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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2017 Volume III: Poetry and Public Life

A Private Moment in Public View: Analysis of Muslim Poets and Political Activists from the 20th Century to Today

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Over the past several years, my student population is becoming more diverse. Many of my students are recent immigrants to America from various countries in the Middle East and Africa. A growing number of my students and their families are Muslim, and they share with our school community many of their customs and traditions. I especially enjoy reading about their religious practices in the students' journals. It is the intent of this unit to provide a canon of poems and prose by Islamic authors and leaders from many different communities around the world about migration, assimilation, falling in love, and political unrest. This unit is designed for eighth grade students in the early part of the second semester. My students follow a 90-minute ELA block for the whole course of the year. This is an introductory unit on poetry with a focus on the use of figurative language, development of syntax, and author's purpose. Students will analyze a selection of poems by contemporary Muslim poets through the use of close reading with little emphasis on historical and biographical context. These poems will be compared to selected episodes of a podcast series entitled *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim* by Tanzila "Taz" Ahmed and Zahra Noorbakhsh. While listening to the podcasts, students will contextualize the biographical and historical significance of several segments of the episodes. The culminating assessment for the students is to write one or two poems for their writing portfolios, and then digitally record one of their poems.

Muslim, Islam, poetry, immigration, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*, podcast, digital portfolio

(Developed for English Language Arts, grade 8; recommended for English Language Arts, grade 7)

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