

Reading Persepolis: Defining and Redefining Culture, Gender and Genre

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Overview

The cultures of the Middle East are some of the most notoriously misunderstood in America; my students are living proof of this when they make comments such as, “He was wearing a turban so he clearly is a terrorist.” It is my goal to create a unit in which students will not only understand the history and culture of a far-away land but also that they will be able to internalize and apply these concepts to their own lives, by expanding understanding of their own identities. Embedded within this unit, students will find access to the discussions about what generically constitutes literature as well as how gender, narrative and culture are constructed.

As literature remains in the throes of post-modernity it is clear that form is of little matter and content now reins king. Instead of turning a blind eye to any text not presented in the standard chapter book form, the proliferation of alternative mediums provides a fresh and accessible outlet to a variety of topics. What was considered suitable only for children can provide as much breadth as the densest of tomes. What is considered didactic is more open for interpretation as more textual forms become available. Enter Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis*; a graphic novel bildungsroman set during the years prior to and following the 1979 Iranian Revolution.

The use of Satrapi’s graphic novel enables students to look at the culture and history of Iran, the culture of women and Islam in the Middle East and the generic form of the graphic novel simultaneously.

Rationale

The graphic novel *Persepolis* is an exemplary tool for teaching history and literature. This unit is designed for a 9th grade Honors Literature elective course, but is adaptable for all high school grades. *Persepolis* is simply a bildungsroman put into pictures at first glance; however, the nuances and lengths this novel takes to provide specific commentary on history, gender, religion and war lend to an exploration loaded with potential on many levels.

The focus of this unit is three-fold. First, there is the necessity for historical background knowledge building as well as defining of key concepts and terms. There is vocabulary and terminology that must be learned in order to produce a full reading of the text. This includes not only vocabulary words from the story, but also graphic novel terminology and key conceptual ideas such as Revolution, Marxism and Anarchy. This will allow the students a solid background on which to build the foundation of the understanding of the essential themes of the novel. Second, there is the necessity for clear comprehension of the events in the novel, specifically in relation to analysis of plot and characterization. Third, after these foundations and analyses have been created, students will endeavor to question their own identities and notions of culture, gender and genre. This creates a connection between their lives in Philadelphia and the lives of others in Iran.

These three facets create an informed and nuanced understanding of the multitude of disciplines in which *Persepolis* offers insight. The activities and assignments in this unit are designed to extend the ideas from the book to the students personally, by encouraging text to self connections.

Objectives

By the end of the unit, students will be able to:

- Explain and understand basic facts about the history of Iran and the Middle East
- Relate ideas of Identity and Gender from text to their own lives
- Comprehend and analyze the text of *Persepolis*
- Understand the concepts of gender and cultural narratives
- Define and effectively apply vocabulary and conceptual terms
- Create an understanding of Islam and the history/use of the Veil
- Compare and contrast life in Tehran with life in Philadelphia
- Demonstrate understand of the concept and history of Revolution
- Recognize the abnormality of a feminine account of life in Iran through comparative readings
- Identify hallmarks of the graphic novel genre

Historical Background

Upon the decision to use *Persepolis* as an educational tool, one must pose the following question for themselves as educator: What does it mean to teach *Persepolis* well?

In terms of historical background knowledge and understanding, there are two distinct avenues that diverge in answering this initial question. One area of inquiry is concerned with content, specifically the political history and culture of Iran; the second area of inquiry is one of form and genre. It is in this second area of inquiry that comic theory and the literary value of graphic novels are explored and rationalized.

Additionally, within the discussion of the history of Iran, it is necessary to understand not only the history of Islam and the Middle East but also the history of perceptions and Western imperialism that shapes any related topic. In other words, before one begins any intellectual endeavor, best practices require one to first examine their own predispositions and assumptions. The in-depth study and comprehension of these topics in combination provide a practical breadth of knowledge for the prepared educator to anticipate inquires and extensions required by the students and the text. It is imperative that the teacher know the full history of Iran, as well as the full history of the book and genre, in order to guide students toward the best and most comprehensive understanding of the text.

An Abbreviated History of Modern Iran

In the 1920s, Iran had become dependent on economic support from Britain and other countries, which angered many of the citizens. The loans from Britain were not of disinterested generosity, but rather calculated to produce a profit from oil ventures. On February 21, 1921, Reza Khan and 3,000 men marched into Tehran and “requested the shah appoint a young civilian reformer, Sayyid Zia Tabataba, as prime minister” (Cleveland 185). Tabataba was merely a figurehead; Reza Khan eventually strong-armed out of his position and took over himself.

The public that was angered and active before the reign of Reza Shah, though hesitant at first, came to respect and revere Reza Shah as a national icon (Cleveland 186). The conception of the Pahlavi dynasty is said to be signaled when “Reza Shah, a former officer in the Cossack Brigade, seized the royal crown and placed it on his own head” (Cleveland 175). The former Qajar dynasty was dissolved in all aspects by 1925.

Reza Khan was a reformer who concerned himself with bringing Iran into the modern industrialized marketplace. In 1935, the name of the country was officially changed from “Persia” to the modern-day “Iran.” Reza Shah focused on revitalizing the army, drawing on the masses of peasants for use as moldable bodies and minds. The need to educate the soldiers in order for them to perform their duties increased literacy and led

to a focus on education within Iran as a whole (Axworthy). For a time, it appeared that Iran was flourishing.

Then, amongst the turmoil of World War II, Reza Shah made the fateful decision not to deport German nationals. This led to the Allied occupation of Tehran and the abdication of the Shah; he was exiled to South Africa and remained there until he died in July 1944 (Axworthy 230). Reza Shah's son, Mohammed Reza came into power proving him to be more connected to books and theories than the needs and pulse of the Iranian people.

After a power struggle between other political factions, the shah eventually regained power and in a measure to further modernize Iran enacted what has become known as "The White Revolution." The Revolution is called white because there was no bloodshed during this transition (Cleveland 295). Agriculture, railways and ports, literacy, education and labor organizations became the focus of the government. The shah granted women increased rights and sought to Westernize Iran as much as possible. SAVAK, the shah's security service, became increasingly cunning and brutal, peaking after the White Revolution with the Shah relying on their services to make problems "disappear" quickly and quietly. All of these elements combined to lead to the eventual conservative backlash in which the Revolution of 1979 was rooted. The Revolution brought back Islamic ideals and mores, which were welcomed at first before becoming constricting and overbearing. Iran has always been an Islamic theocracy in some fashion; the time period after the Revolution of 1979, during which *Persepolis* is set, is demonstratively one of the more severe upswings in the enforcement of fundamentalist Islam.

It is here that Satrapi's book begins. Knowing the topography of the political landscape in Iran is crucial to not only understanding what *Persepolis* is all about but also crucial to effectively and comprehensively educating students about it as well. Intertwined with the history of Iran is the history of Islam. It is imperative that one is informed on the myths and realities of Islam in order to express only truthful assertions to students as well.

An Abbreviated History and Defense of the Graphic Novel Genre

It is a well-known fact that Art Spiegelman's *Maus* changed what comics were. The publication of *Maus* in 1987 signaled the public recognition of a genre that was alive, though underground for decades prior. *Maus* was special because it took an issue that was truly heart wrenching and made it (arguably) more digestible by placing it in a metaphorical and visual context. Spiegelman's graphic novels paved the way for Marjane Satrapi and her decision to relay her story in the form of a graphic novel.

Since their introduction into society, comics have been considered children's reading material. However, in the increasingly multi-sensory world we live in, standard black-and-white typewritten text is not necessarily the best available way to express a concept or narrative. Since 1987, graphic novels have slowly crept into the realm of possibility within mainstream education curriculum. Literary devices, theme, plot and other hallmarks of "English Class" are present in the same capacity as a standard novel and often the pictures lend to an additional level of complexity that must be deciphered.

Persepolis revisits and retells the complicated history and politics of a country in a way that is understandable to middle-school students and above. Because the content is accessible to children means only that it is written in such a manner that it is universally understandable, not that the text is not appropriate for adult or college readers. Instead the appeal of the graphic novel form is that the content counterbalances the simplicity of the language and "help" the reader receives from the pictures. The politics and history of the Middle East is a topic that a small minority of educated adults can intelligently relate; therefore, if Satrapi's book educates even one person, aged 15 or 55, then the form has proven to be worthwhile.

Teaching graphic novels in conjunction with other various texts provides students with the best possible type of ELA education: Multiple Literacies (Monin). The more students are prepared to decode and figure out in different shapes and sizes, the more successful students will be at problem-solving in future classes as well as in life. The use of graphic novels in classroom supports this non-traditional approach to literature.

Strategies

Establishing Historical and Cultural Contexts

This unit is very deliberately designed in terms ordering the presentation of information in such a manner that students have a firm grasp on topics such as Orientalism, Ancient and Modern Middle Eastern History, Gender and National Identity, and Islam, before ever embarking upon the reading of any text. Not only are students provided with the proper vantage point for understanding the graphic novel *Persepolis*, but this approach to research is an excellent model for Honors students presumed to be college-bound. This unit seeks to provide a model for students on how one investigates and begins learning about any given topic. It is important to stress that context is crucial for the reading of any text, not only as a basic tenant of literary theory, but as a useful general rule in life as well. The span of this unit is 90 days or two marking periods. The implementation of the strategies as well as the roll-out of topics can be found in the Classroom Activities section of this unit.

Orientalism and Media Bias Extensions

I have begun with the assumption that the Orient is not an inert fact of nature. It is not merely *there*, just as the Occident itself is not just *there* either. We must take seriously Vico's great observation that men make their own history...Therefore as much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West (Said 4-5)

Oftentimes students have been so engrained with misconceptions by the time they reach high school that it is nearly impossible to completely erase the impressions they maintain. However, it is imperative that, as educators, every effort is made to attempt a paradigm shift of students' beliefs about other cultures. Teaching *Persepolis* works toward this goal in a seamless and easy fashion. Students find themselves relating to a young teenage girl thousands of miles away. Yet they still make comments about suicide bombers and turbans.

Students need to not only understand what their prejudices and predispositions are, but also from where these sentiments first developed. It is not until students are educated about the core philosophical constructs of the West and the East that they can truly begin to comprehend and evaluate themselves and the texts they are reading. To call to attention the idea that what we think about a different culture is based on a set of stereotypes and assumptions, often meant to undermine, is the first step in changing the attitudes of students. In addition to challenging students' perceptions of themselves, it is also necessary to educate students on the reality of the representations and bias of media outlets. Students who are educated on what a reliable news source is can better educate themselves.

These two elements are crucial to the content taught in this unit, as they are the foundational blocks upon which our current understanding of events in other parts of the world rest. Understanding and educating about race relations in other parts of the world opens up the door to the realization and understanding of race relations in the United States. By extension, the discussion and work with ideas about race relations can also encompass ideas about gender relations as well.

Lesson Plan Format

The lessons provided in this curriculum unit follow the seven-step lesson plan mandated by the agreement between the School District of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers. The seven steps are: Do Now (Warm-up or Anticipation Set); Direction Instruction; Guided Practice; Independent Practice; Closing (including Exit Ticket); Homework and Assessment. This format provides a cyclical feedback between student and teacher that ensures understanding and proper comprehension of given

material. Lessons can build on one another using the Do Now as a recall of the previous lesson or Independent Practice as a synthesis activity, combining concepts from a previous lesson with the current day's topic.

Before, During and After Reading Strategies

Before, During and After Reading Strategies (BDA) are extremely useful for constant feedback while students are studying *Persepolis*. "Before" strategies include KWL (know/wonder/learned) charts, historical context introductory lessons, identifying and defining terms and vocabulary, and anticipation guides; "During" strategies include comprehension questions, double-column journals, making predictions while reading and character trait/action tracking. "After" strategies range from a simple multiple-choice post-reading assessments to a research paper or debate speech. It is important to note through each of these stages of the reading process students are constantly reading, writing and thinking about reading and writing. BDA strategies check-in and monitor students' progress throughout the entirety of the text and provide pause in order for the teacher to interject, suggest and discuss elements of previously introduced historical and cultural contexts.

Notes and Information Organization

The nature of this topic lends to a rather lengthy accumulation of information. In order to prevent classroom fatigue, students will record, connect and organize what they have learned in a variety of ways. Graphic organizers are an exceedingly popular method for students to visually layout and align what they learn. These organizers can be provided by the teacher as a photocopy, drawn on a board for a class creation or students can copy a template into their notebooks. Additionally, the two-column note format, sometimes called Cornell Notes, is an easy way for the teacher to lecture while students take notes in a guided and systematic manner. Throughout the course of this unit students will take this style of notes on specific topics as an initial introduction to a subject. Then students will use the notes to assist their learning and reactivate their knowledge as they explore each topic more in depth through participation in the extension activities. All sets of Cornell Notes will be kept in their notebooks creating a reference library for their personal perusal.

Collaborative Student Learning

At several points throughout the unit, students will be invited to work with one another during classroom activities. A prominent idea behind collaborative student learning allows for students to interact on a peer to peer level and potentially communicate ideas about the subject of study in a manner different from that of the teacher. For low-level learner the benefit lies in direct and specific feedback that is sustainably longer and more intense than a teacher could give any single student in a normal period. For higher-level

learners, understanding and synthesis is encouraged when they are “teaching” another student information that they have comprehended. Teaching someone else is the number one activity that encourages thought synthesis and idea analysis.

Jigsaws take information, spilt it up in three to ten groups and require the students in each group to become experts on their bit of knowledge and teach it back to the class. Students who are watching each presentation take notes or fill out a worksheet to retain and record all of the “pieces” with the idea that when students have all information the puzzle will become clear. Jigsaws are useful in a variety of settings.

Another variation of a grouping or “information chunking” activity that require collaboration amongst students is the more traditional station rotation. In this exercise, student groups travel between multiple stations, each with a piece or specific topic of information related to the whole. The exercise is summarized by individually answering a writing prompt which ties together the elements of the different stations to gauge student understanding and mastery of the material.

Classroom Activities/Lesson Plans

Lesson Plan 1: Orientalism Kloze Notes and East/West iconography

Objectives (SWBAT):

- Explore and examine their conceptions of life in other countries through completion of Kloze notes and analysis questions
- Evaluate their own prejudices and predispositions during self-application
- Identify symbols of the East/West and speculate meaning and purpose

Do Now:

1. What prejudices do you hold? Think hard. Why do you feel that way? Where does your negative impression come from?
2. What does it mean to be “American”? Explain in a short paragraph

Direct Instruction:

Instructor asks class: “What is prejudice?” Student voice share-out, link-in Do Now Questions. Then, Instructor lectures as students fill in Kloze notes (See Appendix Figure 1).

Guided Practice:

What is Orientalism? Identifying symbols from the East/West (teacher prints out various images from Google); complete first two as a class, then students complete remaining.

Independent Practice:

Students answer questions on worksheet about cultural perceptions, analysis questions on Middle East, complete East/West Iconography and two short answer synthesis questions

Closing:

What is Orientalism? What is prejudice? Where do what we think about other countries come from? What is the East? The West?

Exit Ticket:

3 ways in which the East is depicted as subordinate to the West
2 reasons why making a group seem inferior would be useful
1 opinion of this lesson

Assessment

Student in-class questions and responses; collected worksheet; exit ticket

Lesson Plan 2: Square Peg, Round Hole Activity

Objectives (SWBAT):

Find evidence of the theme of “being an outsider” in *Persepolis* by completing the Square Peg/Round Hole Activity

Do Now:

1. How is Marjane different from people around her? Explain in a few sentences.
2. Have you ever felt like no one understood you or that you didn't fit in? Explain.

Direct Instruction:

Review Do Now. Instructor explains idea of what it means to be a square peg in a round hole with class. Distributes worksheet (See Appendix Figure 2)

Guided Practice:

As a class, the first chapter (12) is complete with examples from the text.

Independent Practice:

Students complete remainder of worksheet individually or with a partner. Find specific examples from each chapter.

Closing:

Why is Marjane always an outsider? Why is this an important theme in the book?
Brief class discussion follows.

Exit Ticket:

1. How is Marjane an outsider even in her own country? Explain.
2. What does it mean to be a square peg in a round hole?
3. Why do you think being an outsider is a theme in *Persepolis*?

Assessment

Student in-class questions and responses; collected worksheet; exit ticket

Lesson Plan 3: Revolutionaries Station Activity

Objectives (SWBAT):

Connect the idea of revolution in other countries to the 1979 revolution in Iran through participation in Revolutionaries Station Activity

Do Now:

1. How is Marjane different from people around her? Explain in a few sentences.
2. Have you ever felt like no one understood you or that you didn't fit in? Explain.

Direct Instruction:

Review expectations and procedures for Station activity. Explain rotation and activity at each stop. Students will split up, go to station, review slide, fill out graphic organizer and rotate

Guided Practice:

Students create Who/What/Where/When/Why/How Charts for each of the five stations on notebook paper (3 sheets total needs for entire activity).

Who	
What	
Where	
When	
Why	
How	

Independent Practice:

Students visit each of the Revolutionary Stations for 5 minutes. In that time, each pupil reads the slides (see Appendix Figure 3) provided and fills out their graphic organizer. The revolutionaries covered are Trotsky, Castro, L'Ouverture, Guevara and the Zapatistas. At the end of the station rotations, students complete thought questions (posted on whiteboard) on their notebook paper.

Thought Questions

1. What do each of the revolutions described have in common?
2. Which revolution, including the 1979 Iranian Revolution, do you think was the most justified? Why?
3. Is violent overthrow of the government ever acceptable? Why or why not?
4. In your opinion, what is the best way for citizens to make a change?
5. Which revolutionary do you find the most interesting? Explain.

Closing:

What is a revolution? Are revolutions good or bad? Class discussion.

Exit Ticket:

- 3 new things you learned today
- 2 reasons that revolutions can occur
- 1 reaction to the idea of government overthrow

Assessment

Student in-class questions and responses; collected graphic organizers and thought questions; exit ticket

Resources

Annotated Bibliography for Teachers

Abu-Lughod, Lila. "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others." *American Anthropologist* 104.3 (2002): 783-90. Print.

A must reader for any person embarking upon a study of the Middle East. Abu-Lughod lends legitimacy to the Muslim woman's voice by questioning the enforcement of Western/Christian norms upon other cultures.

Axworthy, Michael. Empire of the Mind: A History of Iran. New York: Basic Books, 2010. Print.

The history of Iran in a short (less than 300 pages) narrative form. Axworthy explains in detail events over the course of the last three millennia that have contributed and helped shape the culture and current status of Iran. Axworthy positions the Iranian national character as one of intellectual sophistication and true desire for knowledge, which he traces throughout the centuries.

Chute, Hillary L. Graphic Women. New York: Columbia UP, 2010. Print.

Chute explores how women are shown and heard in various graphic novels including *Persepolis*. While this text is rather dense and geared more toward the scholarly reader, one could still find some benefit from the perusal of the chapter on Satrapi.

Cleveland, William L. A History of the Modern Middle East. 3rd ed. Boulder: Westview, 2004. Print.

A comprehensive history of the entire Middle Eastern region. Cleveland proceeds from the foundation of Islam as the primary evolutionary factor in the creation of the societies and cultures now termed the "Middle East". At times, reads like a fiction novel; you'll be surprised when you can't stop reading.

Little, Douglas. American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945. University of North Carolina Press, 2004. Print.

Little creates a landscape portrait of American foreign policy over the last 50+ years. Each chapter can be read independently as a mini-essay on topics related to the United States involvement in Middle Eastern political affairs. Little does an excellent job of extending Said's *Orientalism* to specific and concrete examples that occur within the United States to this day, including but not limited to the deconstruction of films such as *Aladdin*.

McCloud, Scott. Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art. Harper Paperbacks, 1994. Print.

The seminal discussion of "comics" in a scholarly manner. Written as a comic, McCloud uses direct example and visualization to identify and define a common set of terms from which most informed discussion of the particulars of comic storytelling. Excellent for foundational research and understanding concepts critical to teaching the medium.

Monnin, Katie. Teaching Graphic Novels: Practical Strategies for the Secondary ELA Classroom. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House Pub., 2010. Print.

Invaluable as a teacher's resource. This book provides both strategies for teaching any graphic novel as well as specific activities that can be used to enrich and complement any educator's toolbox. Monnin focuses on laying down the foundational aspects of graphic novels as a genre (vocabulary, design, etc.), then

provides suggestions (and reproducible graphic organizers!) for teaching the narrative, themes and other literary elements found within any given text.

Napoli, Lisa, ed. My Sister, Guard Your Veil; My Brother, Guard Your Eyes. Boston: Beacon, 2006. Print.

A vibrant and fresh compilation of contemporary creative voices from Iran. Marjane Satrapi weighs in with a short discussion on the Persian Identity, which is written in a manner that students can read and understand in order to find perspective on what people from Iran think about Iran. Other essays expose the daring, vice-filled underground of modern Tehran as well as markedly Western influences proliferating in a government openly hostile to European and American cultures. Overall, this collection is a great resource of voices and opinions about the reality of modern Iran.

Rachlin, Nahid. Veils: Short Stories. San Francisco: City Lights, 1992. Print.

A collection of 11 short stories by Iranian-born New Yorker, Nahid Rachlin. The stories express the inner-life of females in Iran or reflecting upon when they lived in Iran previously. In particular “Fanatics” presents the juxtaposition of nostalgic recollection with the violent reality of present-day Iran. There is no title-story, which seems to suggest that the stories contained within are instead, individually, the varied and different “veils” of the Iranian female persona.

Sacco, Joe. Palestine. Seattle: Fantagraphics, 2002. Print.

Self-described “comic journalist”, Sacco seeks to tell the multi-layer, multi-interpreted history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the eyes of the displaced Palestinians. Relying primarily of first-hand accounts, Sacco interviews and presents with laborious detail the story and character of the people of Palestine. In particular two chapters entitled “Women” and “Hijab” provide excellent insight into the feminine sentiment of a particular sect of Middle Eastern women. The novel in its entirety is probably requires a much more involved foundational understanding of the Israeli conflict than the average student might hold, however, through carefully tempered selections, Sacco’s work is a great augmentation to the very different style in which Satrapi draws and writes.

Said, Edward W. Orientalism. New York: Vintage, 2003. Print.

In this seminal study on imperialism and the Anglo desire to dominate and systematically disenfranchise the Eastern Other, Said provides concrete evidence as what he sees as the internalize desire to see the people and culture of the East as barbaric, less modern, in need of White guidance/support and often times weak

or effeminate. This text is a must-read for any first time scholar of the East as well as any person wishing to explore the underlying, and arguably unconscious, motivations and perceptions of the modern Western peoples.

Satrapı, Marjane. The Complete Persepolis. New York: Pantheon, 2004. Print.

A graphic novel about a young girl growing up in Iran during the 1979 Revolution. The novel seeks to provide insight into what it means to be Iranian, what it means to be a woman, what it means to be a woman in Iran and what it means to be Iranian in the world.

Satrapı, Marjane. Embroideries. New York: Pantheon, 2005. Print.

This short graphic novel works to explore the feminine voice in Satrapı's life through the gossip sessions of her grandmother, friends and relatives. Discussing taboo and vulgar issues openly exposes the reader to the inner-life of Iranian females. Selections from this book could be used in the classroom; however, there is discussion of adult topics not suitable for minors making use of the book in its entirety not advisable.

Web Resources for Teachers

National Association of Comics Art Educators (NACE). Web. 30 May 2011.

<<http://www.teachingcomics.org/>>.

Lesson plans, conceptual and academic articles and a large variety of other resources for bring rigor to instruction infused with graphic novels, comics, etc.

"One Book, One Philadelphia: The Complete Persepolis Teaching Curriculum."

http://libwww.freelibrary.org/onebook/obop10/teacher_resources.cfm. Web. 2/01/2011

Short and succinct curriculum with reading comprehension questions, vocabulary and a few enrichment articles. A great base from which to begin designing one's own lessons.

"Picture This! Building Picture Based Writing Skills"

<http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/01/11/picture-this-building-photo-based-writing-skills>. Web. 2/01/2011

Useful lesson idea for students to analyze particularly striking or powerful panels within *Persepolis*

"Persepolis: The Story of Childhood" http://www-av.pps.k12.or.us/doc/n00023_ad.pdf.

Web. 2/01/2011

Designed to complement the One Book, One Philadelphia Curriculum, this writing unit provides ideas for a narrative and a research paper based on *Persepolis*

“Persepolis Lesson Plans”

http://www.getgraphic.org/GG_Kits/Persepolis/Persepolis%20Lesson%20Plans.pdf. Web. 2/01/2011

General lesson plans on a brief intro to the book. Not nearly comprehensive enough to illicit mastered understanding, but a good point from which to jump off. Also contains links to other resources on Iranian culture.

"Zahra's Paradise." <http://www.zahrasparadise.com>. Web. 30 May 2011.

“Zahara’s Paradise” is a serial webcomic written in multiple languages. For political reasons, the authors choose to remain anonymous, but do humorously identify themselves as “as Arab artist and a Jewish editor”. Their comic, which is currently released in semi-regular installments, explores issues related to current Middle Eastern events as well as providing commentary on Iranian culture during the aftermath of the 2009 elections.

Suggested Reading for Students

Moaveni, Azadeh. "Sex in the Time of Mullahs." *My Sister, Guard Your Veil; My Brother, Guard Your Eyes: Uncensored Iranian Voices*. Ed. Zanganeh Lila. Azam. Boston, MA: Beacon, 2006. 55-61. Print.

Rachlin, Nahid. "Fanatics." *Veils: Short Stories*. San Francisco: City Lights, 1992. 1-20. Print.

Satrapi, Marjane. *The Complete Persepolis*. New York: Pathenon, 2004. Print.

Satrapi, Marjane. "How Can One Be Persian?" *My Sister, Guard Your Veil; My Brother, Guard Your Eyes: Uncensored Iranian Voices*. Ed. Zanganeh Lila. Azam. Boston, MA: Beacon, 2006. 20-23. Print.

Appendix

Figure 1 - Orientalism Kloze Note Activity and Key

Orientalism Kloze Notes

Orientalism is a (1)_____ in which the (2)_____ is made to seem (3)_____ and in need of help. Men in the East are portrayed as (4)_____, (5)_____, (6)_____ and (7)_____. Women are viewed as (8)_____ with (9)_____ or education. These portrayals of people in other parts of the world are a result in a (10)_____. These views are spread and compounded by Literature, art, history books, magazines and news. Over many years, these skewed views then become accepted as (11)_____ and engrained into society. It is then that the people buy into (12)_____ and taking over another group of people because it feels as if they need help because of the misrepresentations. This is what Orientalism is all about. It is the thinking that (13)_____ and the West are better than other countries, mostly because the culture and way of life in those countries are different. It is (14)_____ and (15)_____ to assume that one way of life is better than another. Instead of believing what you have been told to be “generally” how a group of people are you must seek to find the (16)_____ and (17)_____ in each person regardless of where they are from. It is only then that (18)_____ and (19)_____ of any time can be (20)_____.

Kloze Notes Key

Orientalism is a system of thought in which the “East” is made to seem inferior and in need of help to be saved. Men in the East are portrayed as weak, lazy, stupid and girly. Women are viewed as slaves with no rights or education. These portrayals of people in other parts of the world are a result in a skewed view. These views are spread and compounded by Literature, art, history books, magazines and news. Over many years, these skewed views then become accepted as fact and engrained into society. It is then that the people buy into dominating and taking over another group of people because it feels as if they need help because of the misrepresentations. This Orientalism is all about. It is the thinking that America and the West are better than other countries, mostly because the culture and way of life in those countries are different. It is arrogant and rude to assume that one way of life is better than another. Instead of believing what you have been told to be “generally” how a group of people are you must seek to find the individuality and humanity in each person regardless of where they are from. It is only then that stereotypes and prejudices of any time can be stopped.

Figure 2 - Square Peg/Round Hole Theme Lesson Worksheet

Name: _____

(____ / 300)

"You Can't Fit a Square Peg Into a Round Hole"

A Square Peg does not fit in a round hole. Sometimes, when a character does not "fit in", he or she feels like a square peg in a round hole. In this graphic organizer, you will need to think find examples Marjane feeling this in way Chapters 12 to 15 of Persepolis. Consider views, values and beliefs of Iranian society (THE ROUND HOLE) and what Marjane's beliefs/actions/trials (THE SQUARE PEG) are in relation. List at least 2 examples per chapter. (25 points per example)

**Class Example:
Chapter 12 "Skiing"**

Square Peg

1. Marjane has experimented with sex and her friends call her a "whore"
2. Marjane is depressed because she feels alienated from her country/family/friends, who think she is so "Western" and cultured, when she really just wants to feel a part of her home culture.

Round Hole

1. Women are not to have any contact with men before marriage
2. Marjane is viewed as a "decadent Westerner" after her time in Austria.

Chapter 13: "The Exam"

Square Peg

1.

2.

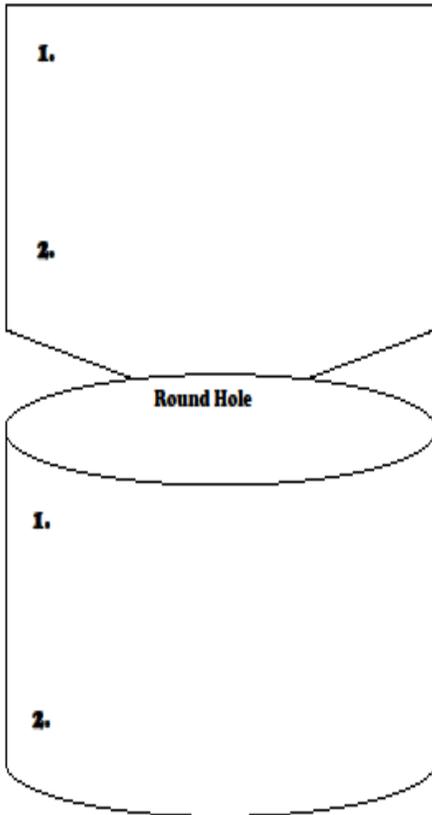
Round Hole

1.

2.

Chapter 14: "The Makeup"

Square Peg



Chapter 15: "The Convocation"

Square Peg

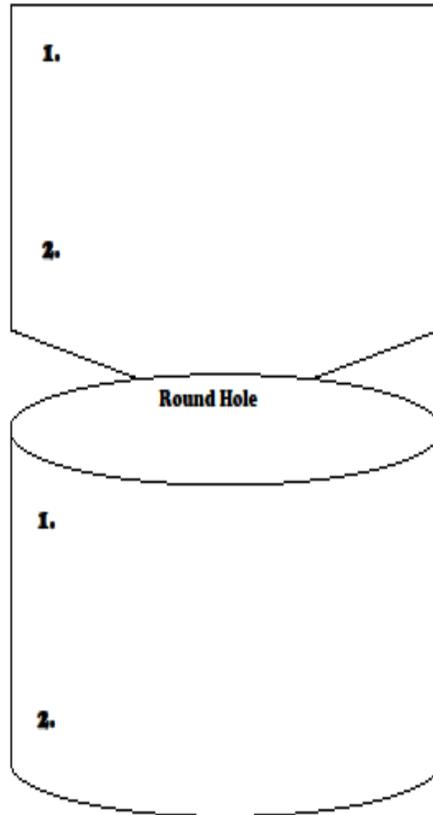


Figure 3 - Revolutionary Station Slide Samples

Che Guevara



- **Born June 14, 1928**
- **Died October 9, 1967**
- **From Argentina**
- **While studying to be a doctor, Che traveled around South America and was shocked by the poverty he found throughout the region**
- **This led him to become politically active and seek reform through Socialism (the father of Communism)**
- **He was captured with help of the US and executed for being a revolutionary**

Fidel Castro's Helper



- **Helped Fidel Castro in his coup of Havana**
- **Guevara helped Cuba get nuclear missiles and trained their army**
- **He is also a well-known rider, known specifically for his "Motor cycle Diaries", the story of his cycling tour through South America**

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'Che'.

Francois-Dominique Toussaint

L'Ouverture



- (pronounced Fran-swah Dominique To-saunt Lo-ver-tur)
- (May 20, 1743 – April 6, 1804)
- was the leader of the Haitian Revolution. Born in Saint-Domingue, Haiti, Toussaint led enslaved blacks in a long struggle for independence over French colonizers, abolished slavery, and secured "native" control over the colony, Haiti.



The Haitian Slave Rebellion



At the time Haiti was owned by the British government and the original inhabitants of the island were forced into slavery. Toussaint kicked out the commissioner as well as the army, then, invaded Santo Domingo (the capital city) to free the slaves there, and wrote a Constitution naming himself governor-for-life that established a new regime for the colony.