

Day 1

Today's Objectives:

Students will explore the definition of “home” and will consider the factors that influence their respective definitions.

Students will interrogate their own stereotypes of Iraq and Muslim-majority countries.

Students will apply this definition of “home” to a video of journalist Zahra Ahmad and will examine how Zahra’s trip to Iraq exposed her own biases and single stories of Iraq.

Students will read and analyze Zahra’s “Journey Home - Welcome Home Committee” and take a formative reflection quiz assessing their understanding of the text. Specifically, they will be asked to examine how Zahra’s trip to Iraq exposed her own biases and single stories of Iraq.

Warm-Up/Do Now

As we begin, answer the following questions below or in the Padlet the teacher has posted:

What words, images or phrases come to mind when you think of “home”?

How might you define “home”?

What factors influence how you define home (e.g., location, people, language, culture, safety, rights, etc.)?

Are there stereotypes or single stories associated with your ‘home’? If so, what are they? How do they make you feel?

-----**STOP!** (Now, let’s share our thinking)-----

As you may already be aware, “single stories” (based on author [Chimamanda Adichie’s TedTalk](#)) refer to narratives, often false perceptions, that we form about individuals, groups and/or countries. Often, these false narratives inform how we judge and/or mistreat others. These stories are often incomplete.

Recall our opening activity. Many of us have, at one point or another, have heard of a stereotype or single story associated with our “home”.

Today, we will take a deeper dive into the danger of single stories and the impact they have on identity. Specifically, we will take a closer look at our own biases’ towards and stereotypes of the Muslim community and the impact they may have. We will also look at the role that migration plays in identity formation and how it may or may not influence how we address these perceived stereotypes.

Activity 1

Let’s take a look at some of the images that appear in a Google Image Search of “Muslim.”

What words come to mind when you see each image?

Image 1



(Source: Vanity Fair)

Image 2



(Source: Open Society Foundation)

Image 1 Words:	Image 2 Words:
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Image 3



(Source: AP News)

Image 4



(Source: BBC News)

Image 3 Words:	Image 4 Words:
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Let's take a moment to interrogate the words we generated.

Are these positive or negative associations?

Why do you think those particular words came to mind? What impact do you think they have on the Muslim community?

What do the images **not** show about Muslim identity?

Activity 2

Now, we will explore the relationship between the media and the portrayal of Muslims.

Clip: [Why Hollywood misrepresents Muslim communities](#)

After we watch the clip, be prepared to discuss the following:

According to the clip, what is the relationship between the U.S. Department of Defense and Hollywood? How might the U.S. Department of Defense influence how Muslims are portrayed in Hollywood?

How might the mainstream and historical portrayal of Muslims in Hollywood impact the stereotypes we have of the Muslim community?

According to the clip, what are advocates like al Hasan calling for?

Activity 3

Now, let's take a look at some of the stereotypes that a group of Muslim women identified during this [ELLE interview](#).

After we watch the clip, be prepared to discuss the following:

What words/stereotypes did the Muslim women identify?

How do those words/stereotypes impact the women in the video?

Activity 4

We will now analyze some of these stereotypes a bit closer in order to dispel some of these misconceptions.

Resource: *Teaching Tolerance:* [Debunking Misconceptions About Muslims and Islam](#)

Based on your reading, what stereotype/misunderstanding from class was addressed/debunked in the article?

Activity 5

To cultivate a more nuanced understanding of the Muslim community, let's take a closer look at some findings from the Pew Research Center, that is posted on the *Teaching Tolerance* website: [“Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream” \(2007\)](#). Answer the questions on the Teaching Tolerance resource and then answer the questions below:

Why do you think there are differences in religious commitment among native born and foreign born U.S. Muslims?

Hypothesize: How might migration impact one's religious/cultural associations?

Activity 6

We will now take a closer look at the experience of journalist Zahra Ahmad.

Resource: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CcZ2XTmJV1Q>

Be prepared to discuss the following questions after the video:

How did 9/11 impact Zahra's experience as a Muslim-American?

How did those images/perceptions impact how Zahra was treated? How did that impact Zahra's sense of "home"?

Why did Zahra visit Iraq in 2019?

What stereotypes/"single stories" does Zahra expose by visiting Iraq? Cite the specific examples she provides that challenge the mainstream paradigm of the "Muslim world" in the United States.

Activity 7

Now, let's learn more about Zahra's trip back to her native Iraq.

Resource: <https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/journey-home-welcome-home-committee>

1. In the opening scene, why is Zahra surprised by what she sees in Iraq?

2. What is the impact of the following sentence on the reader: "Between the restaurants, electronics and clothing stores were rubble where a business may have once stood."

3. What is the purpose of the following passage: "The store in Iraq reminded me of the corner store I'd grown up around in Lansing... Some nights I'd wake up to the sound of a train passing by or a gun being shot off a few blocks away."?

4. According to the author, what was "weighing her down"?

5. According to the author, how are Iraqi women challenging stereotypes placed on them?

6. What challenges do the gender gap pose for Iraqi women?

7. Why does the author wonder if her Baba (father) wanted a boy instead of her?

8. According to the author, what role do Babas (fathers) have in shifting Iraq's narrative around women's rights?

Activity 8**Reflection/Formative:**

Answer the following questions in complete sentences:

In the video we watched journalist Zahra Ahmad suggests that immigrants and/or children of immigrants should visit their country of origin, in part, because it will inform their understanding of “home”. Do you agree or disagree? Why? In your reflection, cite at least one piece of evidence from the video and/or article about Zahra’s experience.

Day 2

Today's Objectives:

Students will revisit their definition of “home” and explore the impact that migration can have on identity formation.

Students will revisit their own stereotypes of the Muslim community. Have their perceptions shifted based on their reading of Zahra Ahmad’s “Journey Home - Welcome Home Committee”?

Students will engage in a close reading of Zahra Ahmad’s “Journey Home - Your Blood Runs Through Me”. Students will annotate for how Zahra’s trip to Iraq exposed her own biases and single stories of Iraq. In addition, they will explore how migration has impacted Zahra’s relationship with her “home”?

Students will be introduced to the concept and components of a personal essay.

Students will explore a personal essay provided by the teacher about their relationship with “home.”

Warm-Up/Do Now

Let’s revisit our definition of “home” based on our learning from class.

How do you define “home”?

How might migration (movement from one place to another) impact one’s sense of identity/understanding of “home”? When answering this question, consider journalist Zahra Ahmad’s experience as a Muslim and Iraqi-American away from Iraq.

How did reconnecting with an aspect of her “home” (Iraq) impact Zahra’s understanding of herself and sense of connection to her family?

Activity 1

Last class, we took a closer look at how migration impacted journalist Zahra Ahmad’s understanding of herself, as well as the “single stories” she came to internalize about her native-Iraq. What were some of the “single stories”/stereotypes of Iraq that she was able to debunk during her 2019 visit to Iraq?

Students break into groups of 4 to revisit the article and identify at least three “single stories” that are “debunked” in the text.

Resource: <https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/journey-home-welcome-home-committee>

Stereotype 1: *Iraq is just a “desert”*

Evidence from text show it was “debunked”:

Stereotype 2: *There are no similarities between Zahra’s “home” of Lansing, Michigan and Iraq.*

Evidence from text show it was “debunked”:

Stereotype 3: *Iraqi women are all oppressed*

Evidence from text show it was “debunked”:

Activity 2

Let’s quickly recap our learning from the article we read last class from journalist Zahra Ahmad.

How did Zahra’s visit to her “home” impact her understanding of Iraq? Of herself?

Activity 3

Now, we will read journalist Zahra Ahmad's [Journey Home - "Your Blood Runs Through Me"](#).

1. How does journalist Zahra Ahmad's perspective of the power of religion differ from the portrayal of the Muslim faith portrayed in the U.S. media, especially after 9/11?

2. In the text Zahra writes:

"Baba (Zahra's father) flew back to Michigan the next day. Baba's lung had been drained and a biopsy showed Baba, too, had stage four mesothelioma. **"I visited Imam Musa," Baba told me as he got ready for bed one night. "I felt so good."**

What is the purpose of the **second sentence** listed above?

3. In the text, the author makes particular note of the strength and resilience of Iraqi's that is often not portrayed in popular media. What examples are provided to support her characterization of Iraqi "strength" and resilience?

4. How did the trip back to Iraq shape Zahra's sense of identity and connection to her home?

Activity 4

Now, we will take a closer look at a “personal essay.”

“A **personal essay** is a piece of writing that serves to describe an important lesson gathered from a writer's life experiences. The **essay** often describes a significant event from a first-person perspective, and can be done in various writing styles, like a formal **essay** or as creative nonfiction.” Source: MasterClass.com

Consider the articles that we read by Zahra Ahmad: [Journey Home - Welcome Home Committee](#) and [Journey Home - Your Blood Runs Through Me](#). Are those examples of personal essays? Why or why not?

Why might the personal essay be an effective format to reflect on identity and/or impactful experiences?

Have you ever written a personal essay before?

What questions or reservations do you have about writing a personal essay?

To better understand the components and impact of a personal essay, we will take a closer look at a sample personal essay written by the teacher: [Example personal essay about “home”](#)

Based on this example, what are the important elements of a personal essay?

When writing a personal essay what should we keep in mind?

What outstanding questions do you have about writing a personal essay?

Activity 5

Reflection/Formative:

Next class, you will write a personal essay about your relationship with “home.”

Based on the previous two classes, how do you define “home?”

What has shaped your definition and relationship to “home?”

Day 3

Today's Objectives:

Students will plan their personal narrative.

Students will conference with the teacher and will receive feedback on their outline.

Students may begin writing their personal narrative.

Warm-Up/Do Now

Read the following prompt and identify any questions you have about the task:

In her piece *The Journey Home: The Welcome Home Committee*, journalist Zahra Ahmad's aunt observes:

"There's something deep inside your [Zahra's] eyes. You seem lost, like you're not fulfilled. That something is missing, like you're caging yourself in. It shows that you've been through a lot and it's trapped you. There is something weighing you down."

In a personal essay, respond to this observation by reflecting on your own relationship with your "home." Your essay should address the following questions:

- How do you define home? Have you ever felt disconnected from your home?
- Why (e.g., perhaps you felt disconnected to an aspect of your culture, perhaps your community was misrepresented on the news, etc.)?
- How did you respond/What have you learned from that experience?

Questions about this task/prompt?

Activity 1

Plan your response to the writing prompt by planning your writing. To do so, complete the [Personal Essay About Home Outline Document](#).

Once you complete the Outline Document and receive feedback, you can begin your writing response to the personal essay prompt:

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"There's something deep inside your [Zahra's] eyes. You seem lost, like you're not fulfilled. That something is missing, like you're caging yourself in. It shows that you've been through a lot and it's trapped you. There is something weighing you down."

In a personal essay, respond to this observation by reflecting on your own relationship with your "home." Your essay should address the following questions:

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