



Terrorism and the Mass Media

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What do you want your students to understand about this topic?

Content Goals (These may include chronology, various historical interpretations, issues and problems, people of the time, etc.)

Complicate the understanding of Terrorism and its role in the world today, as well as the historical foundations of “terrorism”. In addition, the unit will focus on the effect that the current mass mediated culture has on the public perception of terrorism and the world around them.

- ❖ What is terrorism?
- ❖ What qualifies as terrorism? How has terrorism changed through out time?
- ❖ How has mass media shaped our stereotypes? What stereotypes have been crafted for the Arab?
- ❖ Does bias exist in the mass media? How can the choices made when reporting the news alter perceptions of the world around us?
- ❖ What has put the United States at risk for terrorist attacks in the 21st century?





What sources will your students study in order to understand this topic?

_____ **Centerpieces** (Primary sources, historians' differing interpretations, maps, trade books, statistical evidence, etc.)

Books:

- ❖ *The Great War for Civilization* – Robert Fisk
- ❖ *Mass-Mediated Terrorism* – Brigitte L. Nacos
- ❖ *A Peace to End All Peace* – David Fromkin
- ❖ *The 911 Commission Report* – National Commission on Terrorist Attacks
- ❖ *Literacy For the 21 Century: An Overview & Orientation Guide To Media Literacy Education* – The Center for Media Literacy
- ❖ *5 Key Questions that can Change the World* – The Center for Media Literacy
- ❖ *Media Construction of the Middle East: A Digital Media Literacy Curriculum* - Project Look Sharp/Ithaca College

Films:

- ❖ *Peace Propaganda and Promised Land* – Bathsheba Ratzkoff and Sut Jhally
- ❖ *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* – Sut Jhally
- ❖ *WMD: Weapons of Mass Deception* – Danny Schechter
- ❖ *Battle of Algiers* – Gillo Pontecorvo

Materials for Unit Presentation:

Various primary documents provided within.

- ❖ *Hollywood - Casting the Enemy* – Parts 1 and 2 (Al Jazeera) available on YouTube

Part 1 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4TICD0npUU>

Part 2 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2LvKjsCkp0o>

- ❖ *Battle of Algiers* – Gillo Pontecorvo
- ❖ Portion of *Reel Bad Arabs* – Available on YouTube

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ko_N4BcaIPY





- ❖ Picture of 9/11 survivor:

Survivor in Disbelief

http://www.september11news.com/JamesNachtweyTime_alive.jpg

- ❖ Portion of True Lies (1994 Lightstorm Entertainment)

<http://www.ithaca.edu/looksharp/U4L2video.mov>

- ❖ Real News Network Intro Clip

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_9eUXjg4AI

- ❖ Media Education Clip

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQE6b_LTXiY



What historical thinking skills will your students learn and use during this lesson?

Process Goals (Grasp chronology, use historians' basic tools, analyze sources, identify historical issues, etc. – These should be paired with an appropriate content goal and centerpiece)

- ❖ Examine persistent issues involving the rights, roles, and status of the individual in relation to the general welfare. (NCSS Standards, p. 39)
- ❖ Analyze and evaluate conditions, actions, and motivations that contribute to conflict and cooperation within and among nations. (NCSS Standards, p.39)
- ❖ Interpret patterns of behavior reflecting values and attitudes that contribute or pose obstacles to cross cultural understanding. (NCSS Standards, p.33)
- ❖ Use primary sources to construct an understanding of the nature and history of terrorism throughout world history.
- ❖ Explore the role media plays in the dissemination of political, religious, or ideological agendas amongst our mass-mediated culture.
- ❖ Investigate the level of subjectivity that is displayed in our mass media.

What Activities will help your students learn, practice and achieve these goals?

Lesson 1: *What is Terrorism?*

Essential Question: What is terrorism?

- 1) Picture of 9-11 and analyze using the NARA documents.
 - a. Display the image: *Survivor in Disbelief*
http://www.september11news.com/JamesNachtweyTime_alive.jpg
- 2) Ask each student to complete the Nara Picture Analysis worksheet.
- 3) Discussion of Photograph in a structured discussion
 - a. What is this a photograph of?
 - b. How do you know – what evidence helps you come to this determination?
 - c. What do you know about 9-11?
 - d. If 9-11 is a terrorist attack, what is terrorism? How do we define it?
- 4) Have each student jot down the first three things that come to mind when you here the word terrorism.





- a. Using the responses from the class to create a mind map of terrorism together on the board.
- 5) **Homework:** Each student will come to class tomorrow with a well reasoned written definition of terrorism.

Lesson 2: *Terrorism through the Ages*

Essential Questions: What qualifies as terrorism? How has terrorism changed through out time?

- 1) Have students turn in their definitions and discuss their definitions. Discuss their various responses. Solicit responses as to their rationale behind their definitions.
- 2) Provide a definition of terrorism as defined by Department of Defense:
 - a. Department of Defense definition: *"The unlawful use of -- or threatened use of -- force or violence against individuals or property to coerce or intimidate governments or societies, often to achieve political, religious, or ideological objectives."*
 - b. Have the students copy this definition down. It will become useful to refer back to later.
- 3) Discussion of this definition. Point out that terrorism *must be public*: "to coerce or intimidate governments or societies". Terrorism isn't done against only one individual – although the individual act may be carried out against one person.
- 4) Divide the class up into four or five groups. Explain to the class that we will be looking at a number of events throughout world history. Explain that as a group they will analyze the pictures, documents, or videos using the NARA documents analysis worksheets.
 - a. Once they have completed the analysis of the pieces of evidence each group will come to a group consensus as to whether their events meet the definition of terrorism as given by the US Department of Defense.
 - b. If the group feels that their act qualifies as terrorism then they will place their event on a time line drawn in the front of the class.
 - c. After all groups have completed the time lining the groups will then share with the class what their event or document pertains to and explain why they felt that it did or did not meet the definition. The class in general can weigh in on these conclusions.
 - d. Note: Students should be filling out their own timeline as the class completes theirs as a whole.
 - i. The documents pertain to the following events.
 1. Old Testament – Sicarii in Rome – Jewish assassins who killed those who collaborated with the Romans. Roman historian Josephus.
 2. Roman killing of the Christians in the Coliseum.
 3. Christians in the Crusades.



4. Witch Trials
 5. French Revolution.
 6. September 16th, 1920 Anarchist Bombing in Wall Street
 7. 1972 Olympics
 8. 1995 Oklahoma City Bombing
 9. 1996 Olympic Park Bombing
 10. 2006 Tamil Tiger suicide bombing
- 5) Show photo story of terrorist organizations across the world.

Lesson 3: Arab stereotypes in the Mass Media

Essential Questions: How has mass media shaped our stereotypes? What stereotypes have been crafted for the Arab?

- 1) Ask the class what is a stereotype? Discuss stereotypes in general.
 - a. Positive – Uniforms associated with helpful people (police, fire, etc.), strangers and candy etc.
 - b. Negative – Racial, gender, weight, etc.
- 2) Ask the class how do we form stereotypes? What influences guide us in forming our stereotypes? Guide the class to the discussion of mass media and its role in shaping our opinions.
- 3) Break the class up into 6 groups. Each group will be responsible for detailing one of the following stereotypes. The group should build a list of traits that apply to the particular stereotype. After creating their list have them write them on the board for that class to discuss. Also they should be able to tell the class why they chose the traits they did. In other words what influenced their decisions? The following iconic stereotypes are as follows:
 - a. Hero
 - b. Teacher
 - c. Villain
 - d. Nerd
 - e. Rock star
 - f. Grandmother
- 4) After the class constructs these lists switch the discussion to that of the stereotype of Arabs in the media. Ask the class to describe the how they have seen people of Arab descent portrayed in the media?



- 5) Distribute the political cartoons (found in lesson 3 documents folder) to the groups and ask them to use the NARA cartoon analysis worksheets to analyze the cartoons.
 - a. Begin by showing the *True Lies* film clip found here:
 - i. <http://www.ithaca.edu/looksharp/U4L2video.mov>
 - ii. Discuss the stereotypes present in this clip.
 - b. Once the groups have finished have each group come to the front of class and describe their cartoon.
 - c. Create a class list of the traits that the political cartoons attribute to the Arab people.
- 6) Begin the Arab stereotype videos.
 - a. First video – A small portion of *Reel Bad Arabs* available here:
 - i. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ko_N4BcaIPY
 - b. Second Video – Two short videos from an Al Jazeera short video entitled Hollywood: Casting the Enemy
 - i. Part One - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4TICD0npUU>
 - ii. Part Two - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2LvKjsCkp0o>
- 7) Homework: Have the class answer the following question in an essay.
 - a. Explain stereotypes. How have they been used to portray a certain image of a group of people? Be sure to provide specific details and mention specific images or portrayals in the media. You should include Arabs and one other group of your choosing.



What Questions will you ask to help students think critically and reflect on their own learning?

- ❖ How has the mass media and myth altered our perception of the cultural phenomenon of terrorism?
- ❖ How can the mass media change our understanding of the world in which we live?

How will you Assess your students' learning with an activity that furthers their learning and reflects both their grasp of historical thinking skills and content goals?
