

Southwest Asia: Causes of Terrorism

Introduction

The media frequently connects Islam and terrorism, usually without informing the audience about the religion and its central beliefs. Through inquiry learning, students will identify causes of terrorism, especially in Southwest Asia.

This lesson may act as an affective hook at the beginning of a unit about the Middle East or religion by taking advantage of the cultural misconceptions that pervade current media. The lesson is a natural segue in promoting recognition of the interconnection of religions that exist in Southwest Asian and European cultures.

Standard Indicators

- 7.1.4 Describe the historical origins, central beliefs, and spread of major religions, including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism.
- 7.1.20 Form and respond to historical questions, and use a variety of information resources to find and evaluate historical data on the people, places, events, and developments that have played a part in the history of Africa, Asia, and the Southwest Pacific.
- 7.5.3 Give examples of specific changes in societies in Africa, Asia, and the Southwest Pacific as a result of cultural diffusion in the past and present.
- 7.5.7 Define the term ethnocentrism, and give examples of how this attitude can lead to cultural misunderstandings.
- 7.5.8 Use a variety of information resources to identify examples of present conflicts between cultural groups or nations, and analyze the historical and geographical background of such conflicts.

Materials

For the teacher:

- Further information about “chalk talk”: <http://www.fi.edu/htlc/teachers/adeshigbin/chalk.htm>
- Further information about Socratic seminar: http://www.studyguide.org/socratic_seminar.htm
- Butcher paper

For the students:

- Chalk or Dry-erase markers (whatever is the norm in the classroom)
- BLM 1 Inquiry Data Table
- BLM 2 Guidelines for Socratic Seminar Participants
- Access to the Internet and other sources

Activity

A. Activation of Prior Knowledge

1. In the center of the board, write the question “what causes terrorism?” in large letters.
2. Inform the students that they are going to participate in an activity called “Chalk Talk”. Explain that this discussion will not have any talking, in fact, that talking is not allowed. Rather, they will use a piece of chalk to have a conversation. Any student that is given a piece of chalk can come up to the board and record what they think about the topic, or what they think about what other students record. This conversation should take the form of a web. Tell the students that they need to raise their hand to indicate to their peers that they want a turn.

3. When everyone has had the opportunity to respond, review the discussion with the class. Predictably, religion will be listed as a cause. Emphasize what they students have recorded, asking questions about responses, but not directing these questions to any student. The purpose of questioning is to model inquiry thinking.

B. Question Generation and Inquiry

1. Turn to the class and ask a student to determine what they think is most important cause out of those listed on the board. Allow for other students to engage in this discussion. Follow with the question: what do we need to know to understand what causes terrorism? Inform the students that this is an issue that affects our government now, in the choices it makes when dealing with other countries, and how we, as American citizens, may perceive other countries. It is important then to inquire into what causes terrorism to better understand what our government is doing to stop it and to better understand the people that live in parts of the world where terrorism seems to flourish.
2. Begin by asking students what they need to know to be able to make an informed judgment. Tell them that they need to word this in the form of a question. Ask for volunteers, and record their questions on a clear area of the board or on a large piece of butcher paper. Try to avoid altering a question, instead prompting the student to paraphrase or summarize particularly long, verbose questions.
3. Distribute BLM 1 *Inquiry Data Table* to the students. Have the students record what they think are the most important questions in the appropriate row of the data table. If the students are unfamiliar with using a data table to process information, it may be necessary to model use before students use it.
4. Instruct students to research their questions. This may be done via the internet or library resources. Use whatever resources are most easily accessed and current.
5. Tell the students to record what information that helps answer questions and where they got the information in the appropriate cell on the data table.
6. After a few days of research, show the students how to summarize using what they have learned in the appropriate row of the data table.

C. Socratic Seminar

1. Following the completion of BLM 1 *Inquiry Data Table* explain to the students that they are now going to participate in a Socratic seminar. For this activity the students need to be able to see each other; sitting on the floor in a circle will do this. If the class has not participated in a seminar before, introduce the guidelines listed in BLM 2 *Guidelines for Socratic Seminar Participants*. Begin with the following prompt:
 - According to what you have learned, what do you think is the most important cause to terrorism?Try to direct the students to converse together, rather than direction their answers, comments, or questions to you. The teacher should turn conversation away from themselves by redirecting it towards other students in the circle. A productive Socratic discussion will be self generating; these prompts may not be necessary if the students are focused on the discussion, and referring to the text to support their thinking. Prompts:
 - Based on what you have learned, what role do you think religion has played in causing terrorism?
 - How have people used religion to justify what they do?
 - How might cultural diffusion be a cause? *Note: students will need to understand what cultural diffusion is before being able to discuss it as a cause.*
 - Why might ethnocentrism be a cause? *Note: students will need to understand what ethnocentrism is before being able to discuss it as a cause.*

Exit Card: Student attendance and participation during the dialogue will be evaluated using an exit card. Students will record their response to the prompt on a ½ sheet of paper, recording their name and class period in the upper corner. Prompt:

 - Explain what you think is the most important cause of terrorism.