a gunman attacks a mosque in the name of Judaism, a Catholic IRA guerrilla sets off a bomb in an urban area, or Serbian Orthodox militiamen rape and kill innocent Muslim civilians, these acts are not used to stereotype an entire faith. Never are these acts attributed to the religion of the perpetrators. Yet how many times have we heard the words 'Islamic, Muslim fundamentalist. etc.' linked with violence.

Politics in so called "Muslim countries" may or may not have any Islamic basis. Often dictators and politicians will use the name of Islam for their own purposes. One should remember to go to the source of Islam and separate what the true religion of Islam says from what is portrayed in the media. Islam literally means 'submission to God' and is derived from a root word meaning 'peace'.

Islam may seem exotic or even extreme in the modern world. Perhaps this is because religion doesn't dominate everyday life in the West, whereas Islam is considered a 'way of life' for Muslims and they make no division between secular and sacred in their lives. Like Christianity, Islam permits fighting in self-defense, in defense of religion, or on the part of those who have been expelled forcibly from their homes. It lays down strict rules of combat which include prohibitions against harming civilians and against destroying crops, trees and livestock.

NOWHERE DOES ISLAM ENJOIN THE KILLING OF INNOCENTS.. The Quran says:

"Fight in the cause of God against those who fight you, but do not transgress limits. God does not love transgressors." (Quran 2:190) "If they seek peace, then seek you peace. And trust in God for He is the One that heareth and knoweth all things." (Quran 8:61) War, therefore, is the last resort, and is subject to the rigorous conditions laid down by the sacred law. The term 'jihad' literally means 'struggle'. Muslims believe that there are two kinds of jihad. The other 'jihad' is the inner struggle of the soul which everyone wages against egotistic desires for the sake of attaining inner peace.

MISCONCEPTION #2:

Islam oppresses women.

The image of the typical Muslim woman wearing the veil and forced to stay home and forbidden to drive is all too common in most peoples thoughts. Although some Muslim countries may have laws that oppress women, this should not be seen as coming from Islam. Many of these countries do not rule by any kind of Shari'ah (Islamic law) and introduce their own cultural standpoints on the issue of gender equity.

Islam on the other hand gives men and women different roles and equity between the two is laid down in the Quran and the example of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Islam sees a woman, whether single or married, as an individual in her own right, with the right to own and dispose of her property and earnings. A marriage gift is given by the groom to the bride for her own personal use, and she keeps her own family name rather than taking her husband's. Both men and women are expected to dress in a way that is modest and dignified. The

Messenger of God (peace be upon him) said: "The most perfect in faith amongst believers is he who is best in manner and kindest to his wife."

Violence of any kind towards women and forcing them against their will for anything is not allowed. A Muslim marriage is a simple, legal agreement in which either partner is free to include conditions. Marriage customs thus vary widely from country to country. Divorce is not common, although it is acceptable as a last resort. According to Islam, a Muslim girl cannot be forced to marry against her will: her parents simply suggest young men they think may be suitable.

MISCONCEPTION #4:

Islam was spread by the sword and is intolerant of other faiths.

Many social studies textbooks for students show the image of an Arab horseman carrying a sword in one hand and the Quran in the other conquering and forcibly converting. This, though, is not a correct portrayal of history. Islam has always given respect and freedom of religion to all faiths. The Quran says: "God forbids you not, with regards to those who fight you not for [your] faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them; for God loveth those who are just. 60:8)

Freedom of religion is laid down in the Quran itself: "There is no compulsion (or coercion) in the religion (Islam). The right direction is distinctly clear from error". (2:256) Christian missionary, T.W. Arnold had this opinion on his study of the question of the spread of Islam: ".. of any organized attempt to force the acceptance of Islam on the non-Muslim population, or of any systematic persecution intended to stamp out the Christian religion, we hear nothing. Had the caliphs chosen to adopt either course of action, they might have swept away Christianity as easily as Ferdinand and Isabella drove Islam out of Spain, or Louis XIV made

Protestanism ..."

It is a function of Islamic law to protect the privileged status of minorities, and this is why non-Muslim places of worship have flourished all over the Islamic world. History provides many examples of Muslim tolerance towards other faiths: when the caliph Omar entered Jerusalem in the year 634, Islam granted freedom of worship to all religious communities in the city. Proclaiming to the inhabitants that their lives, and property were safe, and that their places of worship would never be taken from them, he asked the Christian patriarch Sophronius to accompany him on a visit to all the holy places. Islamic law also permits non-Muslim minorities to set up

their own courts, which implement family laws drawn up by the minorities themselves. The life and property of all citizens in an Islamic state are considered sacred whether the person is Muslim or not.

Racism is not a part of Islam, the Quran speaks only of human equality and how all peoples are equal in the sight of God. "O mankind! We created you from a single soul, male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, so that you may come to know one another. Truly, the most honored of you in God's sight is the greatest of you in piety. God is All-Knowing, All- Aware. (49:13)

MISCONCEPTION #7:

All Muslim men marry four wives.

The religion of Islam was revealed for all societies and all times and so accommodates widely differing social requirements. Circumstances may warrant the taking of another wife but the right is granted, according to the Quran, only on condition that the husband is scrupulously fair. No woman can be forced into this kind of marriage if they do not wish it, and they also have the right to exclude it in their marriage contract.

Polygamy is neither mandatory, nor encouraged, but merely permitted. Images of "sheikhs with harems" are not consistent with Islam, as a man is only allowed at most four wives only if he can fulfill the stringent conditions of treating each fairly and providing each with separate housing etc. Permission to practice polygamy is not associated with mere satisfaction of passion. It is rather associated with compassion toward widows and orphans. It was the Quran that limited and put conditions on the practice of polygamy among the Arabs, who had as many as ten or more wives and considered them "property".

It is both honest and accurate to say that it is Islam that regulated this practice, limited it, made it more humane, and instituted equal rights and status for all wives. What the Qur'anic decrees amount to, taken together is discouragement of polygamy unless necessity for it exists. It is also evident that the general rule in Islam is monogamy and not polygamy. It is a very tiny percentage of Muslims that practice it over the world. However, permission to practice limited polygamy is only consistent with Islam's realistic view of the nature of man and woman and of various social needs, problems and cultural variations.

The question is, however far more than the inherent flexibility of Islam; it also is the frank and straightforward approach of Islam in dealing with practical problems. Rather than requiring hypocritical and superficial compliance, Islam delves deeper into the problems of individuals and societies, and provides for legitimate and clean solutions which are far more beneficial than would be the case if they were ignored. There is no doubt that the second wife legally married and treated kindly is better off than a mistress without any legal rights or expermanence.

Sources:

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