Lesson plan United Arab Emirates: A Place of Hope

Kathryn Hodgkinson

Study of the UAE could fall in various places in the curriculum of a Geography or World History course. For example, it could be part of a study of the Middle East, a contemporary study of countries with significant oil reserves, a current example of a government directed diversification of the economy, or its study could stem from a look into European (in this case British) interference in the Middle East after the world wars.

Premise: The UAE is unique in the Middle East, and in the world, in its history and culture. Evidence of its positive and hopeful view of life and the country include the vision and direction of its first leader, Sheikh Zayed, its Space Program, Hedayah\*, the creation of a Ministry of Happiness.

\* Hedayah was created in response to the growing desire from members of the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum ([GCTF](https://www.thegctf.org/)) and the wider international community for the establishment of an independent, multilateral center devoted to dialogue and communications, capacity building programs, research and analysis to counter violent extremism in all of its forms and manifestations. (Hedayah website: http://www.hedayahcenter.org/ftfprograms/about-hedayah)

**Opening Activity**

1. Label map of Middle East
2. Students individually complete “Questions for Discussion.” (Included)
3. Discuss bullet point lists with neighbor (or partner). Each student may add to his/her list.
4. Open up discussion for class. Write major points of impressions/assumptions on board.
5. Introduce idea that some of the students impressions/assumptions about the UAE may be correct, but as more is learned about the UAE, many of those assumptions may be incorrect.

**Gathering information about the UAE**

This can be accomplished in several ways. There are many sources on the UAE that students could read to gather data about the country.

Examples include:

The UAE Embassy website: <http://www.uae-embassy.org/uae>

The CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ae.html>

UAE Interact: <http://www.uaeinteract.com/uaeint_misc/pdf_2008/English_2008/eyb3.pdf>

I especially like this last one for history and information on Sheikh Zayed. The UAE Embassy website is also good as it divides the information into categories including history and economy, for example.

Some of the historical background and overall introduction could be presented in a lecture format as well. Background should include:

Pearl industry in early history

Role of Britain early in history of area

Discovery of oil

Impetus for unification of seven Emirates to become the UAE, December 2, 1971

Role of Sheik Zayed in directing development of UAE.

Divide students into groups to gather information about different aspects of the UAE by category. These should include:

History (if not provided in a lecture)

The unification of the UAE

Sheikh Zayed (The UAE Interact website has good information on this topic.)

Demographic information

Economy

Education

Government (Include current leader.)

Religion and its role in the UAE

Women in the UAE

# The Space Program (“Why the United Arab Emirates Is Building a Space Program From Scratch” <http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future_tense/2017/03/why_the_united_arab_emirates_is_building_a_space_program.html>

Foreign Policy

Health Care

UAE Counterterrorism

**Create a class “Fact Sheet” on the UAE and PowerPoint on Sheik Zayed**

 The class as a whole will create a combined UAE Fact Sheet that includes the information gathered from each group.

The group assigned to gather information on Sheikh Zayed should create a PowerPoint presentation or video on his role in the UAE. (include info on Sheikh Zayed Mosque in Abu Dhabi)

All of the class should receive copies of the final, compiled Fact Sheet (which will probably cover the front and back of one sheet of paper.)

**Next, the class should view the PowerPoint or video on Sheikh Zayed, and then complete the following questions:**

1. Where was Sheikh Zayed from?
2. Describe Sheikh Zayed’s background.
3. Describe his attitudes about his land and its people. Include his views about women.)
4. Discuss Sheikh Zayed’s role in the unification of the UAE.
5. What position did Zayed hold in the UAE? For how long did he hold this position?
6. List actions Sheikh Zayed took to create a hopeful society for the people of the UAE.
7. List evidence that supports the idea of Sheikh Zayed as a “visionary leader.”

**Discuss the answers to the questions.**

**New information and discussion.**

Divide students into groups to find information on the following:

Hedayah

Women in the UAE today

The newly created Ministry of Youth and Ministry of Happiness in the UAE.

Each group should research its topic thoroughly and compose three to four questions to ask the rest of the class on its topic.

**Present information on topics.**

Each group present information to class on topic.

Class discussion on what these topics present about the UAE and its role in the Middle East and the world.

Answer the questions created by the groups.

**Culminating assignment**

Individually or in groups, students will write a two-page paper that provides an overall picture of the UAE and discusses ONE of the topics from last group work assignment. They do not have to write on the topic of their group, they can choose any of the three topics. Paper must include a thesis statement and evidence to support the points of the thesis.