Arab Spring Lesson Plan: Writing Exercises
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Introduction
During the winter of 2010 and the spring of 2011, the world watched as pro-democracy protesters across North Africa and the Middle East rose up against the dictatorial regimes that had ruled their home countries for years. The long-term political, social, and economic ramifications of these revolutions remain to be seen, but there is much to study in the factors that led to these large-scale people’s movements, and the intended and unintended consequences as countries across the region seek democratic reforms.

Lesson Plan Description
The resources outlined below can be used to help students complete a comprehensive research paper on the events of the 2011 Middle East uprisings, or “Arab Spring.” The sources may also be grouped to help students focus on specific factors that led to, sustained, and in some respects, expedited the revolutions: the role of Arab youth; the use of social media; the role of the U.S. and other NATO countries; demographic factors such as the “youth bulge;” and economic factors such as the global recession and high unemployment rates.

The lesson also includes videos produced by Al Jazeera English to provide students with background information on the evolution of the revolutions and how protest has (and has not) led to change across the Arab World. [Note: These videos are appropriate for a range of students and should be pre-viewed by the class teacher before use in the classroom.]

Student Instructions/Sample Assignments:

Internet Search Terms for Research
As your students complete this writing assignment they may need to identify additional online and print resources. In addition to “Arab Spring” the following search terms listed may be of assistance: Arab Awakening; Middle East unrest; Middle East uprising; Tunisian revolution; Egyptian revolution; pro-democracy protests.

1. Informative Essay (Grades 6-12)
Have your students select one country involved in the Arab spring movement and write an informative essay about it. The essay should include historical and political background information on the country, the major events of the uprising in that country, and a summary of what changes, if any, have taken place since the uprising. Students should use the timelines for country specific information, Pulitzer Center and other reporting pertaining to their country as resources.

2. Comparative Essay (Grades 8-12)
Have students write an essay comparing how the Arab spring revolution manifested itself in two different countries. Students can compare who participated in protests, nature and number of protests, countries’ government structures, the response by countries’ governments, and the relative success of movement. Students should use the background videos, timelines, Pulitzer and other reporting pertaining to the country as sources.
3. **Argumentative Essay (Grades 8-12)**
Have students write an argumentative essay on which factor was the most influential in causing the movement. Example factors: youth bulge, authoritarian governments, economic conditions, lack of rights. Students should use the background videos, timelines, Pulitzer and other reporting pertaining to the factor as sources.

4. **Research Essay (Grades 8-12)**
Have students identify a theme or topic from the Arab spring that they would like to explore further. Encourage students to choose a theme or topic that is applicable to more than one country. Example themes/topics are: role of women, role of religious groups, role of media, role of youth, challenges for the future, etc. Students should use the background videos, timelines, and country/topic specific Pulitzer reporting as well as additional sources to complete this assignment.

5. **Political Cartoons (Grades 10-12)**
Have students write an essay analyzing the Arab Spring political cartoons included in this lesson. Students can choose to focus on one cartoon, group cartoons by theme and analyze them together, or compare two or more cartoons. Their analysis should go beyond description of the cartoon and talk about the cartoons meaning and/or significance.

6. **Document Based Question (Grades 10-12)**
This essay is similar to the AP test’s document based questions. Students are given a set of documents they must use in their essay. Typically, students only have a fixed amount of time to prepare and write this essay; however, teachers can adjust this prompt to best fit their classroom. For each prompt, provide students with 5-6 documents that are relevant to the question. We recommend including at least one visual (photo, graph, timeline, cartoon).

Students must answer the provided question by using all of the documents to support their thesis. Possible questions are included below:

- Many factors led to the 2010-2011 uprisings in the Arab world. Which factor was the most influential in causing and sustaining the revolutions?
- How successful were the spring 2011 uprisings in Egypt? Analyze the factors that contributed to the level of success achieved. Use the documents provided to support your response.
- Discuss the uncertainty the events of the “Arab Spring” have created both within affected countries and across the world. Explain how nations are responding to this uncertainty.
- Evaluate both the positive and negative effects of the “Arab Spring.”
Background Information Resources:

1. Al Jazeera: “The Evolution of Arab Revolutions” Short video segments documenting the role of youth and the media in the Arab Spring, April 22, 2011 on Al Jazeera English
   - VIDEO:  
   - TRANSCRIPT:  
     - Start of video-2:40, introduction (stats and short background)
     - 3:10-7:55, role of youth in Arab Spring
     - 24:00-28:56, role of the media in Arab Spring

2. “The Arab Awakening” Seven one-hour examinations of the Arab Spring, May 14, 2011 on Al Jazeera English  
   a. The Death of Fear, 49 minutes
      How the death of Mohammad Bouazizi in Tunisia ignited a revolution across the Arab world.  
   b. The Fall of Mubarak, 24 minutes
      An examination of how the people’s revolution in Egypt brought down the Mubarak regime.  
   c. The People Want, 17:30-23:15
      This video examines peoples’ opinions on NATO’s interference in Libya,  
Timelines and General Information Resources

   
   
   This interactive timeline provides information on protests, government responses, international responses, regime changes and more, for 17 different Middle East countries. Bonus: each point on the timeline is linked to a relevant news stories.

   
   
   This interactive map provides a timeline of events for each country involved in the Arab Spring movement.

3. BBC News: Arab Uprising
   
   
   This news page features all of BBC News’ Arab Uprising related reporting, including country background information, leader profiles, and current reporting.

   
   
   This feature provides country specific up-to-date information on the Arab spring movement.

   
   
   This article gives a good account of the origins of the Arab spring in Tunisia and how the movement spread throughout the region.

   
   
   This is an interesting index of unrest based off of the factors present in the initial Arab spring uprisings.
**Political Cartoons:**

1. MSNBC Arab Spring Cartoons (Numbers 3 and 5) By R.J. Matson and Adam Zyglis, 2011
   

2. The Week, “Al-Assad’s Viral Protest” By Steve Breen, 2011
   

3. The Week, “Middle East cleans up” By Osama Hajjaj, 2011
   

   
   Link: [http://theweek.com/section/cartoon/53/215176/middle-east](http://theweek.com/section/cartoon/53/215176/middle-east)

5. Palestinian Pundit, “Arab Spring” By Khalil Bendib, 2011
   

**Pulitzer Center Articles:**

1. “Revolutions End” by Ellen Knickmeyer
   
   
   This article covers protesters in Egypt as they contemplate how to transition from protest to sustainable action.

2. “Wheels of Change” by Ellen Knickmeyer
   
   Link: [http://pulitzercenter.org/articles/saudi-arabia-women-driving-ban-arab-spring](http://pulitzercenter.org/articles/saudi-arabia-women-driving-ban-arab-spring)
   
   This article covers acts of protest by women in Saudi Arabia.

3. “Struggle for Power in Egypt Continues” by Reese Erlich
   
   
   This article covers the ongoing political struggles in Egypt post-revolution.

4. “The Arab World’s Youth Army” by Ellen Knickmeyer
   
   
   This article covers the very early days of the revolution in Tunisia, including the spark that inspired mass youth protests.
Issue and Country-Specific Supplemental Reporting
This reporting, from a variety of other news outlets, should be used to supplement background information and Pulitzer Center reporting. It is subdivided by topic:

Role of Women


2. “Women and the Revolution” By Lauren E. Bohon and Sarah Lynch, Foreign Policy, March 2, 2011
   Link: [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/03/02/women_and_the_revolution](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/03/02/women_and_the_revolution)


Role of Youth

1. “Children of the Revolution” By Suzanne Merkelson and Aylin Zafar, Foreign Policy, March 31, 2011

Role of Media

1. “Read all about it,” The Economist, March 17, 2011
   Link: [http://www.economist.com/node/18399193](http://www.economist.com/node/18399193)

Prospects for the Future

1. “How to keep your crown,” The Economist, June 16, 2011
   Link: [http://www.economist.com/node/18836448](http://www.economist.com/node/18836448)

2. “Clinging to Power,” The Economist online, June 2, 2011

   Link: [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/03/10/what_egyptian_women_and_men_want?page=0,0](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/03/10/what_egyptian_women_and_men_want?page=0,0)


   Link: [http://www.economist.com/node/18442133](http://www.economist.com/node/18442133)
Country-Specific Reporting

**Bahrain**

   Link: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_9499000/9499462.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_9499000/9499462.stm)


**Egypt**


**Jordan**


**Libya**


**Morocco**

**Saudi Arabia**

   Link: [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/03/1/saudi_arabias_musk_revolution](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/03/1/saudi_arabias_musk_revolution)


**Syria**


**Tunisia**


**Yemen**

1. “Cairo It Ain’t” By Haley Sweetland Edwards, *Foreign Policy*, February 24, 2011  
   Link: [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/02/24/cairo_it_aint](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/02/24/cairo_it_aint)

2. “An uncertain future” By The Economist online, April 6, 2011 (radio interview with Ginny Hill)  