

EDUCATION PACK **LEARNING ABOUT THE ARAB WORLD**

PART 2 STEREOTYPES AND ISLAMOPHOBIA

Arabic language and Arab culture
www.britishcouncil.org/schoolsonline



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PART 2

STEREOTYPES AND ISLAMAPHOBIA

Curriculum links: Citizenship, Personal, Social and Health Education, Religious Education, Media studies, English.

Core and transferable skills: Communication and collaboration, digital literacy, critical thinking and problem solving, student leadership and personal development, citizenship.

Learning objectives:

- To understand what is meant by stereotypes.
- To explore the influence of film and media stories.
- To understand the value of looking beyond stereotypes and generalisations and the need for mutual respect and understanding.

Resources: You will need: access to the internet, slide projector, large pieces of paper and pens, copies of newspaper articles on appendix 2.

A **stereotype** is defined as a widely held and simplified idea or belief that people have about a thing or group that is based upon how they look on the outside, which may be untrue or only partly true. Negative stereotypes are particularly harmful when positive images of that group are absent.

Begin the session by downloading the slides for this section from: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/find/classroom/stereotypes-islamophobia>. Depending on the time you have available and the age of your students, you may wish to tailor the activities and discussions to meet the needs of your pupils or divide this session into two parts focussing separately on stereotypes and media stories. You can see a snapshot of the slides on Appendix 1.

SLIDES 1 AND 2

Explain that we are going to explore stereotypes and sensitive issues in this session. In order to achieve productive discussions and deeper thinking remind them about the discussion guidelines they agreed in part one and suggest some sentence stems they could use to politely challenge different viewpoints if they disagree with them. Copies of these could be placed on each table and might include suggestions such as 'I hear what you're saying, but have you thought about ...' or 'How did you come to that conclusion?' Further examples can be found in the British Council pack [It's Good to Talk](#) and the work of *Voice 21*.

Ask the students to work in pairs or small groups to come up with their own definitions of a stereotype. Then encourage them to draw a picture of a stereotypical young person and write words or phrases that might be associated with people of their own age around their pictures. Perhaps share images from the media and/or magazines to get them started.

Explore the validity of these stereotypes and discuss the following questions:

- Do you think these views show positive and negative aspects of young people?
- How accurate are they?
- Do these images represent you and your friends?
- Where do stereotypes come from? Do they matter? If so why?

SLIDE 2

A survey by YouGov and Caabu in 2017 found that 30% of British people interviewed associate the Arab world with wealth and 25% linked it with extremism. Ask your students to write words and phrases which they think are most commonly associated with Arabs and the Arab world and then discuss the following questions:

- Are positive and negative views equally represented?
- Do they think this is a true representation?
- Does this tally with the Caabu survey results of 2017?
- Discuss with the students where they think these associations might come from.

Provide some pictures of people and places in the Arab world and large pieces of paper. Ask the students to place the images on one side or the other if they think the picture portrays a positive or negative image of the Arab world. Ask one person from each group to explain why they placed a particular picture in that category.

Share the rest of the slides with the students, using the accompanying notes to explain and clarify the points being made.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT AND DISCUSS...



Do we hear enough good new stories or positive representations of people from Arab and Muslim backgrounds?



ACTIVITY 1: SLIDE 9

If you have access to the internet, find and share footage from a film which features characters from the Arab world. Ask the students to note down any stereotypical images or impressions that they notice and record them on the board. Point out, that the Arab world has a large amount of geographical, cultural and architectural diversity. Is this portrayed in the film?

How are the good and bad characters represented? Do the negative portrayals of Arab characters outweigh the positive? If so - does this matter? Remind the students that negative stereotypes are particularly harmful when positive images of that group are missing.

When the animated cartoon of Aladdin was released, there was an outcry from the American-Arab anti-Discrimination Committee about the original lyrics to the opening song, which began:

*"Oh, I come from a land,
From a faraway place,
Where the caravan camels roam,
Where they cut off your ear If they don't like your face,
It's barbaric, but hey, it's home"*

Disney agreed to change the lyrics for the video version to:

*"It's flat and immense, and the heat is intense.
It's barbaric, but hey' it's home."*

Do your students think this is an improvement? Do they imagine that people from the Arab world would be satisfied with the change?

ACTIVITY 2: ISLAMOPHOBIA AND MEDIA STORIES

Slides 10-16

Ask students where they get their news from and what they expect from the news media. Do they watch/listen to traditional news broadcasts or get their news from internet sites?

Do they think media organisations have a responsibility to engage young people, be accurate and not mislead their readers? If you are working with a partner school, compare your thoughts and ideas with them.

Other things to think about and discuss:

- Should there be tough punishments on the press and social media sites that publish stories that are incorrect or provoke extremists? What should they be? For example should they be fined large sums of money or publish apologies to the groups concerned?
- Why is it important to be aware of the influence stereotypes can have on people?

Divide the class into pairs or small groups. Give each pair or group a copy of an article on Appendix 2. There are three articles that are all discussed in a 2008 report on prejudice towards Muslims in the print media. Ask each pair/group to read the news story, make sure they understand what the article is about, and record any questions they have or words or phrases that they don't understand. Can they summarise the story in one sentence and report back their summaries and thoughts back to the rest of the group?

Give each pair/group the background to the article and ask them whether the additional information changes their attitude.

Ask each group to share their thoughts. Recording their answers on the board may also help students to understand the cumulative effect of reading articles like these.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Encourage students to draft a letter to the newspaper editor about the article they read, explaining why they object to or support the article. You could use the following sentence starters to help them draft their ideas:

Partner School Activities:

If you are working with a partner school:

- Photograph and share your pictures of stereotypes of young people along with the positive and negative images they chose of the Arab world.
- Exchange thoughts and ideas from your discussions and debates.

Dear editor,

I am writing to express my
thoughts about your article on....

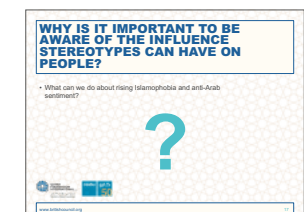
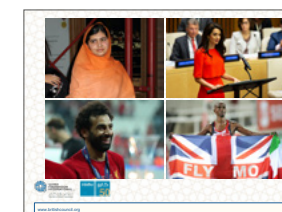
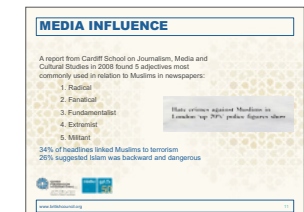
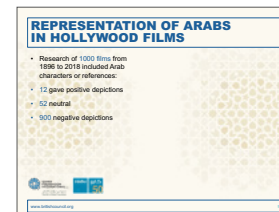
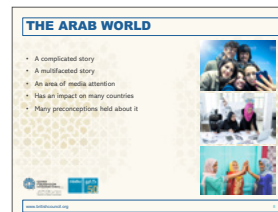
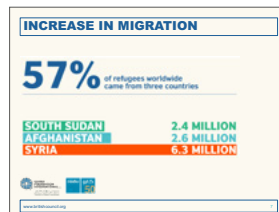
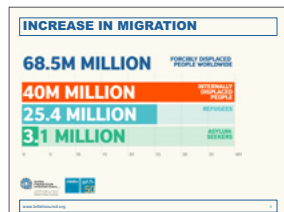
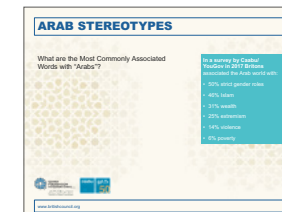
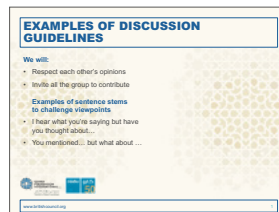
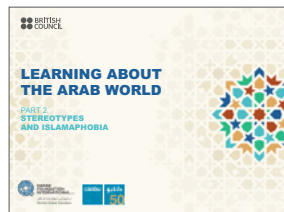
It seems to me that...

I think that you should...

Yours faithfully,



APPENDIX 1



APPENDIX 2: COPIES OF NEWSPAPER ARTICLES AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

SOURCE 1: NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

CHRISTMAS IS BANNED: IT OFFENDS MUSLIMS – COUNCIL IS ‘ASHAMED’ TO BE CHRISTIAN.

BRITAIN'S proud heritage suffered a devastating blow yesterday after council chiefs banned Christmas. Critics immediately accused a politically correct local authority of being ashamed to be Christian. The council ordered Christmas lights in its town centres to be called winter or even celebrity lights to avoid upsetting other faiths.

The astonishing diktat is one of a string of decisions by town hall bureaucrats, which have undermined many age-old traditions. Their obsession has already seen crucifixes removed for being too Christian, Bibles taken out of some hospitals and even teachers told they can no longer fail children. Last night there was widespread condemnation of the ruling with residents, MPs and leaders from all faiths joining forces to condemn the outrageous move.

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Background

There was no evidence at all that Muslims had had anything to do with the decision by the council to change the name of its Christmas lights. The council said that the entire story was deeply misleading. Christmas was going on as usual, the Christmas tree was up in the town hall, the usual Christmas carols were being sung, and the lights were up. The different names were never the official council policy, yet it escalated into a huge story.



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SOURCE 2: NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

NOW THE PC BRIGADE BANS PIGGY BANKS IN CASE THEY UPSET MUSLIMS.

Piggy banks are being banned in case they offend Muslim customers, it emerged last night. The decision by high street banks was condemned as “barmy” and “bonkers” by critics. They warned that such moves would only fuel inter-community tensions. Branch bosses imposed the ban because they fear the time-honoured symbol for thriftiness could upset ethnic customers. All promotional material bearing the figure has now been scrapped because the Koran forbids Muslims from eating pork and pigs are considered by them to be unclean.

Background:

The bank in question reported that the end of one promotion had nothing to do with fear of causing offence. Another bank noted that it has not withdrawn any piggy banks from branches and in fact it had not used piggy banks in its branches for a number of years. The press statement noted: ‘There is absolutely no fact in the story. We simply had a UK wide savings marketing campaign, which included pictures of piggy banks, running until the end of September. Piggy banks have been and will continue to be used as a promotional item.’

SOURCE 3: NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

GET OFF MY BUS I NEED TO PRAY.

A MUSLIM bus driver told stunned passengers to get off so he could PRAY. The white Islamic convert rolled out his prayer mat in the aisle and knelt on the floor facing Mecca. Passengers watched in amazement as he held out his palms towards the sky, bowed his head and began to chant. One, who filmed the man on his mobile phone, said: 'He was clearly praying and chanting in Arabic.'

Eventually everyone started complaining. After a few minutes the driver calmly got up, opened the doors and asked everyone back on board. But they saw a rucksack lying on the floor of the red single-decker and feared he might be a fanatic. So they all refused. The passenger added: 'One chap said, I'm not getting on there now'.

An elderly couple also looked really confused and worried. After seeing that no one wanted to get on he drove off and we all waited until the next bus came about 20 minutes later. I was left totally stunned. It made me not want to get on a bus again. The passenger said he rang the bus firm to complain but claimed it did not believe him. He said: They asked me, 'Are you sure?'. Then they said they would get back to me, but they weren't taking me seriously at all.

Background:

The newspaper ran the story after giving the Bus Company very little time to investigate, obliging them to issue a holding statement saying they would look into the matter. Once they had done so it was clear that the story was rather different. The bus had been delayed, so in order to maintain frequency the bus company had ordered the driver to stop his bus and allow passengers to board the bus behind. Tickets and CCTV evidence show that all the passengers were on that bus within a minute. The driver was under strict instructions not to allow any passengers onto his bus. He was on a ten-minute break so could do what he wanted.

The so-called witness, who recorded the bus driver praying, had not in fact been on the bus, and had arrived after the incident to find a small crowd waiting outside a bus. Jumping to a false conclusion, he sold his story to the newspaper.



FIND OUT MORE

Find Out More:

If you want to find out more, the following links provide additional information and resources:

<https://www.caabu.org/what-we-do/education/teaching-resources>

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/secondary-education-resources/lesson-plan-ideas/lesson-5-prejudice-and-stereotypes>

Caabu offers a number of talks and works for schools. To book a Caabu speaker for your school or college, please contact caabu@caabu.org or phone 02078321321.

The following materials show how to promote oracy, discussion and debate in your school: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/find/classroom/its-good-talk>

<https://www.voice21resources.org/>

Queens of Syria is the story of fifty women refugees now living in Jordan who came together to create and perform their own version of The Trojan Women, the timeless Greek tragedy about the plight of women in war:

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/find/classroom/queens-syria-resource-pack>

Sources about the representation of British Muslims in the print media can be found at the following sources:

“Images of Islam in the UK The Representation of British Muslims in the National Print News Media 2000-2008”, Kerry Moore, Paul Mason and Justin Lewis published on 7 July 2008:

<http://orca.cf.ac.uk/53005/1/08channel4-dispatches.pdf>

<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/IASS/news-events/MEDIA-ChrisAllen-APPGEvidence-Oct2012.pdf>

The Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies, University of Leeds, Katy Sian, Ian Law, S. Sayyid in March 2012

<https://ces.uc.pt/projectos/tolerance/media/Working%20paper%205/The%20Media%20and%20Muslims%20in%20the%20UK.pdf>

A report of the University of Birmingham, Chris Allen, in October 2012:

<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/IASS/news-events/MEDIA-ChrisAllen-APPGEvidence-Oct2012.pdf>





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