CULTURALLY RELEVANT CURRICULUM: CHALLENGING THE SINGLE MIDDLE EASTERN/MUSLIM STORY IN PUBLIC SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

A Project

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by

Ghutai Amin

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CULTURALLY RELEVANT CURRICULUM: CHALLENGING THE SINGLE MIDDLE EASTERN/MUSLIM STORY IN PUBLIC SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

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by

Ghutai Amin

Approved by:

______________________________, Committee Chair
Porfírio Loeza, Ph.D

______________________________
Date
Student: Ghutai Amin

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Albert Lozano, Ph.D  Date

Department of Graduate and Professional Studies in Education
Abstract of CULTURALLY RELEVANT CURRICULUM: CHALLENGING THE SINGLE MIDDLE EASTERN/MUSLIM STORY IN PUBLIC SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

by Ghutai Amin

Statement of Problem

Middle Easterners and Muslims have historically been ignored or inaccurately portrayed in literature and curriculum based textbooks, as the limited information found was offered exclusively from a Western perspective (Wingfield & Karaman, 1995). Even before the September eleventh attack and influx of Middle Eastern, Muslims immigration in the United States, an imperialist perspective of exclusion or “other” took shape. The exclusion of Middle Easterners and Muslims in literature was reflective of the socio cultural assimilation era. Nonetheless, the systematic exclusion was, and is, psychologically detrimental for Middle Eastern Americans. For instance, Landt (2011) explains the “feelings of marginalization, invisibility, and rejection can occur when students do not see self reflected in what they read” (p. 3). The omission of Middle Easterners experiences fosters ineptitude in Middle Eastern children and youth (Al-Hazza and Butcher, 2008a; Fox & Short, 2003; Iskander, 1997). These students may surrender aspects of their Middle Eastern and Islamic heritage in favor of assimilation as a gateway
to integrate and feel accepted by their peers (Miller, 1995; Nasir & Saxe, 2003; Olsen, 1997; Taylor & Whittaker, 2003).

Purpose of the Project

The researcher will provide primary and secondary educators in the San Juan Unified School District a comprehensive training on the effectiveness of facilitating cultural relativity through multicultural literature, with an emphasis on Middle Eastern American literature. The key elements of the project include summarizing the historic and current representation of the Middle East and Islam, examining the portrayal of Middle Easterners and Muslims in multicultural children and young adult literature and offering analysis on the implications of said literature for both Middle Eastern, Muslim American students and non-Middle Eastern, American students. Additionally, the researcher will provide recommendations to rectify the literary image of Middle Eastern, Muslim Americans from a multicultural, social justice paradigm.

Project Description

Cultural relativity training should be a fundamental element of education credential programs. While most teachers acquire classroom management skills and learn how to implement core curriculum, many lack the resources and preparation to teach to diverse student populations, and not at them (Freire, 1970). The goal of this project was to provide cultural relativity training, with an emphasis on the Middle Eastern, Muslim American culture through an interactive presentation and workshop. To promote a cooperative learning atmosphere, a familiar and comfortable setting for the participants was utilized to promote a discussion, collaboration and inquiry. A PowerPoint (appendix
A) was utilized as a backdrop to virtually weave together the three main components of the training (Clark, 2008): A brief overview of the damage of the single Middle Eastern, Muslim story, the introduction of authentic Middle Eastern, Muslim literature via a comprehensive Recommended Book List (appendix D), a collaborative workshop to inspire participants to integrate the books in their classroom curriculum. Cultural diversity trainings can be effective in raising awareness and challenge the oppressive treatment of Middle Eastern, Muslim American students (Britto, 2011). The training is offered as an essential first step in challenging the single story ascribed to minority groups.

_______________________, Committee Chair
Porfirio Loeza, Ph.D

_______________________
Date
DEDICATION

An adolescent Muslim girl from Pakistan addressed the United Nations General Assembly and demanded we “wage a glorious struggle against illiteracy, poverty and terrorism, let us pick up our books and our pens, [as] they are the most powerful weapons.” This project is dedicated to the extraordinary Malala Yousafzai for inspiring me in my daily quest to inspire my students to be the difference they seek in this world.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Loeza and Dr. Lozano for their feedback encouragement and support. I am certain I could not have finished this project without their patience.

I would like to thank Dr. Zaben and Nassiba Cherif for planting the seeds of this project and motivating the initial idea to flourish. Your commitment to student advocacy and efforts to bridge communities is admirable and inspiring.

Most of all, I would also like to thank Mom and Dad, for helping me find me in some place between here and there.
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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Historically, Middle Easterners and Muslims were generally ignored in literature or inaccurately portrayed in textbooks, as the limited information found was offered exclusively from a Western perspective (Wingfield & Karaman, 1995). Thus, even before the September eleventh attack and influx of Middle Eastern, Muslims immigration in the United States, an imperialist perspective of exclusion or “other” took shape. The exclusion of Middle Easterners and Muslims in literature was reflective of the sociocultural assimilation era. Nonetheless, the systematic exclusion was, and is, psychologically detrimental for Middle Eastern Americans. For instance, Landt (2011) explains the “feelings of marginalization, invisibility, and rejection can occur when students do not see self reflected in what they read” (p. 3). The omission of Middle Easterners experiences fosters ineptitude in Middle Eastern children and youth. As a result, these students may surrender aspects of their Middle Eastern and Islamic heritage in favor of assimilation as a gateway to integrate and feel accepted by their peers.

Significance of the Problem

Gopalakrishnan (2011) defines multicultural children’s literature as the “sociocultural experiences of previously underrepresented groups” (p. 21). She advocates for the continued development and integration of multicultural literature into mainstream education, as it validates the struggles and celebrates the contributions of the disenfranchised. According to the United States Census Bureau, Arab Americans, as
well as many people of Middle Eastern origin, are classified racially as White. However, historically and certainly more recently, people from the Middle East are not extended the privileges afforded to groups traditional categorized as White. Thus, Middle Easterners are only “White on paper and Brown in reality” (Bayoumi, 2001, p. 70).

In other words, this is the “best of times and the worst of times” (Banks, 2009, p. 464) for Middle Eastern, Muslim Americans”, as many Middle Eastern Americans, particularly of Arab descent, have historically prospered in their economic and educational pursuits. However, since 9/11, [anti-Muslim/Middle Eastern] sentiments have heightened drastically and continue to dominate popular culture, policy and perception (Banks, 2009). As a result, the hostile Muslim/Middle Eastern rhetoric has transpired into classroom textbooks, and in turn curriculum and instruction, throughout the United States. For instance, Brockway (2007) found that “junior high and high school textbooks used in the United States provide a negatively biased portrayal of the Middle East through the presentation of inadequate information” (p. 77). Subsequently, educators across the nation are unknowingly teaching the next generation a “very biased perspective about a religion and a region that is gaining strength in today’s world” (Brockway, 2007, p. 29).

**Purpose of the Project**

The researcher will provide primary and secondary educators in the San Juan Unified School District a comprehensive training on the effectiveness of facilitating cultural relativity through utilization of multicultural literature, with an emphasis on Middle Eastern American literature. The key elements of the project include
summarizing the historic and current representation of the Middle East and Islam, examining the portrayal of Middle Easterners and Muslims in multicultural children and young adult literature and offering analysis on the implications of said literature for both Middle Eastern, Muslim American students and non-Middle Eastern, American students. Additionally, the researcher will provide recommendations to rectify the literary image of Middle Eastern, Muslim Americans from a multicultural, social justice paradigm.

**Methodology**

The researcher will offer primary and secondary school educators in the San Juan Unified School District a training on how to successfully integrate authentic Middle Eastern American literature in their classrooms. The training will take place at Thomas Edison Language Institute, a dual immersion (Spanish/English) kindergarten through eighth grade school, located in Sacramento, California, for twenty to forty educators and administrators. The presentation will last approximately 90 minutes. The district coordinator, school principal and school secretary will assist the researcher in arranging a date, time and setting for the presentation. The researcher will address her findings and finished product in the form of a PowerPoint presentation. A PowerPoint outline of the presentation, as well as a comprehensive, recommended Middle Eastern American book list, and an example lesson plan highlighting a story from the book list will be developed and will be provided for participants. At the conclusion of the presentation, the researcher will ask participants to anonymously complete pre training and post-training mixed methods surveys. The completed surveys will be collected by the researcher and used to assess the participants’ understanding of the content presented and determine the
likelihood of the participants to incorporate authentic Middle Eastern American literature in their curriculum.

**Limitations**

Senzai (2010) calls to action the need to expand publication and increase awareness of published Middle Eastern American children’s books and young adult novels. It is essential that the Middle Eastern American narrative be adequately recognized and reflected within the scope of multicultural literature, as the region and people gain prominence in an increasingly globalized world. Furthermore, according to Al-Hazza and Butcher (2008a), educators must incorporate authentic Middle Eastern American literature “into the curriculum if they hope to eliminate stereotypes, foster cultural appreciation, and help Middle Eastern American students build cultural identity” (p. 233).

With that said, the project is limited to a small group of staff in one school within the San Juan Unified School District. Subsequently, educators and administrators throughout the district, and greater Sacramento area, will not have access to the information, despite an influx of Middle Eastern immigrants and refugees in the region. In addition to authentic narratives and inclusion of said literature in the classroom curriculum, educators can further benefit from cultural sensitivity training programs to empowering not just Middle Eastern American students, but all marginalized groups and cultures.
Theoretical Basis of the Study

The literature review will summarize the historic and current representation of Islam, the Middle East and Muslims in mass media, provide insight on the significance of culturally relevant curriculum as it pertains to the perspective of the “oppressed,” and offer analysis on the implications of Middle Eastern, Muslim American multicultural literature for Middle Eastern, Muslim American students and non-Middle Eastern, American students. Additionally, evaluations of recommendations to rectify the literary image of the Middle Eastern, Muslim Americans from a multicultural, social justice paradigm will be discussed.

Othering Theory

According to Middle East correspondent, author and educator; Edward Said, Orientalism, or western study of Islam and the Middle East was “political intellectualism meant for [Western] self-affirmation, rather than for objective intellectual enquiry and academic study of [Middle Eastern] cultures” (1978, p. 13). Hence, Orientalism functioned as a method of cultural discrimination wherein the West examines the Middle East from a position of superiority, and thus those of Middle Eastern origin will always, “bear [their] foreignness as a mark of [their] permanent estrangement from the West” (Said, 1978, pp. 243-244). Since the attacks on 9/11, anti-Muslim/Middle Eastern sentiments have “heightened drastically and continue to dominate popular culture, policy and perception” (Banks, 2009, p. 132). Despite their economic, educational and political gains; Middle Eastern Muslim have found caricatures of themselves in American films, television, and more recently in comic books and action computer games (Khan, 2004;
Majaj, 2008; Said, 1978; & Seto, 1995). Western media has habitually featured Middle Eastern, Muslim as villains. Al-Hazza and Lucking (2007) assert that, “not since the days of ‘cowboys and Indians’ has such a dichotomous portrayal of good and evil been more apparent” (p. 132). These caricatures have distorted America perception and translated to protest against Middle Easterners and Muslims (CAIR, 2006), military aggression in the Middle East, such as the Gulf War against Iraq (Gerges, 1997; & Said, 1994), and racially motivated hate crimes, such as individual beatings, mosque vandalism, and murders (CAIR, 2006; Wing, 2005). According to Brockway (2007), the skewed representation of the Middle East and Islam has reestablishment orientalist propaganda.

The attacks on September 11, 2001, reinforced the categorization of Middle Eastern, Muslim students as Others, as popular media portrayals of said group generates fear among non-Middle Eastern, Muslim classmates and teachers (Al-Hazza, 2006). Middle Eastern, Muslim, American youth have experienced stereotypes that categorize them as bombers, billionaires, and or (culturally) backwards (Wingfield & Karaman, 1995). These stereotypes can reinforce the message that all Middle Easterners and Muslims are inherently violent and foreign (Said, 1978), and perpetuate the culturally alienating power structures in schools through the promotion of White middle class norms (Miller, 1995).

**Critical Pedagogy**

It is essential educators offer all students valid representations and accounts of varied cultural and social groups. Authentic exposure and access to the stories of
underrepresented groups is the cornerstone of critical pedagogy. According to Giroux (2010), critical pedagogy is an “educational movement, […], to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, connect knowledge to power, and [it is] the ability to take constructive action (p. 2). Freire (1970) emphasizes education should serve to empower the “oppressed to regain their sense of humanity, in turn overcoming their condition” (p. 54). Thus, it is critical for students to be exposed to the authentic stories and injustices of the oppressed, as exposure facilitates understanding and validates the history of the oppressed by acknowledging their plight for equality.

Critical pedagogy is not unlike Karl Marx’s anti colonial perspective. Freire (1970) asserts the oppressed can regain their freedom when they are informed of the history, contributions, and advances of their people. The anti colonial perspective of education empowers the disadvantaged, as it teaches one to think critically about issues of contentment; to challenge the status quo. Critical pedagogy removes the constraints attributed to positions of power, allowing student and teacher to engage in dialogue to deepen their understanding of the topic at hand. The free exchange of information between teacher and student is the essence of empowerment. It is how students develop confidence and self worth.

In addition, hooks (1994) interprets Freire’s assessment of critical pedagogy as a source of student empowerment. Hooks (1994) insists anyone can learn how to teach education as the practice of freedom, however, “the learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred; who believe that our work is not merely to share” (p. 13). When educators
believe they are the only source of knowledge, engagement and discussion is limited. As a result, educators impede student’s academic and personal growth as they are disconnected from the content. However, when educators acknowledge the value of students’ cultural backgrounds and experiences, they accept their role as both teacher and student. Similarly, when educators offer students a platform to share their experiences, students are empowered because their stories matter.

Critical pedagogy places great emphasis on educators to develop and exhibit cultural competency to ensure they are prepared to teach students of varied backgrounds. Ladson-Billings (1992) emphasizes the significance of implementing culturally relevant teaching as conducive to comprehension, improving connection to the content, and creating a culture of care. The concept of culturally relevant teaching was introduced by Ladson-Billings in 1992 as a way to encourage the academic success of minority students who have traditionally been ignored by institutionalized education. Ladson-Billings (1992) asserts that culturally relevant teachers “engage in the world and others critically [by preparing] students [to] develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities” (p. 14). Culturally relevant teaching expects students to experience academic success, practice cultural competence, and develop a critical consciousness to recognize and actively challenge oppression (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

**Multiculturalism**

Madsen (2012) emphasizes all students need to have access to authentic multicultural literature, reflective of their cultural experiences, “instead of stereotypes
and misrepresentations […] books should provide children with insights into power and sociopolitical issues while also serving to challenge the dominant, mono cultural perspective” (p. 12). It is essential for students to be exposed to the contribution of and injustices endured by Middle Eastern, Muslims as exposure facilitates understanding and validates the history of the oppressed by acknowledging their plight for equality.

To successfully challenge the bias Middle Eastern, Muslim image, educators must integrate authentic cultural literature in the curriculum. For example, Al-Hazza and Butcher (2008a) caution, “Sometimes schools include a folkloric and ‘superficial approach’ to [incorporate] Arab’s into the curriculum, but do not give students enough variety of literature and information to truly understand the Arab culture” (p. 211). Middle Eastern, Muslim literature, like all multicultural children’s literature, should not be applied as the “flavor of the month,” as the celebration model dismisses the literary significance of the text. Additionally, the stories seclusion to a specific day or month can hinder non Middle Eastern American students from forming cultural connections to the experiences of the Middle Eastern, Islamic culture literature.

Al-Hazza and Butcher (2008b) suggest educators introduce Middle Eastern literature into the curriculum as a source of inspiration for Middle Eastern students and as an opportunity for other students to “identify with [Middle Eastern] characters in the literature they read, [so they] will develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for the [Middle Eastern] culture” (p. 117). When educators integrate authentic Middle Eastern, Muslim literature into the curriculum, they offer a platform for all students to
challenge the socially constructed, single story of the Muslim terrorist, perpetuated by mass media.

The biased perspective of the Middle East and Islam, coupled with mass media propaganda and America’s political interests, require the continued analysis and development of authentic Middle Eastern multicultural children literature. It is imperative that Middle Eastern, Muslim Americans children are offered an accurate representation to see themselves in books, as it is critical to their psychological and emotional wellbeing. Inclusion of Middle Eastern American literature in classroom curriculum is essential in challenging the single story ascribed to them and the negative implications that it entails.

**Definition of the Relevant Terms**

*Academic Language* - The oral, written, auditory, and visual language proficiency required to learn effectively in schools and academic programs (edglossary.org).

*Achievement Gap* - Any significant or persistent disparity in academic performance or educational attainment between different groups of students (edglossary.org).

*Critical Pedagogy* - Educational movement, [...], to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action (Giroux, 2010).

*Cultural Competence* - Set of academic and personal skills that allow individuals to increase their understanding, sensitivity, appreciation and responsiveness to cultural differences and the interactions resulting from them (Diversity.berkely.edu).
**Cultural Relativism** - Explains why some things are completely acceptable in one society, but taboo in another (education-potal.com).

**Culturally Relevant Teaching** - Pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills and attitude (Ladson-Billings, 1992).

**Differentiation** - A wide variety of teaching techniques and lesson adaptations that educators use to instruct a diverse group of students, with diverse learning needs in the same classroom (edglossary.org).

**English Learner (EL)** - Students who are unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, often come from non-English-speaking homes and backgrounds, and usually require modified instruction in English and in their academic courses (edglossary.org).

**Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR)** - Learning model, wherein the responsibility of task completion shifts gradually over time from the teacher to the student (literacyleader.com).

**Hidden Curriculum** - The unwritten, unofficial, and often-unintended lessons, values and perspectives that students learn in schools (edglossary.org).

**Institutionalized (Education)** - To incorporate [education] into a structured and often highly formalized system (Merriam-Webster.com).

**Multicultural Literature** - “sociocultural experiences of previously underrepresented groups” (Gopalakrishnan, 2011, p. 21).

Paradigm - A theory or group of ideas about how something should be done, made or thought about (Merriam-Webster.com)

Pedagogy - The art, science, or profession of teaching (Merriam-Webster.com).

Sociocultural - Combining social and cultural factors (Merriam-Webster.com).

Organization of the Project

The research project includes four chapters, appendices, and references. Chapter 1 introduces the problem and explains why the research and implementation of the proposed literature is applicable to the field of education, specifically to curriculum development. Chapter 2 includes a detailed review of literature relevant to the focus of this project. Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology and components of the project. Finally, chapter 4 concludes the project with a thoughtful discussion and presents survey’s findings and offers recommendations for future studies.

Background of the Researcher

Amin earned her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology with a minor in Middle East and Islamic Studies, as well as her single subject Social Science credential from California State University, Sacramento. She has taught both primary and secondary grades in the public and private sector throughout northern California since 2010.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Introduction

In the “Ballads of East and West,” Kipling famously declares, “east is east and west is west, and never the twain shall meet” or at least not “til […] God’s great judgement seat” (as cited in Kipling, Beecroft and Powers, 1956, p. 12). This is a simplistic, and yet, telling declaration, which is often told with “easterners” cast as a the exoticized “Other,” reinforcing the ever-present theme of Middle Easterners/Muslims as inferior (Said, 1978). The “single story” often designated to minority groups is paramount and when Middle Easterners and Muslim are represented inaccurately, or not at all, the story is clearly told – for them (Barlow, 1994). In the school setting, children and adolescents begin their steadfast immersion into a western centered narrative which is reiterated throughout their educational journey (Bishop, 1982; Delpit, 1995; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994). The damaging perspective of Middle Easterners/Muslims as fundamentally foreign is embedded into mainstream western media and discourse; and transparent in public school classrooms and curriculum throughout the nation (Brockway, 2007; Said, 1994). This distorted perspective is (un)intentionally supported by classroom teachers (Wingfield & Karaman, 1995) reinforcing the concept that the Middle East – descendants thereof; and Islam, is the antithesis of western culture and norms (CAIR, 2006).

Decades of studies detail the negative impact of western centered narratives for minority groups, with this bias continuing to persist as the dominant story in most
educational settings (Deschenes, Cuban, & Tyack, 2001; Gee, 2001; Gopalaskrishnan, 2011). A variety of strategies could be used to challenge the negative or limited image of the Middle East and Islam, including the inclusion of authentic multicultural literature, reflective of Middle Eastern students’ cultural experiences (Madsen, 2012). The importance of children’s and young adult literature in adding to their understanding of the world is undeniable (Fox & Short, 2003), as these stories lift the imagination of young minds, to rise to magical and unexpected heights, in “creating understanding where comprehension has, thus far, been elusive” (Aziz, 2012, p. 18).

The reviewed literature provides a brief summary of Middle Eastern Americans and the larger Muslim communities is presented in an attempt to contest the damaging single story historically and currently attributed to the Middle East, the Middle Eastern culture, and Islam. The practice of institutionalized racial/cultural inequity reinforced in public school classroom is examined, with an emphasis on the Western-Eastern dichotomy. Additionally, the implication of culturally biased narratives for Middle Eastern/Muslim American and non Middle Eastern/Muslim American students is discussed; specifically, as it relates to the exclusion of said group from classroom literature and curriculum. Further, the significance of the inclusion of authentic Middle Eastern American children and young adult literature is reviewed. Finally, cultural relativity training for classroom teachers is offered as an essential first step in rectifying the literary image of Middle Eastern, Muslim Americans from a multicultural, social justice paradigm.
Background

According to Ozalp (2011), it is difficult to geographically define what countries comprise of the Middle East, as the region has been socially constructed as, “an opposition to the West intellectually since ancient Greece. Over time, the term historically, culturally, religiously, geographically, politically, and economically became more complex” (p. 6). Thus, Al-Hazza and Butcher (2008b) broadly define the modern Middle East as encompassing twenty-two countries located across the regions of North Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Arabian Peninsula, and “geographically extends from Egypt to Afghanistan, or the cultural region where Islam arose and developed” (Goldschmidt & Davidson, 2002, p. 7). People assume that all Middle Eastern countries are the same, however; the geographic vastness of the region is not conducive to a single homogeneous culture, as the Middle East is comprised of Arabs, Afghans, Armenians, Assyrians, Iranians, Israelis, Kurds, Pakistani, and Turks (Haddad, 2011). Although, Arabs are the largest ethnic group residing in the majority of countries in the Middle East with a world population of nearly three hundred million (Elmandjra, 2004). Despite these differences, Middle Easterners are committed to the “importance tribal affiliation, generosity, and children” (Lowery, 2010, p. 269).

In addition to the misunderstanding Westerners have that all Middle Easterners are Arabs, many also incorrectly assume all Arabs are Muslims (Al-Hazza & Butcher, 2008a). Although a majority of Arabs are Muslims, they only comprise 20 percent of the second largest religious population in the world (Suleiman, 1996). According to Naff (1988), most Muslims are Asian; not Middle Eastern, as is often assumed (Hafiz, Hafiz,
& Hafiz, 2009). For this project, the broader Muslim group is included to share more of the literature that is being created for elementary and adolescent students. Additionally, the Middle East is also comprised of diverse religions with large groups of Christians, Druze, Egyptian Copts, Jews, Maronites, Melokites and Zoroastrians (Al-Hazza & Butcher, 2008b; Ozalp, 2011; Said, 1978).

**Middle Eastern, Muslim Americans**

Middle Eastern, Muslim Americans have been a unique part of the American culture for over a century (Curiel, 2008). Many Middle Eastern Americans, particularly of Arab descent, have historically prospered in their economic and educational pursuits (Aburumuh, Smith, & Ratcliffe, 2010). According to Kayyali (2006) the first wave of immigration from the Middle East began in the late 1800’s from Syria, Lebanon and Jordan; and many of them were Christians (Haddad, 2011). The reversal of the Asian Exclusion Act of 1965 increased Muslim population and shifted Middle Eastern representation in the United States (Haddad, 2011). Changes in immigration laws, such as the adoption of the lottery system and greater issuing of refugee visas in the later part of the 20th century, augmented and also diversified the U.S. Muslim population, as immigrants arrived from the Indian subcontinents; and refugees came from countries “racked by civil wars and often [suffered] the results of Western exploitation, [such as] Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon, Somalia, Palestine and Afghanistan” (Haddad, 2011, p. 5).

Muslim immigrants enhanced the diversity of American religions. Today, most immigrants from the Middle East are Muslims (Hoobler & Hoobler, 2003). According to the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR, 2006), there are about seven million
Muslims living in the United States and Arabs representing a quarter of the Muslim American population, and African Americans and South Asians combined make up over sixty percent of the community. And although, Islam is one of the fastest growing religions; it is also the most misunderstood religion in the United States today (Hafiz et. al. 2009). For example, some non-Muslims, believe that Muslims worship Muhammad, rather see him as the last prophet in the Abrahamic tradition (Hafiz, Hafiz, & Hafiz, 2009). Many non-Muslims, especially in the West, are unaware of the vast similarities between Islam and Christianity, such as the “respect Islam has for Jesus and his mother Mary” (Haddad, 2011, p. 21).

**The Single Middle Eastern Muslim Story**

Nigerian writer, Chimamanda Adichie (2009) has eloquently warned the masses about the dangers of the single story; in which the experiences of groups of people tend to be viewed in limited ways. As for Middle Eastern Muslims, their single story has been “signed, sealed, delivered” (Wonder, 1970) and repeated, since the 1800’s (Said, 1978). Unlike other ethnic minorities, according to the United States Census Bureau, most Middle Easterners are racially classified as White (as cited in Bayoumi, 2001). However, they are not extended the privileges of being White in America, instead Middle Easterners have become a minority of suspicion (Al-Hazza & Lucking, 2007), as “enormous misconceptions and biases exist about these people and their culture” (Al-Hazza & Lucking, 2007, p. 132). Thus, Americans of Middle Eastern descent are only “White on paper and Brown in reality” (Bayoumi, 2001). According to Said (1978), Orientalism, or western study of Islam and the Middle East was “political intellectualism
meant for [Western] self-affirmation, rather than for objective intellectual enquiry and
academic study of [Middle Eastern] cultures” (p. 13). Hence, Orientalism functioned as a
method of cultural discrimination wherein the West examines the Middle East from a
position of superiority, and thus those of Middle Eastern origin will always, “bear [their]
foreignness as a mark of [their] permanent estrangement from the West” (Said, 1978, pp.
243-244).

The systematic discrimination of Middle Eastern Muslims stems from politics, as
one cannot separate politics from literature and media (El-Hajj, 2006; Giroux, 2010;
Gregory, 2004). The West has a long history of defining the cultures and religions of
marginalized groups (Freire, 1970; Seto, 1995). According to Banks (2009) this is the
“best of times and the worst of times for [Middle Eastern, Muslim] Americans” (p.132).
Despite their economic, educational and political gains; Middle Eastern Muslim have
found caricatures of themselves in American films, television, and more recently in
comic books and action computer games (Khan, 2004; Majaj, 2008; Said, 1978; Seto,
1995). Western media has habitually featured Middle Eastern, Muslim as villains. Al-
Hazza and Lucking (2007) assert that, “not since the days of ‘cowboys and Indians’ has
such a dichotomous portrayal of good and evil been more apparent” (p. 132). These
caricatures have distorted America perception and translated to protest against Middle
Easterners and Muslims (CAIR, 2006), military aggression in the Middle East, such as
the Gulf War against Iraq (Gerges, 1997; Said, 1994), and racially motivated hate crimes,
such as individual beatings, mosque vandalism, and murders (CAIR, 2006; Wing, 2005).
According to James Abourezk, the first U. S. Congressman of Arab descent, anti-Arab
sentiments have been prevalent in the West since the Crusades, as “anytime there is a lot of violence […] in the Middle East, you find rising animosity towards Arab Americans in the United States” (Houston, 1990, p. 180 as cited in Curiel, 2008). Additionally, a national survey conducted in 1981 found that, “fifty percent of American respondents described ‘all or most’ Muslims as ‘warlike and bloodthirsty,’ forty-nine percent described them as ‘treacherous and cunning,’ and forty-four percent as ‘barbaric’ and ‘cruel’” (Gerges, 1997, p. 70).

Since the attacks on 9/11, anti-Muslim/Middle Eastern sentiments have “heightened drastically and continue to dominate popular culture, policy and perception” (Banks, 2009, p. 132). According to Brockway (2007), the skewed representation of the Middle East and Islam is due to America’s foreign policy, with the reestablishment of orientalist propaganda. America’s ongoing economic and political interests, such as the war efforts in Afghanistan is significant, as it propagates Islam and the Middle East as a desert, comprised of Bedouins and terrorist (Barlow, 1994), to reaffirm the masses of their burden to save the region to democracy. For example, following the attacks on September 11th, former U.S. president, George W. Bush, asked the American people, “Why do they hate us?” (Transcript of President Bush’s Address, 2001). According to Gregory (2004), this question, “forced the public to draw a division between America and the Middle East” (p. 21); and reinforced the dichotomy between ‘us’ and ‘them,’ with Middle Eastern Muslims as the out-cast Others (CAIR, 2006). National surveys following the attacks on 9/11, demonstrate Americans’ views of Islam, wherein thirty percent of Americans believe Islam supports violence against non-Muslims (ABC News
Poll, 2006), and thirty-nine percent of Americans have at least some feelings of prejudice against Muslims (CNN/USA Today Gallup Poll, 2006), and sixty-one percent of Americans felt that the 2005 Danish cartoon controversy was due to Muslims intolerance of different points of view, as opposed to Western nations’ lack of respect for the religion of Islam (Gallup Poll, 2006).

### Cultural Bias in the Classroom

The vilification of Middle Eastern, Muslims has reaffirmed discourse and action in “politics, social convention, war, and in the classroom” (Al-Hazza & Lucking, 2007, p. 132). Schools have the ability to categorize and treat students as privileged or as Other (Kumashiro, 2000). The attacks on September 11, 2001, reinforced the categorization of Middle Eastern, Muslim students as Others, as popular media portrayals of said group generates fear among non-Middle Eastern, Muslim classmates and teachers (Al-Hazza, 2006). Schools can be hostile environments where the students categorized as “Other” are treated poorly (Kumashiro, 2000), through the actions and inactions of teachers, staff, and other students (Hovart & Antonio, 1999). For non-Middle Eastern, Muslim students, the uncertainty and instability of the ongoing wars coupled with grossly inaccurate information about Islam and the Middle East, instills a culture of distrust and deepens the division between us and them (Henderson, 2008; Welch, 2006).

Numerous studies have documented instances of oppression that contribute to hostile school environments (Deschenes, Cuban, & Tyack, 2001; Ready, Lee, & Welner, 2004). Oppressive treatment of minority students can be subtle and take shape in the form of “vicarious racism and microagressions” (Alvarez, 2009, p. 14). It is often the
subtle way that ‘othering’ takes place in schools that are usually unnoticed (Kumashiro, 2000). Prior to the attacks on September eleventh, educators did not perceive anti-Arab racism and Islamaphobia as a problem, and thus excluded representing them in multicultural books and curriculum (Al-Hazza, & Butcher, 2007; 2008b). According to Brockway (2007), most educators lack basic knowledge about Middle Eastern and Islamic cultures and should “examine their own perceptions and expectations of their students” (p. 37), as the gap in knowledge has resulted in some teachers making obscure assumptions, reinforcing negative stereotypes about Islam and the Middle East; and most importantly, impeding students’ academic and social progress (Aburumuh, Sith, & Ratcliffe, 2010, p. 21). A teacher from Virginia explained Middle Eastern Muslim students are “the lost sheep in the school system. They fall through the cracks in our categories” (Wingfield, & Karaman, 1995, p. 7). Additionally, a study conducted by Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee (Anti Discrimination Committee, (ADC, 2002) found that, similar to other marginalized groups, Middle Eastern and Muslim American students regularly heard negative stereotypes about their culture disguised as jokes; but when the they called foul, their peers, teachers and administrators responded that their comments were “not to be taken seriously” (p. 5). The ADC believe there should be “greater public awareness and acknowledgement and ignoring the cultural identity of Middle Eastern, Muslims is “just another form of racism” (Wingfield & Karaman, 1995, p. 7).

Oppressive treatment of students can also manifest in “direct forms of racism, discrimination, and harassment” (Pollock, 2001, p. 3). Since the 9/11 attacks, some
teachers allowed their fears and anger transgress into classroom. The Committee on Islamic American Relations (CAIR, 2006), has documented instances where teachers throughout the nation have asked their Middle Eastern, Muslim American students for information about the terrorist attacks, commented negatively on their Arabic names, or ignored other students taunting them. Due to misrepresentation of Middle East and Islam in the media and the limited instructional resources available to teachers, educational polls note that this factor does little to eliminate the personal biases of teachers and school administrators (Subedi, 2006). Additionally, reports of discrimination, bullying, and exclusion by Middle Eastern, Muslim students has increased substantially since 9/11 (CAIR, 2006). Studies have documented Muslim students observing widespread misunderstandings and negative perceptions about Islam in their schools, which makes them feel isolated from their peers and school community (Ahmad & Szpara, 2003; Ayish, 2003). In large part, this bullying is linked to cultural misunderstanding (CAIR, 2006). For example, girls who wear the hijab (head scarf) report feeling the most vulnerable (Britto, 2011). What is most disturbing about the bullying Middle Eastern, Muslim American students experience is the geopolitical situation they happen to be a byproduct of; which “they cannot control and are often hard-pressed to even understand” (Britto, 2011, p. 8). And thus, the most challenging aspect of teaching Middle Eastern, Muslim American students is for educators to move past the damaging stereotypes deeply ingrained in American consciousness and classrooms, alike (Said, 1994).

Students respond differently to oppressive treatments. Some become over achievers (Friend, 1993), as in the case of Arab-American students, as they have
traditionally met the behavioral and social expectations of their teachers, conducive to academic success” (Dwairy, 2004; Suleiman, 1996). While, others have experienced an “array of hidden injuries” (Osajima, 1993). Regardless of the apparent differences between Middle Eastern, Muslim American students who thrive academically and those who “fail, or simply fail to distinguish themselves” (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 27); they all experience oppression (Freire, 1970).

**Othering and Practice: Curriculum and Instruction**

Scholars (Suleiman, 2000; Taylor & Whittaker, 2003) recognize curriculum plays a significant role in the negative schooling experiences of Middle Eastern, Muslim students, as traditional curriculum does not fully convey their cultural stories. Additionally, recent research suggests that state mandated curriculum and educators can negatively influence how information about Islam is being taught as a result of the skewed media representation of Muslim in media. (Douglass, 2009). Middle Eastern, Muslim-American youth have experienced stereotypes that categorize them as bombers, billionaires, and or (culturally) backwards (Wingfield & Karaman, 1995). These stereotypes can reinforce the message that all Middle Easterners and Muslims are inherently violent and foreign (Said, 1978), and perpetuate the culturally alienating power structures in schools through the promotion of white middle class norms (Miller, 1995).

The hostile Muslim/Middle Eastern rhetoric propagated in Western media and discourse has transpired into classrooms textbooks, and in turn curriculum and instruction, and libraries throughout the United States. The ‘knowledge’ many students have about the Middle Easterners and Muslims is misleading because the region and
religion are denigrated and marginalized or incomplete because of exclusion and ignored from the lesson plans (Al-Hazza & Lucking, 2007; Brockway, 2007; Sabry & Bruna, 2007). What makes these partial knowledges problematic is that they are often taught through the ‘hidden’ curriculum (Borrero, Cruz, Suda, & Yeh, 2012). Cowell (1972) defines the hidden curriculum as “that which the school teaches without, in general, intending or being aware that it is taught” (p. 13). Because this kind of knowledge is taught indirectly, and often unintentionally, it carries more educational significant than the official curriculum (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hanson, 1993). If knowledge about the Middle East and Islam is created in comparison to an accepted norm – that of a class of Anglo-Americans (Aziz, 2012), then educators across the nation are unintentionally “teaching the next generation a very biased perspective about a religion and a region that is gaining strength in today’s world” (Brockway, 2007, p. 20).

Brockway’s (2007) study found that history textbooks used in classrooms throughout the country “present a biased perspective of the Middle East and Islam through word use, omission of data and the presentation of inaccurate information” (p. 82). Similarly, the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) and the Middle East Outreach Council (MEOC) researched history and geography textbooks used in classroom throughout the nation, and found an over portrayal of deserts, camels and nomads in the chapter on the Middle East (Barlow, 1994). Even some well-intended teachers use the Bedouin image as somehow typifying [Middle Eastern] culture (Suleiman, 1996). Meanwhile, in reality “about two percent of people in the Middle East are traditionally Bedouin” (Wingfield, & Karaman, 1995, p. 9). Not surprisingly, some
Middle Eastern and Muslim youth feel they have to give up their cultural and religious identity in place of an academic identity (Miller, 1995; Nasir & Saxe, 2003; Olsen, 1997).

Historically Middle Easterners and Muslims were generally ignored in literature or inaccurately portrayed in textbooks, as the limited information found was offered exclusively from a Western perspective (Al-Hazza, & Lucking, 2007; Naber, 2000; Suleiman, 1996). Even before the September eleventh attack and influx of Middle Eastern, Muslims immigration in the United States, an imperialist perspective of exclusion or “other” took shape (Said, 1978). The exclusion of Middle Easterners and Muslims in literature was reflective of the socio cultural assimilation era. Nonetheless, the systematic exclusion was, and continue to be, psychologically detrimental for Middle Eastern, Muslim students (Subedi, 2006). For instance, Landt (2011) explains the “feelings of marginalization, invisibility, and rejection can occur when students do not see self reflected in what they read” (p. 14). The omission of Middle Easterner experiences fosters ineptitude in Middle Eastern children and youth. As a result, these students may surrender aspects of their Middle Eastern and Islamic heritage in favor of assimilation as a gateway to integrate and feel accepted by their peers.

The feelings of isolation and inadequacy among Middle Eastern American students persist as institutionalized education continues to serve as a vessel for the nations political interests (Gregory, 2004). As Middle Easterners and Muslims inclusion within mainstream educational literature is taking shape, the representation of said group is not without bias, because “when writing about topics that concern the Middle East [and Islam], American writers do not consult world area experts” (Said, 1978), resulting in
several texts offering “serious misinformation and frequently only American-centered perspectives” (Barlow, 1994, p. 3). Because Middle Easterners and Muslims are predominantly represented in literature and text from a foreign perspective, the narrative lacks authority, as the information is, at best, sympathetic (Lowery, 2010). Although more likely, the literary foreign perspective depicts Middle Eastern, Muslims offensively (Aziz, 2012; Barlow, 1994; Said, 1978).

Muslim scholars express concern regarding information about Islam offered in most American textbooks, because the misinformation ensures “[American] students will never receive the information necessary to correct the misconceptions produced [about Islam and the Middle East] at the high school level. Misinformation here is very damaging, because “there may never be a chance to rectify it” (Barlow, 1994, p. 3). Textbooks, particularly history texts, are promoted as a source for learning facts about cultures and regions. Understandably, Muslims express frustration when confronted with the disparity of what they read about Islam as “facts” and what they know about Islam to be true (Ahmad & Szpara, 2003).

**Culturally Relevant Curriculum**

Students interest in learning and sense of belonging in school can be enhanced when the curriculum and instructional content reflects their cultural values and identities (Al-Hazza & Butcher, 2008a; Bergin, 1999; Friere, 1970; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Ladson-Billings (1994) proposes educators, especially educators of diverse student populations, connect with all students by adopting a ‘culturally relevant’ pedagogy built on their experiences to validate and preserve their culture, and “transcend
the negative effects of the dominant culture” (p. 17). Teachers can challenge the oppressive nature of traditional schooling by teaching to all students. Researchers recommend teachers committed to challenging oppression integrate the diverse cultures of their students into their classroom and curriculum and instructional strategies to teach in a culturally relevant way (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Phillips, 1983; Sheets, 1995; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1993).

It is imperative for teachers to learn about and integrate Middle Eastern, Muslim culture in their class, as the historic achievements and oppression of Middle Easterners and Muslims is generally ignored in most American classrooms. Wingfield & Karaman (1995) assert that in a culturally [relevant] classroom, “there is no good reason why a historical and cultural dimension of the Middle East and Islam cannot be discussed” (p. 14). Culturally relevant curriculum aims to challenge the teacher and students’ understanding of different cultures and perspectives by working against biased forms of knowledge that students have about the Middle East and Islam. The pedagogy aims not just to increase the students’ content knowledge, but requires student and teacher to be “vulnerable to think about [those who have traditionally been marginalized] in an empathetic way” (personal communication, P. Loeza, October 15, 2015). Rather, than teaching to the dominant culture, culturally relevant curriculum teaches to all students (Kumashiro, 2000).

It is essential for teachers to offer all students valid representation and accounts of diverse cultures and social groups. Freire (1970) believes that education should serve as a vessel of empowering the “oppressed to gain their sense of humanity, in turn
overcoming their condition” (p. 54). It is critical for all students to be exposed to authentic stories and the injustices of Middle Eastern, Muslims as exposure facilitates understanding and validates the history by acknowledging their plight for equality. Additionally, hooks (1994) insists all teachers are capable of empowering students, however, “the learning process comes easiest to those […] who believe there is an aspect of [teaching] that is sacred; who believe that [their] job is not merely to share” (p. 13). When educators teach as the only source of knowledge in the classroom, student engagement and learning is limited to the confines of the teacher’s perspective. In doing so, teachers severely impede students’ academic, social and personal growth by disconnecting them from the curriculum. Instead, educators committed to social justice, readily integrate Middle Eastern students’ cultural backgrounds and experiences, as they accept their role as both teacher and student. Ladson-Billings (1994) contends that culturally relevant educators empower students by offering them a platform to voice their stories; their truths. She emphasizes the significance of culturally relevant curriculum as conducive to student comprehension of academic content, improving connection to the curriculum and creating an overall culture of care.

Critical pedagogy stresses great emphasis on the role of the teacher to exhibit cultural competency to ensure the curriculum utilized in their classroom and instruction is culturally relevant and authentic (Friere, 1970; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1992). The limited educational resources available to teachers on the Middle East and Islam, personal preconceptions of teachers and school administrators are likely to infiltrate into instructions and curriculum (Subedi, 2006). Nieto (2002) instructs educators to think
beyond the obvious properties often highlighted in multicultural education, such as major holidays, clothing and foods. Instead, educators need to develop cultural knowledge and sensitivity focused on the social values within the Middle Eastern, Muslim traditions to facilitate a deeper understanding (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Greenfield, 2000).

Students can not understand, and certainly they cannot challenge the injustices experienced by Middle Eastern, Muslims, or any marginalized group within and beyond the borders of the United States, without a teacher’s moral obligation to teach to their students’ academic, emotional, and cultural needs (Aburumuh, et al., 2010; El-Haj, 2006).

In an increasingly globalized and transnational society, teachers must be culturally responsive by demonstrating appreciation and sympathy for others’ cultural heritages and reflecting their experiences in the curriculum (Gay, 1995; Neuharth-Pritchett, Payne, & Reiff, 2004). Al-Hazza and Lucking (2007) assert that teachers who express regard for ethnic and cultural diversity instill similar behavior in their students. Culturally relevant instruction examines multiple perspectives about the Middle East and Islam by the teacher and students to developing a comprehensive understanding of the culture and greater acceptance of the group (Al-Hazza & Lucking, 2007), while simultaneously narrowing the “gap between home and school culture” (Sabry & Bruna, 2007, p. 44). It only takes one teacher to help a child feel at ease in their own skin and surroundings.
Authentic Multicultural Literature

“Literature is one medium in which the world is presented to us” (Lowery, 2000, p. 2); as they allow readers to learn about others and self (Bishop, 2003; Gee, 2001); and have the potential to influence children and youths’ identity formation (Gee, 2001; Heath, 2011). The stories teachers exclude and the ones they integrate in their classroom curriculum, can impact the way children and youth perceive themselves (Chaudhri & Teale, 2013). Gopalakrishnan (2011) defines multicultural children’s literature as the “sociocultural experiences of previously underrepresented groups” (p. 26). She advocates for the continued development and integration of multicultural literature into mainstream education, as it validates the struggles and celebrates the contributions of the disenfranchised (Gopolakrishnan, 2011). Multicultural literature has the power to test oppressive discourse and biases, as these stories highlight varied and intricate human experiences (Bishop, 1982; Chaudhri & Teale, 2013). This is especially pertinent to Middle Eastern, Muslim children and youth as it allows them to “name [their] own reality” (Delgado, 1995, p. 57).

It is essential students to have access to authentic multicultural literature, reflective of their cultural experiences, instead of stereotypes and misrepresentations (Aburumuh, Smith & Ratcliffe, 2010; Gopalakrishnan, 2011; Madsen, 2012; Nieto, 2002). Bishop (2003) defines cultural authenticity stories are as authors who successfully “reflect the cultural perspectives of the people whom he or she is writing about, making readers from the inside group believe he or she, knows what’s going on” (p. 33). Authors of authentic Middle Eastern, Muslim American literature intricately weaves stories about
their native “cultural roots on which they draw and the diverse ways in which these
cultural roots play out in the U.S. (Majaj, 2008, p. 19). Culturally authentic picture or
story books can be used as a great resource in aiding students to understand, appreciate
and respect self and others (Aziz, 2012; Gopalakrishnan, 2011); while offering counter
stories for readers “to reflect on cultural differences from the perspective of shared
humanity” (Mo & Shen, 2003, p. 203).

Multicultural literature should “provide children with insights into power and
sociopolitical issues while also serving to challenge the dominant, mono cultural
perspective” (Madsen, 2012, p. 12). Students from all cultural backgrounds need to be
exposed to the contribution of and injustices endured by Middle Eastern, Muslims as
exposure facilitates understanding and validates the history of the oppressed by
acknowledging their plight for equality. To successfully challenge the bias Middle
Eastern, Muslim image, educators should integrate culturally authentic literature into the
curriculum. For example, Al-Hazza and Butcher (2008a) caution, “Sometimes schools
include a folkloric and ‘superficial approach’ to [incorporate] Arab’s into the curriculum,
but do not give students enough variety of literature and information to truly understand
the Arab culture” (p. 211). Middle Eastern, Muslim literature, like all multicultural
children’s literature, should not be applied as the “flavor of the month,” as the celebration
model dismisses the literary significance of the text. In addition, the stories seclusion to a
specific day or month can hinder non Middle Eastern American students from forming
cultural connections to the experiences of the Middle Eastern, Islamic culture literature.
Instead, Al-Hazza and Butcher (2010) suggest educators introduce Middle Eastern
literature into the curriculum as source of inspiration for Middle Eastern students and as an opportunity for all students to identify with Middle Eastern characters in the stories they read, so that they may cultivate understanding and appreciation for Middle Eastern culture. When educators integrate authentic Middle Eastern, Muslim literature into the curriculum, they offer a platform for all students to challenge the socially constructed, single story of the Middle Eastern/Muslim terrorist, perpetuated by the mass media.

Summary

The biased perspective of the Middle East and Islam, coupled with mass media propaganda and America’s political interests, require widespread efforts to educate society about Middle East, Islam through the continued analysis and development of authentic Middle Eastern multicultural children literature. It is imperative that Middle Eastern, Muslim Americans children are offered an accurate representation to see themselves in books, as it is critical to their psychological and emotional wellbeing. In addition, inclusion of the Middle Eastern American literature in classroom curriculum is essential in challenging the single story ascribed to minority groups and the negative implications that it entails.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The project was designed to share research findings with the Kindergarten through twelfth grade educators about the perpetuation of the “single story” of Middle Eastern/Muslim Americans, the implications it poses for said group, and provide ways to rectify the Middle Eastern/Muslim image in their classrooms through authentic multicultural literature. To encourage deeper understanding of culturally bias principles, the critical research study was incorporated into a ninety-minute lecture. Hands-on materials to emphasize and clarify content and important points accompanied a PowerPoint presentation comprised of slides with relevant quotes, images and videos. According to Clark (2008), PowerPoint slide shows “can allow the [presenter] to turn a traditionally conservative practice into a bridge between direct and [reflective] learning models” (p. 40). As such, the utilization of a visual backdrop to convey significant findings of the research improved participants’ understanding of the content.

In an effort encourage participation throughout the presentation, the presenter incorporated dialogue driven teaching strategies. Discussions help participants build personal connections to the content. Thus, open-ended questions are liberally incorporated throughout the training to collaboratively recognize and “challenge a system in which inequity is perpetuated” (Cozart & Gordon, 2006, p. 11). The ninety-minute presentation is presented in a classroom at Thomas Edison Elementary School. Authentic Middle Eastern food and drinks will be provided in an attempt to introduce educators to
the culture and foster an environment conducive to dialogue, and ultimately recognizing and challenging the Middle Eastern/Muslim cultural bias in the classroom.

**Research Design**

The project is grounded in qualitative research. Merriam (2009) explains “[q]ualitative researchers are interested in how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, [and] what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 14). With qualitative research, “the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (Merriam, 2009, p. 15). The data is specifically collected and presented from a qualitative, critical research paradigm. Significant findings from the research were presented via PowerPoint slideshow to facilitate easy flow and grasp of an arguably, sensitive subject matter. Additionally, a brief overview of the comprehensive recommended books (appendix D) available for children and adolescents is provided. Finally, teaching strategies and an Example Lesson Plan (appendix E) were integrated throughout the presentation to encourage discussion and offer participants hands on training to effectively integrate Middle Eastern American literature into their classroom curricula to encourage students to think “about the larger world outside their experiences, classrooms, homes, and communities” (Lowery, 2010, p. 269).

**Critical Research**

The project utilizes qualitative, critical research with the intent to examine and present the key components of the research effectively in ninety minutes. Critical inquiry is influenced by Freire’s transformative and emancipatory education and aims “to critique and challenge” (Merriam, 2009, p. 34). Utilizing critical research to collect and present
pertinent information regarding the single Middle Eastern, Muslim story encourages participants to confront preconceived dispositions relative to said group. Additionally, “Critical qualitative research [also] raises questions about how power relations advance the interest of one group while oppressing those of other groups, and the nature of truth and the construction of knowledge” (Merriam, 2009, p. 35). The study includes information relative to the current and historical portrayals of Middle Easterners and Muslims accompanied by images to encourage personal reflections and discussion.

“Critical education research […] queries the context where learning takes place, including the larger systems of society, the culture and institutions that shape educational practice, and the structure and historical conditions framing practice” (Merriam, 2009, p. 35). The contents of the presentation are intended to emphasize the (un)intended consequences of the single Middle Eastern, Muslim story, specifically as it relates to Middle Eastern, Muslim American students. In addition to understanding and critiquing the status quo, critical research seeks to transform society (Patton, 2002). The final component of the presentation recommends educators to integrate authentic, relevant multicultural literature to empower them to challenge cultural and religious bias in the classroom.

Madsen (2012) notes all students need to have access to authentic multicultural literature, reflective of their cultural experiences, “instead of stereotypes and misrepresentations, [as] books should provide children with insights into power and sociopolitical issues while also serving to challenge the dominant, mono cultural perspective” (p. 12). Thus, it is essential for students to be exposed to the contribution of
and injustices endured by Middle Easterners and Muslims, as exposure facilitates understanding and validates the history of the oppressed by acknowledging their plight for equality.

**PowerPoint Presentation**

PowerPoint, a computer generated software, was utilized to condense vast information and present the research. PowerPoint “posse multiple attributes designed to produce […] sensory stimulation” (Levasseur & Kanan, 2004, p. 3). Utilizing PowerPoint slideshow “allows [the presenter] to enhance lectures with both auditory and visual stimuli” (Levasseur & Kanan, 2004, p. 3). However, Goldstein cautions presenters that when using PowerPoint, the visuals should develop the message, not become the message; so to allow the presenter “to be conversational, natural, and spontaneous” (as cited in Minh, 2004, p. 221). Graphics were integrated in the slideshow with thoughtful consideration. Additionally, participants were provided with the recommended authentic book list and a copy of the slideshow to promote understanding (Levasseur & Kanan, 2004). While computer generated software was used to share the content, the majority of the presentation did not come from the slides, but “from the depth and breadth of the presenter’s extemporaneous discussion of the topic during the presentation” (Minh, 2004, p. 221). The PowerPoint slide show was divided into three subject areas: an overview of the danger of the single Middle Eastern, Muslim story, introducing authentic Middle Eastern/Muslim American literature to offer diverse and accurate representations, and utilization of authentic literature in classroom with an emphasis on culturally relevant pedagogy.
Single Middle East, Muslim Story

Our lives, our cultures, are composed of many overlapping stories. Novelist, Chimamanda Adichie (2009) shares how she discovered her culturally authentic voice through diverse experiences and representations; she also notes grave misunderstanding result from only being offered a single story about another person or country. The concept of being misunderstood is certainly applicable to Middle Eastern, Muslim American students, as many of their peers and teachers may have preconceived notions about the experiences. Our sympathy for their plight unintentionally labels, and perceives, them simply as “victims or terrorists.” The generalization limits us from considering who they are beyond a single tragic experience. The limitation deters us from the recognizing the combination of experiences that make up one’s existence and identity.

Historically Middle Easterners and Muslims were generally ignored in literature or inaccurately portrayed in textbooks, as the limited information found was offered exclusively from a Western perspective (Barlow, 1994). Unfortunately, not much has changed in offering varied perspectives of the Middle East, Middle Easterners and Muslims (Brockway, 2007). For example, information on said group generally remains vague and inaccurate, as “[o]ver-portrayal of deserts, camels and nomads” is consistent on the chapter covering the Middle East (Barlow, 1994, p. 18). Even some well-intentioned teachers use the Bedouin image as somehow typifying the '[Middle Eastern] culture'" (Wingfield & Karaman, 1995). Additionally, because American writers do not consult world area experts when writing about the Middle East and Islam, the information
is generally presented and written from a dominant western perspective (Brockway, 2007); wherein several texts “offer serious misinformation and frequently only America-centered perspectives” (Barlow, 1994, p. 3). Finally, the general exclusion of narratives from Middle East/Muslim perspectives in the West is alarming, because:

"it is only a slight overstatement to say that [Muslims] and Arabs are essentially seen as either oil suppliers or potential terrorists. Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab-[Muslim] life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Arab world. What we have, instead, is a series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world presented in such a way as to make that world vulnerable" (Said, 1978).

**Culturally Authentic Recommended Book List**

Although it is difficult to define cultural authenticity, according to Bishop (2003), explains cultural authenticity as the degree to which a book mirrors the values and norms of a particular culture and the “authenticating details of language and everyday life for members of the specific culture” (p. 35). An insider reading a book about their own culture, knows it when they see it. These stories have universal experiences seeping through carefully crafted authentic characters and settings (Fox & Short, 2003). The collective and particular culture merge to form a story in which the Middle Eastern, Muslim reader can identify with, while readers from various cultural backgrounds can learn about misunderstood culture and likely determine that there are more similarities than there are differences among cultures (Lower, 2010). Although there is no single view of life that defines a culture, certain topics, features, and essential beliefs can be
expended to establish cultural authenticity (Bishop, 2003, Gopalakrishanan, 2011; Madsen, 2012).

In assisting educators in their search for accurate multicultural children’s literature, Al-Hazza and Lucking (2007), suggest teachers first authenticate the credentials of the author and illustrator, if applicable. Stories written by authors and illustrators who are outside of the culture can “misrepresent and silent significant groups of people and their values through a lack of inclusion” (Young, 2003, p. 3). The writing noticeably lacks integrity, as Anglo American writers have not lived the realities of a culturally diverse child, “they do not have that child’s identity, culture, or family history” (Seto, 1995, p. 170). Educators should examine the plot as well as images for accuracy; and lastly, choose recently published books as they are more authentic (Al-Hazza, 2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author’s credential</td>
<td>Is the author culturally native?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrator’s credential</td>
<td>Is the illustrator from the same cultural background as the text or spent a significant amount of time in the native country?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally sensitive plot</td>
<td>Is the plot sensitive to the norms and values of the culture?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally sensitive images</td>
<td>Are the images accurately reflective of the culture?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication date</td>
<td>Was the story published before 1979?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: *Culturally Authentic Book List Criteria*
Middle Eastern/Muslim American multicultural literature was inspected for accuracy by cross referencing with the criteria listed in Table 1. The books included in the researchers comprehensive list of recommended readings; Recommended Book List: Authentic Middle Eastern, Muslim American Multicultural Literature (appendix D) met at least four of the five criteria of culturally authentic literature, author’s credentials, illustrator’s credentials, culturally sensitive plot, and the book’s publication date, as listed in Table 1. The Recommended Book List is demonstrative of literature available to students; and represents a few of the Middle Eastern, Muslim children and youth who have endured and flourished. The real and fictional characters in the books direct readers’ curiosity to varied cultural experiences and universally relevant topics, such as family, friendship, and love. The books can also be utilized to validate the lives of Middle Eastern, Muslim American students who rarely see themselves accurately represented in literature (Al-Hazza & Lucking, 2007; Madsen, 2012); and they can inspire readers of different cultures from their own to make connections on a universal, human level (Azziz, 2006).

The recommended books were chosen for their literary quality as well as offering varied and complex representations of the Middle Eastern, Muslim experience and textual features. Many of the books include, maps, glossaries and images to “teach students how information is delivered and can be understood in a variety of modes” (Chaudhri, 2013, p. 1). Culturally authentic literature can also offer cultural relevancy by providing Middle Eastern and Muslim students a source of connection to the curriculum (Gopalakrishnan, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Educators can introduce all students to
an accurate portrayal of a misrepresented group to bridge understanding and cooperation. Finally, said literature is can also serve as a source of empowerment for Middle Eastern, Muslim students (Al-Hazza & Lucking, 2007).

**Utilizing Authentic Literature in Classroom**

The teaching methods served as an essential component in training teachers to utilize the books as regular classroom curriculum resource. It is critical for educators to integrate authentic Middle Eastern Muslim American literature in their curriculum, because it is offers educators the opportunity to rectify misinformation about the Middle East and Islam (Barlow, 1994). The Middle Eastern, Muslim books can be integrated in classroom curriculum to serve various social purposes while meeting academic state standards. For example, the Reading Language Arts standards in the primary grades requires students to “read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p. 24). This standard emphasizes significance of literacy progress through a variation of fiction and nonfiction books.

An Example Lesson Plan (appendix E) for Senzai’s (2010) book, *Shooting Kabul*, is utilized towards the end of the training to demonstrate effectively integrating an authentic Middle Eastern, Muslim book in their regular classroom curriculum. The book is a historical fiction, based loosely on the author’s husband’s experience as an Afghan youth seeking refuge in America during the Cold War. The lesson plan is developed for 4th grade English Language Arts. The subject of the lesson is to write a “letter to the
author” after reading the book as a class. The activity will require students to recall and record information from the book by producing a letter detailing their connection to the story. Students will be able to form a connection to the Afghan American culture by distinguishing similarities and differences with a favorite character from the story. The lesson is developed with the goal of having students write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic, convey ideas and information clearly, and to connect thoughts with categories of information using words and phrases (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). The Example Lesson Plan details the role of the teacher as she instructs, observes and assesses the students using GRR, to model the steps and skills required of developing and producing a letter independently (Fisher & Frey, 2008).

The Example Lesson Plan is a precursor to the workshop component of the presentation, in which participants will be tasked with choosing a book from the authentic book list and collaborating with a group to construct a lesson plan for their classrooms to naturally and effectively integrate into their classroom. The Middle Eastern American literature should not merely be used as a cultural flavor of the month (Al-Hazza & Butcher, 2008b; Banks, 2002; Nieto, 2002). Instead, the literature should be highlighted as it connects to classroom content standards, and an emphasis on multicultural, social justice objectives (Banks, 2009, Brockway, 2007; Douglas, 2009; Gay, 1995).

**Teaching Methods**

Teaching strategies were integrated in the cultural relativity training, including critical pedagogy and lecture. Critical pedagogy challenges the banking concept of
education utilized in traditional instruction. Freire (1970) explains the banking method "transforms students into receiving objects. It attempts to control thinking and action, leads men and women to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power" (Freire, 1970, p. 77). Although lecturing is utilized throughout the presentation to introduce participants to the dangers of the single story, the presentation acknowledges the participants in the process of understanding with frequent opportunities for participation, dialogue and reflection. Critical pedagogy, as a performative practice, “opens up a space where [participants] should be able to come to terms with their own power as central agents; it provides a sphere where the unconditional freedom to question and assert is central to the purpose of democracy” (Giroux, 2006, p. 32). Acknowledging the audiences’ experiences and perspectives helps bridge personal connection to the content and enhances the quality of the presentation.

**Summary**

A variety of methods including critical inquiry, PowerPoint slide show, and cooperative teaching strategies were used to facilitate understanding of the content and encourage audience participation. The training aims to inform educators about the dangers of the single Middle Eastern, Muslim story impact it has on Middle Eastern, Muslim students in their classroom. Educators are encouraged take action by utilizing authentic cultural literature and picture books throughout the classroom curriculum to effectively challenge the single story ascribed to the Middle Eastern, Islamic culture and people.
Chapter 4

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND REFLECTIONS

Discussion

When asked about culturally bias practices in their classrooms, teacher usually assume that they treat all of their students the same. Teachers often reinforce the negative Middle Eastern, Muslim stereotypes by supporting the hidden curriculum and integrating their own culturally biased perspectives throughout the classroom (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hanson, 1993). The hidden curriculum is an active component of the daily school schedule and “serves to transmit tacit messages to students about values, attitudes and principles” (Kentli, 2009, p. 88). Children develop concepts of race at a very young age; some researchers suggest that some children have already developed racist attitudes and behaviors even before they enter the educational system (Bigler & Liben, 1993; Doyle & Aboud, 1995). Teachers often believe their responsibilities are limited to the subject and state standards. By separating the social learning from academic schooling, teachers are unintentionally promoting and reinforcing broken an inequitable learning environment.

“Critical education research [...] queries the context where learning takes place, including the larger systems of society, the culture and institutions that shape educational practice, and the structure and historical conditions framing practice” (Merriam, 2009, p. 35). The contents of the presentation are intended to emphasize the (un)intended consequences of the single Middle Eastern, Muslim story, specifically as it relates to
Middle Eastern, Muslim American students. In addition to understanding and critiquing the status quo, critical research seeks to transform society (Patton, 2002, p. 131). The final component of the presentation recommends educators to integrate authentic, relevant multicultural literature to empower them to challenge cultural and religious bias in the classroom.

Madsen (2012) stresses all students should be able to see self and culture honestly reflected in literature, as such narratives offer glimpses into issues of power, while simultaneously confronting the dominant cultural norm” (p. 12). Thus, it is crucial all students be exposed to books that represents the Middle Eastern culture honestly, so they may learn about to the contribution of and discriminations sustained by Middle Eastern, Muslims. The exposure to said literature can enable empathy and validates their experience; affirming their plight for equality (Al-Hazza & Lucking, 2007; Lowery, 2000).

**Cultural Relativity Training**

The ninety-minute training was designed in an effort to provide an overview of the negative impact of Middle Eastern, Muslim bias in the school and classrooms, with the goal of encouraging teachers to challenge the anti Middle Eastern and Muslim rhetorical in their classroom and curriculum. When asked, many culturally conscious educators report the importance of integrating activities that eliminate racial and cultural biases and promote individual differences and similarities (Grant & Tate, 1995), however, they also report that priority should be given to core subject matter, as many teachers dichotomize and prioritize (Artiles, Barreto, Pena, & McClafferty 1998). The
primary objective of the training was to provide a comfortable, cooperative atmosphere to allow teachers and administrators to think critically about their own perception of the Middle East and Islam in an effort to eliminate bias practices (Britto, 2011) through the inclusion of Middle Eastern, Muslim American literature in their classroom curriculum (Al-Hazza & Lucking, 2007; Lowery, 2000; Lowery, 2010).

The training was comprised of three topic areas. First, to provided an overview of the danger of the single Middle Eastern/Muslim story presented using research, images and video via PowerPoint to enhance discussion and promote understanding (Levasseur & Kanan, 2004). Next, the researcher introduced and reviewed the Recommended Book List (appendix D) highlighting authentic Middle Eastern, Muslim American literature available to children and adolescents was introduced and provided as a handout. Lastly, the research integrated teaching strategies throughout the presentation to encourage discussion and an Example Lesson Plan (appendix E) and group activity offered participants hands on training to successfully integrate authentic Middle Eastern, Muslim American literature into their classroom curricula.

A ten question quantitative survey (appendix A) was distributed to participants upon entering the training; to ascertain background information about the participants and their current knowledge and use of multicultural and Middle Eastern, Muslim American literature in the classroom. A short mixed method survey included two quantitative questions and two open ended questions (appendix B), to encourage more detailed responses was distributed at the conclusion of the training. The aim of the surveys was to measure the effectiveness of the presentation (Salant & Dillamn, 1994) and collect
feedback to improve future cultural relativity trainings (Knox & Burkard, 2009).

**Survey Questions**

**Pre Training Survey**

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your age range?
3. What is your ethnicity?
4. What is your profession?
5. If you are a teacher, what grade do you teach?
6. If you are a secondary teacher (6-12), what subject do you teach?
7. Are you familiar with multicultural literature?
8. Do you use multicultural literature in your classroom?
9. Are you familiar with Middle Eastern/Muslim American literature?
10. Do you use Middle Eastern/Muslim American literature in your classroom?

**Post Training Survey**

1. Do you feel the training prepared you to use Middle Eastern/Muslim American literature in your classroom?
2. Do you intend to use Middle Eastern/Muslim American literature in your classroom?
3. If you do not intend to use Middle Eastern/Muslim American literature in your classroom, please explain why?
4. Please note any comments, questions, and/or suggestions for the presenter.
## Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
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<td>Teacher</td>
<td>53 +</td>
</tr>
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<td>53 +</td>
</tr>
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<td>42 – 52</td>
</tr>
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<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td>31 – 41</td>
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<td>42 – 52</td>
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<td>Participant 28</td>
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<td>Teacher</td>
<td>25 – 30</td>
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<td>Asian</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>31 – 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 30</td>
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<td>Teacher</td>
<td>31 – 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Other</td>
<td>53 +</td>
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<td>Participant 35</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>42 – 52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Demographic Profile of the Participants
The training consisted of 35 adult participants from Thomas Edison Language Institute. The minimum age for participation in the training was 18, as the project was geared towards teachers and administrators. Additionally, men and women from the four major racial groups of African American, Asian, Caucasian, and Hispanic, attended and participated in the ninety-minute training. Of the 35 participants, 15 identified as Caucasian, 15 identified as Hispanics, 2 were Asian, 1 was African American; and 2 identified as Other. Additionally, 31 females and 4 males represented the five racial group. The 2 youngest participants were between the ages of 18 and 24, and the six oldest participants were over the age of 53; the average age of the sample is between the ages of 31 and 41. Further, 29 of the 35 participants indicated their occupation as teacher; fourteen taught Kindergarten, nine primary grades (first-fifth grade), seven taught secondary grades (sixth-eighth grade), and three taught multiple grades. Of those who taught secondary grades, three taught English and History, three taught Math and Science and one taught an elective course; Music. The other 6 participants were administrators, classroom aids, a counselor and a college student. Table 2 illustrates an overview of participant characteristics.

Figure 1 compares the participants’ familiarity with general multicultural books and Middle Eastern, Muslim American literature. Regarding familiarity with multicultural literature, 4 of the 35 participants responded that they were very familiar with multicultural literature and 2 participants answered they were very familiar with Middle Eastern, Muslim American literature. The majority of teachers and staff believed they were familiar with books about diverse cultures, however only 3 participants
responded they were very familiar with Middle Eastern, Muslim American stories. Additionally, less than a quarter of respondents were not sure how familiar they were with multicultural literature; but nearly half were not sure if they were familiar with Middle Eastern, Muslim American literature. Only 1 participant answered he was unfamiliar with the multicultural books in general, and 1 responded they were unfamiliar or very unfamiliar with Middle Eastern, Muslim American literature.

Figure 1: A Comparison of Participants’ Familiarity with Literature

Figure 2 compares the participants’ integration of general multicultural literature with integration of Middle Eastern, Muslim American literature at the start of the training. Regarding the integration of multicultural books in the classroom, 3 teachers indicated they used the literature often, 25 used the books occasionally, and
administrator, counselor or other employers responded not applicable. Meanwhile, 6 of the 35 participants said they use Middle Eastern/Muslim literature in their class occasionally, 10 said they rarely used the literature, while 10 said they never use the literature in their classrooms, and 8 declined to answer.

*Figure 2: Comparison of Participants’ Utilization of Literature*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To promote a cooperative learning atmosphere, a familiar and comfortable setting was considered to be an essential element for a positive training session. The Music Room at school site was used as it was a convenient and familiar environment for the staff, with a large seating area and the necessary technological tools to present the contents of the presentation. Authentic Middle Eastern food and drinks was provided as participants entered the training and audience participation was considered and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
encouraged throughout the training.

**Post Survey Results**

*Figure 3: Preparation to use Middle Eastern, Muslim Literature in Classroom*

All of the twenty-nine teachers and one classroom aid felt the presentation prepared them to use Middle Eastern/Muslim American literature in their classrooms; while school administrators, classroom aid, school counselor, college students were *not sure* or determined the question was *not applicable*.

All twenty-four multiple subject and English and History teachers and Music teachers strongly agreed or agreed that after participating in the training they intend to integrate Middle Eastern/Muslim American literature in their classroom curriculum. The
school administrator, classroom aids, school counselor, college student, and Math, Science teachers found the information *not applicable*.

*Figure 4*: Intent to Utilize Middle Eastern, Muslim Literature in Classroom

![Pie chart showing the distribution of participants' intentions regarding the utilization of Middle Eastern, Muslim literature in the classroom.]

**Emerging Themes**

As can be seen in Figure 5, the majority of the participants entered the training with the opinion they were unfamiliar with Middle Eastern, Muslim American literature, categorized as *foreign*; and most of the participants also asserted that the books were *excluded* from the classroom curriculum. Once the training was complete, the effectiveness of the training was categorized through the factors that distinguished between participants who intended to *integrate the books* in their classroom and those who did not (*exclude books*) – the relevance of the literature to their profession, content of the presentation, and interpretation of the concept of the single story ascribed to marginalized groups.
**Figure 5:** Participants’ Familiarity and Utilization of Middle Eastern, Muslim American Literature Pre and Post Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unfamiliar with MEMAL</th>
<th>Relevancy of MEMAL to occupation</th>
<th>Integrate MEMAL from curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excluded MEMAL from curriculum</td>
<td>Contents of the presentation</td>
<td>Exclude MEMAL from curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation of the single story</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: MEMAL = Middle Eastern, Muslim American literature

In regards to the *relevancy of the literature to participant’s profession*, based on the surveys, half of the participants who indicated that they did not intend to use the literature in their “job,” “classroom” or “subject” as was the case for the school administrator, counselor and one of the Math, Science and Music teachers. This is classified as *relevancy* in Figure 5, as relevancy, or lack thereof, to the participant’s occupation or subject matter (such as Math, Science or Music) was a contributing factor to the 17% of total participants who did not intend to integrate Middle Eastern, Muslim American literature in their classrooms. Nonetheless, those that did not intend to use the literature in their class due to lack of relevancy, did not deter their interest in the books.
For example, a Caucasian, female participant indicated that she assist in a dual Spanish/English immersion class and made note that because she offers instruction in Spanish only, she could not read the books with the students, but indicated she wants to “use them somehow.” Also, a Science and Math teacher wrote he “intend[s] to read the books on his free time” as the school has many Middle Eastern students and he “hopes this will help [him] connect with them.”

Pertaining to the content of the presentation, the majority of participants made reference to the overall content of the presentation as significant to their understanding and ultimate intent to use the books in their classroom. Specifically, 25% of teachers noted their appreciation of the book list, indicating, that they “loved that [the presenter] gave examples of books to read at school,” and “showing [them] the pictures of the book covers [was] very helpful felt “inspired to add the books in [their] classroom[s].” Additionally, 10% of teachers reiterated the importance of the hands on component of the training as conducive to preparing them to effectively use the literature, where they were teamed up with other participants who taught the same grade and/or subject to design a lesson or activity utilizing a book from the Recommended Book List (appendix D). For example, a female, Hispanic primary grade teacher noted that, “engaging the audience in the lesson planning activity was a great idea” and “the information [left her] with food for thought.” Another female primary, grade teacher also wrote, “getting up and having movement and working collaboratively was great!” However, based on the feedback, one of the participants referred to the content of the presentation as insufficient, specifically noting one of the videos used in the PowerPoint presentation, “claims many
things (kids are disinterested in literature) but offers no evidence” and said the presentation offers citations, but no evidence. He suggested the presentation would be stronger if it included “at least one study on such an important topic.”

Finally, pertaining to the interpretation of the single story, an overwhelming majority of participants interpreted the research and content of the presentation indicative of intent to integrate the books in classroom curriculum. For example, one of the participants noted, she “thought this presentation was outstanding! As a child of the Middle East growing up in America, I think it would be really interesting if these books would have been used by my teachers.” Although the majority of the participants interpreted the message as it was intended, one participant; a female, Kindergarten teacher between the ages of 42 and 52 demonstrated her frustration, cautioning the researcher to, “be careful to not portray ‘White’ or ‘Western’ viewpoints as ‘bad,’ because most Whites now didn’t contribute to misinformation and are often made to feel guilty simply for being White.”

Conclusion
The ninety-minute training on effectively integrating of Middle Eastern, Muslim American literature in the primary and secondary classroom was received enthusiastically by the staff at Thomas Edison Language Institute. The familiar and relaxed environment and frequent requests for audience participation and inquiry, was conducive to a cooperative exchange of commentary and ideas, the foundation of critical pedagogy, (Freire, 1970). The overwhelmingly positive feedback confirmed that understanding of new content pertaining to Middle Eastern, Muslim bias emerged even within a limited
capacity (Britto, 2011). While the intent of the presentation was to provide a general overview of the importance of challenging the single Middle Eastern story through the integrating of authentic Middle Eastern/Muslim American literature for all students, some of the participants preferred more hard based data and research as evidence that integration of the literature addressed this form of oppression.

Overall, the presenter’s utilization of research, anecdotes, videos, recommended book list, examples for curriculum integration and group workshops highlighted the essence of the training and resonated with the majority of the participants (Bell, 2002; Greene, 1993). The reoccurring theme of the damaging effects of the “single story” attributed to the Middle East and Islam served as a prominent passage to challenge personal bias while enhancing the overall presentation.

**Limitations**

Thirty-five participants attended the training, which is a very small sample. Additionally, only twenty-nine of the total participants were teachers, the target audience of this gender equity training. None of the participants were high school teachers and thus a specific group of teachers’ perspective was excluded from the reception and feedback of information.

**Recommendations**

The systematic negative impact of the single story for Middle Eastern, Muslim American students in the classroom and the subsequent strides needed to eliminate the tremendously damaging consequences of Middle Eastern, Muslim bias in classrooms throughout the nation cannot be amended with one training. Comprehensive cultural and
religious sensitivity trainings and workshops should be obligatory for all teacher and school administrators (Al-Hazza, 2006; Britto 2011; CAIR, 2006). While many cultural groups are eager to see themselves represented in books, students should be encouraged to engage in critical discussions and analysis of these representations. The literature should be approached from a critical justice paradigm (Nieto, 2002), enabling us to better understand ourselves and the greater world around us. The shifting demographics of the United States require we need to learn about diverse cultures (Bhabha, 1997; Gee, 2001; Hoobler & Hobbler, 2003) so that all students may feel they have a place in the world (hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1992).

**Reflections**

Ladson-Billings (1992) notes the importance of “culturally relevant teaching” as conducive to student comprehension of academic content, improving connection to the curriculum and creating an overall culture of care. She strongly believes educators need to connect to a diverse student population to validate their experience with the goal of preserving their complex identities and “transcending the negative effects of the dominant culture” (p. 17). Teachers can challenge the oppressive nature of traditional schooling by teaching to all students. Teachers committed to social justice should reflect diverse cultural backgrounds in their classroom and curriculum and instructional strategies to teach in a culturally relevant way (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Phillips, 1983; Sheets, 1995; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1993). Culturally relevant curriculum aims to challenge the teacher and students’ understanding of different cultures and perspectives by working against biased forms of knowledge that students have about the Middle East.
and Islam. Rather, than teaching to the dominant culture, culturally relevant curriculum teaches to *all* students (Kumashiro, 2000).
APPENDIX A

Pre Survey
PRE TRAINING QUESTIONNAIRE

Culturally Relevant Curriculum:

Challenging the Single Story Narrative in Public School Classrooms

Please answer questions 1-10 before the training begins.

1. What is your gender?
   A. Male
   B. Female

2. What is your age range?
   A. 18-24
   B. 25-30
   C. 31-41
   D. 42-52
   E. 52 +

3. What is your ethnicity?
   A. Caucasian
   B. African American
   C. Hispanic
   D. Asian
   E. Other
4. What is your profession?
   A. Teacher
   B. Administrator
   C. Counselor
   D. Aide
   E. Other ________________________

5. If you are a teacher, what grade do you teach?
   A. Pre K - Kindergarten
   B. 1 - 5
   C. 6 - 8
   D. 9 – 12
   E. Not Applicable

6. If you are a secondary teacher (6-12 grade), what subject do you teach?
   A. English
   B. History
   C. Math
   D. Science
   E. Other ________________________
7. How familiar are you with multicultural literature?
   A. very familiar
   B. familiar
   C. not sure
   D. unfamiliar
   E. not familiar at all

8. Do you use multicultural literature in your classroom?
   A. often
   B. sometimes
   C. not applicable
   D. rarely
   E. never

9. Are you familiar with Middle Eastern/Muslim American literature?
   A. very familiar
   B. familiar
   C. not sure
   D. unfamiliar
   E. not familiar at all
10. Do you use Middle Eastern/Muslim American literature in your classroom?

A. often
B. sometimes
C. not applicable
D. rarely
E. never
APPENDIX B

Post Survey
POST TRAINING SURVEY

Culturally Relevant Curriculum:
Challenging the Single Story Narrative in Public School Classrooms

Please answer questions 1–4 at the end of the training.

1. Do you feel the training prepared you to use Middle Eastern/Muslim American literature in your classroom curriculum?
   A. strongly agree
   B. agree
   C. not sure/not applicable
   D. disagree
   D. strongly disagree

2. Do you intend to use Middle Eastern/Muslim American literature in your classroom curriculum?
   A. strongly agree
   B. agree
   C. not sure/not applicable
   D. disagree
   D. strongly disagree
3. If you do not intend to use Middle Eastern, Muslim American literature in your classroom, please explain why?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

4. Do you have any additional comments, questions, and/or suggestions for the presenter?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX C

PowerPoint Presentation
Culturally Relevant Curriculum:

Challenging the Single Story Narrative in Public School Classrooms
Introduction

Education:
- Graduate Studies (CSUS): Education
- Credential (CSUS): Single Subject (Social Science)
- Bachelor of Arts (CSUS): Sociology
  * Minor: Middle East, Near East, Islamic Studies

Experience:
- SJUSD EL Saturday Program
- Salam Academy
- Natomas Unified School District
- Elder creek Community Center
- New Haven Unified School District
Background

- Afghan-American
- Refugee
- Bilingual
Multicultural Literature?

"Multicultural children’s literature is about the sociocultural experiences of previously underrepresented groups. It validates these groups’ experiences, including those occurring because of differences in language, race, gender, class, ethnicity, identity, and sexual orientation" (Gopalakrishnana, 2011)
Why is Multicultural Literature Important?

Expanding Literacy Through Multicultural Literature

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2BHlkSFMTKc

• Students can see similarities between themselves and others – fostering understanding.

• Students become aware of prejudice and discrimination and can become active in its elimination.

• Promotes engagement, positive self-image, and affirmation of self for students belonging to minority groups.

• Formation of text-to-self connection.
Implications of Multicultural Literature & Common Core/ELD Standards

- Include a combination of classical and contemporary literature and challenging informational texts on a variety of topics. The chosen texts must help students to "gain insights, explore possibilities, and broaden their perspectives" (CA Common Core 2014).

- The Common Core mandates specific content: classical myths and stories from around the world, Shakespeare, American literature, and foundational U.S. documents. This suggests we must include folklore and multicultural literature (CA Common Core 2014).
Multicultural Education Theorists

Gloria Ladson-Billings

Culturally Relevant Teaching: But That’s Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (1995)

- Ladson-Billings explains the significance of culturally relevant instruction to the overall academic achievements of minority students in inadequately funded public schools.
- Her research emphasizes the importance of providing culturally relevant literature as essential to acquiring sustaining knowledge, especially for students in urban schools.
Multicultural Education Theorists

Paulo Freire
*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1974)

- Freire challenges the systematic “culture of silence” in education.

- He argues that in order to promote a socially just classroom, and in turn society, students must read, understand and critically evaluate context and information from the experience of the oppressed.
The Danger of A Single Story

Chimamanda Adichie

Our lives, our cultures, are composed of many overlapping stories. Novelists, Chimamanda Adichie tells the story of how she found her authentic cultural voice - and warns that if we hear only a single story about another person or country a critical misunderstanding.

http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en
Historical Portrayal of Middle East/Muslim Culture in Text

- Generally ignored in literature
- Textbooks include generalizations or inaccurate information
- Information was from Western perspective
Historical Portrayal of Middle East/Muslim Culture in Text

- "So far as the United States seems to be concerned, it is only a slight overstatement to say that Muslims and Arabs are essentially seen as either oil suppliers or potential terrorists. Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab-Muslim life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Arab world. What we have, instead, is a series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world presented in such a way as to make that world vulnerable to military aggression" (Said, 1978).
Current Portrayal of Middle East/Muslim Culture in Text

- Vague and inaccurate: “Over-portrayal of deserts, camels and nomads” in the chapter on the Middle East. Even some well-intentioned teachers use the Bedouin image as somehow typifying the ‘[Middle Eastern] culture’ " (MESA & MEOC, 1995).

- Dominant Western Perspective: “Apparently, when writing about topics that concern the Middle East, American writers do not feel any need to consult world area experts. As a result, several texts offer serious misinformation and frequently only America-centered perspectives” (Barlow, 1995).

- Exclusion of narratives from Middle East/Muslim Perspectives (Said, 1997).
Why is it Critical to Integrate Middle East/Islamic Literature into the Classroom?

• Opportunity for educators to rectify misinformation about the Middle East and Islam

• Cultural Relevancy: Provides Middle Eastern/Muslim American students a source of connection to curriculum

• Introduces all students to an accurate portrayal of a misrepresented group to bridge understanding and cooperation

• A source of empowerment for Middle Eastern/Muslim American students
Examples of Middle East/Muslim American Literature

Primary Grades

*My Father’s Shop* (Satomi Ichikawa)
Age Range: Pre K-3
Summary: A little boy in the Moroccan carpet shop meets tourists from around the world and learns about different languages: English, Spanish, Japanese, French.

*Travelling Man: The Journey of Ibn Battuta* 1325-1354 (James Rumford)
Age Range: K-4
Summary: Rumford retells the story of Ibn Battuta through pictures and maps weaving the tale of not just a traveler in a world long gone, but of a man on his journey through life.

*Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Colors* (Hena Khan)
Grade Level: Pre K-2
Summary: From a red prayer rug to a blue hijab, everyday colors are given special meaning as young readers learn about clothing, food, and other important elements of Islamic culture, with a young Muslim girl as a guide.
Examples of Middle East/Muslim American Literature

Primary Grades

The Big Red Lollipop (Rukhsana Khan)
Grade: Pre K - 3
Summary: Rubina has been invited to her first birthday party, and her mother insists that she take her little sister along. Her little sister demands to win every game and after the party she steals Rubina’s party favor, a red lollipop. What’s a fed-up big sister to do.

Saving Kabul Corner (N. H. Senzai)
Grade Level: 3-7
Summary: Senzai explores the lives of Afghan immigrants in California. A rival Afghan grocery store opens near Ariana’s family store, reigniting decades-old feud tracing back to Afghanistan. The cousins, Mariam, and their newfound frenemies, Waleed Chilai, must band together to help the families find a lasting peace before it destroys both businesses and everything their parents have worked for.
Examples of Middle East/Muslim American Literature

Secondary Grades

*The Complete Persepolis* (Marjane Satrapi)
Grade Level: 9-12
Summary: The graphic novel approach to this memoir makes the story of a girl growing up in Iran during the Islamic Revolution even more poignant. As Persepolis examines daily life in Iran, it also deals with a child’s view of parents, friends, and old and new heroes — all within the mixed framework of family, politics, and growing up.

*Kite Runner* (Khaled Hosseini)
Grade Level: 9-12
Summary: In this shattering story of betrayal and redemption set in war-torn Afghanistan, childhood friends grow up as close as brothers, but face dramatically different fates when one flees to America after the Soviet invasion and the other is left behind.
Examples of Middle East/Muslim American Literature

Secondary Grade

Mornings in Jenin (Susan Abulhawa)
Grade Level: 9-12
Summary: Forcibly removed from the ancient village of Ein Hod by the newly formed state of Israel in 1948, the Abulhejas are moved into the Jenin refugee camp. There, exiled from his beloved olive groves, the family patriarch languishes of a broken heart, his eldest son fathers a family and falls victim to an Israeli bullet, and his grandchildren struggle against tragedy toward freedom, peace, and home. This is the Palestinian story, told as never before, through four generations of a single family.
Specific Example: Shooting Kabul

*Shooting Kabul* (N.H Senzai)

Grade Level: 4-7

Summary: Adjusting to life in the United States isn't easy for Fadi's family and as the events of September 11th unfold the prospects of locating his sister in a war torn Afghanistan seem slim. When a photography competition with a grand prize trip to India is announced, Fadi sees his chance to return to Afghanistan and find his sister. But can one photo really bring Mariam home?

Based in part on the Mrs. Senzai’s husband’s own experience fleeing his home in Soviet controlled Afghanistan in the 1970s, Shooting Kabul is a powerful story of hope, love, and perseverance.
Shooting Kabul:
4th Grade Lesson Plan

Result Image
How Can You Integrate Middle East/Muslim American Literature in your Classroom Curriculum to Facilitate Discourse and Understanding?

Group Activity

• Divide into groups of 4-6 members grade/subject specific

• Decide on group member roles:
  • Facilitator
  • Recorder
  • Presenter
  • Researcher

• Decide on one book you could utilize into your classroom curriculum. Create a lesson plan using content from the book your group has chosen with an emphasis on critical literacy and social justice

• Share
Thank You

Please complete the post training survey and submit to your presenter.
APPENDIX D

Recommended Book List
**Recommended Book List**

Authentic Middle Eastern/Muslim American Multicultural Literature

*Under the Ramadan Moon*

Author: Sylvia Whitman

Publication:

Grade Level: Pre K-2

Summary: Ramadan is one of the most special months of the Islamic year, when Muslims pray, fast, and help those in need. This lyrical story serves as an introduction to Ramadan—a time for reflection and ritual with family and friends.

*The Secret Message*

Author: Mina Javaherbin

Grade Level: Pre K-2

Summary: Based on a poem by the ancient Persian philosopher Rumi, *The Secret Message* is a funny story of surprising twists, powerful solidarity, exotic travels, and a simple wish fulfilled. This witty tale, told with humor and vibrant images, will enchant young readers as it introduces them to the culture, literature, and history of Persia.
Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Colors

Author: Hena Khan
Grade Level: Pre K-2
Summary: From a red prayer rug to a blue hijab, everyday colors are given special meaning as young readers learn about clothing, food, and other important elements of Islamic culture, with a young Muslim girl as a guide.

The Sandwich Swap

Author: Queen Rania of Jordan Al Abdullah
Grade Level: Pre K-2
Summary: Lily and Salma exchange unflattering opinions with one another about their school lunch and they stop being friends. As their story spreads across the school, so does intolerance. Students begin choosing sides in the cafeteria. When the two girls get caught in the middle of a food fight and called to the principal's office, they decide it's time to make some changes. This engaging story reminds children to having the courage to try new things can result in positive experiences.

My Father’s Shop

Author: Satomi Ichikawa
Age Range: Pre K- 3
Summary: A little boy in the Moroccan carpet shop meets tourists from around the world and learns about different languages: English, Spanish, Japanese, French.
Big Red Lollipop

Author: Rukhsana Khan
Grade: Pre K-3
Summary: Rubina has been invited to her first birthday party, and her mother insists that she take her little sister along. Her little sister demands to win every game and after the party she steals Rubina’s party favor, a red lollipop. What’s a fed-up big sister to do?

The Golden Sandal: Middle Eastern Cinderella Story

Author: Rebecca Hickox
Grade Level: K and up
Summary: An Iraqi version of the Cinderella story. Known in Arabic as "The Red Fish and the Clog of Gold," this is the story of Maha and her tribulations with her stepmother and stepsister. Maha finds a small red fish in a basket one day. Releasing the fish, she is told that no kindness goes unrewarded. The fish becomes her source of help whenever life becomes too difficult.

Silent Music: A Story of Baghdad

Author: James Rumford
Grade Level: K-4
Summary: Ali lives in war-torn Baghdad. He loves soccer and music, dancing, and calligraphy. Calligraphy is soothing to Ali and helps him block out the bombs and noise of war. It’s a beautiful human story of the cost of war and the need for peace.

*Alia’s Mission: Saving the Books of Iraq*

Author: Mark Alan Stamaty

Grade Level: K-3

Summary: In 2003, a librarian in Basra, Alia M. Baker, preserves the culture and history of Iraq from the destruction of the war. She saves 30,000 books by transferring them to a safe place. The story celebrates the importance of the freedom to read and examines the impact of war on a country and its people.

*Travelling Man: The Journey of Ibn Batutta, 1325-1354*

Author: James Rumford

Age Range: K-4

Summary: Rumford retells the story of Ibn Battuta through pictures and maps weaving the tale of not just a traveler in a world long gone, but of a man on his journey through life.

*Four Feet: Two Sandals*

Author: Karen Lynn Williams

Grade Level: 1 and up
Summary: When relief workers bring used clothing to a refugee camp, ten-year-old Lina is thrilled when she finds a sandal that fits her foot - until she sees that another girl has the matching shoe. The girls meet and decide to share the sandals. The book honors the experiences of refugee children, whose daily existence is marked by uncertainty and fear.

*Saladin: Noble Prince of Islam*

Author: Diane Stanley

Grade Level: 3-7

Summary: The book tells the tale of Saladin, remarkable for his generous and chivalrous ways, a warrior who longed for peace. Stanley’s narrative and illustrations inspired by the Islamic art of the time, presents a hero whose compassion, piety, tolerance, and wisdom made him a model for his time.

*The Space Between Our Footsteps*

Author: Naomi Shihab Nye

Grade Level: 7 and up

Summary: Shihab Nye brings together the work of over 120 poets and artists from 19 countries in the Middle East. In turn compelling, lyrical, tragic and humorous, this rich anthology opens the door to the Middle East and beckons readers to explore common ground. Includes full-color illustrations.
*The Arabian Nights*

Author: Wafa Tarnowska  
Grade Level: 4-8  
Summary: Tarnowska opens a window onto the Arab world with her magnificent translation of eight stories from A Thousand and One Nights. This edition is notable for combining favorites such as Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp with less familiar tales such as The Diamond Anklet and The Speaking Bird and the Singing Tree. The collection also features the frame stories about Shahriyar and Shahrazade.

*Saving Kabul Corner*

Author: N.H Senzai  
Grade Level: 3-7  
Summary: Senzai explores the lives of Afghan immigrants in California. A rival Afghan grocery store opens near Ariana’s family store, reigniting an old feud tracing back to Afghanistan. Ariana, her cousin and their frenemie, must ban together to help the families find a lasting peace before it destroys both businesses and everything their parents have worked for.

*Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood*

Author: Ibtisam Barakat  
Grade Level: 6-8
Summary: The memoir is set in Palestine after the 1967 Six-Day War. The story captures what it is like to be a child whose world is shattered by war. With candor and courage, Barakat stitches together memories of her childhood. When she discovers alef, the first letter of the Arabic alphabet, it is the beginning of her passionate connection to words. As language becomes her refuge, allowing her to piece together the fragments of her world, it becomes her true home.

Shooting Kabul

Author: N.H. Senzai

Grade Level: 4-7

Summary: In 2001, 11-year-old Fadi and his family hastily board a truck to begin their escape from Afghanistan, tragically leaving his younger sister Mariam behind. Fadi struggles with integrating himself into American middle school culture, eventually finding solace in the photography club. Still, he determined to find Mariam. A photography contest with the prize of a trip to India seems to be his best means of finding a way back to Afghanistan to help in the search for his sister. A worthwhile book about the immigrant/refugee experience in general, and Afghan culture specifically.

Does My Head Look Big in This?

Author: Randa Abdel-fattah

Grade Level: 7-9
Summary: When sixteen-year-old Amal decides to wear the hijab full-time, her entire world changes, all because of a piece of cloth. Sixteen-year-old Amal makes the decision to start wearing the hijab full-time and everyone has a reaction. Can she handle the taunts of "towel head," the prejudice of her classmates, and still attract the cutest boy in school? Brilliantly funny and poignant, Randa Abdel-Fattah's debut novel will strike a chord in all teenage readers, no matter what their beliefs.

*My Name is Aram*

Author: William Saroyan

Grade Level: 9-12

Summary: Aram Garoghlanian is a Californian, born in Fresno, but he was also part of a large, sprawling family of immigrant Armenians—a whole tribe of eccentric uncles, brawling cousins, and gentle women. Through these unforgettable, often hilarious characters Aram comes to understand life, courage, and the power of dreams. Saroyan's brilliant short stories in work together to create a picture of a time, a place, and a boy's world.

*Funny in Farsi: A Memoire of Growing up Iranian in America*

Author: Firoozeh Dumas

Grade Level: 9-12
Summary: In a series of scenes, we watch the family grapple with American English, American traditions, and American culture. Above all, this is an unforgettable story of identity, discovery, and the power of family love. It is a book that will leave us all laughing—without an accent.

*The Complete Persepolis*

Author: Marjane Satrapi

Grade Level: 9-12

Summary: The graphic novel approach to this memoir makes the story of a girl growing up in Iran during the Islamic Revolution even more poignant. The memoir examines daily life in Iran and deals with a child's view of parents, friends, and old and new heroes — all within the mixed framework of family, politics, and growing up.

*Kite Runner*

Author: Khalid Hosseini

Grade Level: 9-12

Summary: In this shattering story of betrayal and redemption set in war-torn Afghanistan, childhood friends grow up as close as brothers, but face dramatically different fates when one flees to America after the Soviet invasion and the other is left behind.
**A Thousand Splendid Suns**

Author: Khalid Hosseini  
Grade Level: 10-12  
Summary: Born a generation apart and with very different ideas about love and family, Mariam and Laila are two women brought jarringly together by war, by loss and by fate. As they endure the ever escalating dangers around them—in their home as well as in the streets of Kabul—they come to form a bond that makes them both sisters and mother-daughter to each other, and that will ultimately alter the course not just of their own lives but of the next generation.

**Mornings in Jenin**

Author: Susan Abulhawa  
Grade Level: 9-12  
Summary: Forcibly removed from the ancient village of Ein Hod by the newly formed state of Israel in 1948, the Abulhejas are moved into the Jenin refugee camp. There, the family patriarch languishes of a broken heart, his eldest son fathers a family and falls victim to an Israeli bullet, and his grandchildren struggle against tragedy toward freedom, peace, and home. This is the Palestinian story told through four generations of a single family.
Palestine

Author: Joe Sacco

Grade Level: 10-12

Summary: Based on several months of research and an extended visit to the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the early 1990s. *Palestine* was the first major comics work of political and historical nonfiction by Sacco. *The story* brilliantly navigates socially and politically sensitive subject matter within the confines of the comic book medium. Sacco has often been called the first comic book journalist, and he is certainly the best.

*The Language of Baklava*

Author: Diane Abu-Jaber

Grade Level: 9-12

Summary: Abu-Jaber’s vibrant memoir weaves stories of being raised by a food-obsessed Jordanian father with tales of Lake Ontario shish kabob cookouts and goat stew feasts under Bedouin tents in the desert. The repasts, complete with recipes, in turn illuminate the two cultures of Diana's childhood while helping to paint a loving and complex portrait of her impractical, displaced immigrant father who cooked to remember the place he came from and to pass that connection on to his children.
**The Locust and the Bird: My Mother’s Story**

Author: Hanan al-Shaykh  
Grade Level: 9-12  
Summary: Married at a young age against her will, Kamila soon fell in love with another man—and was thus forced to choose between her children and her lover. As the narrative unfolds through the years, we follow this passionate woman as she survives the tragedies and celebrates the triumphs of a life lived to the very fullest.

**Looking for Palestine**

Author: Najla Said  
Grade Level: 9-12  
Summary: A second-generation Arab American and daughter of an outspoken Palestinian advocate describes her struggles with her identity growing up in Manhattan and the denial she felt while assimilating into different social and economic groups.

**The Weight of a Mustard Seed**

Author: Wendell Stevenson  
Grade Level: 11-12  
Summary: Through the remarkable story of an Iraqi General rise and fall, and a vivid, compassionate portrayal of the Iraqi people.
APPENDIX E

Example Lesson Plan
EXAMPLE LESSON PLAN

Shooting Kabul

Lesson Title/Subject:
Letter to the Author

Standards
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly. Link ideas within categories of information using words and phrases (4th grade, ELA Writing Common Core Content Standards, California Department of Education, 2011).

Purpose
Students will be able to recall information from the text using complete sentences. They will also be able to compose a letter detailing their connection to the information. In addition, students will also be able to distinguish similarities and differences between themselves and the favorite character from the text.

Background Knowledge
Students will have completed reading the novel, Shooting Kabul. They will be familiar with the character’s journeys as an immigrant to America. They will read the authors note to become familiar with the authors perspective and I will review the components and formatting letter.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Objectives</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A:</strong> 4th grade ELA students.</td>
<td><strong>Informal:</strong> As students are working on their answers, the teacher will visually observe their progress by determining if they have included all of the guidelines of assignment. <strong>Formal:</strong> Students will be graded based on whether all questions are incorporated in their letter and letter includes all of the components.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B:</strong> Students will be able to demonstrate understanding of the text and make connections with the characters and producing a thoughtful to the author.</td>
<td><strong>C:</strong> Students will work on their letters using their text and text packet to gather and integrate information. <strong>D:</strong> Students’ letters will be in letter format, including the date, greeting, paragraphs and ending.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The students will incorporate Afghan vocabulary words from text in their letter. Students will also integrate transition terms within the letter. (ex, Also, for example, next, lastly, etc)</td>
<td><strong>Informal:</strong> Scan students’ answers to see if they are using terms in correct context. <strong>Formal:</strong> Students answers will be graded according to integration and proper use of vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multicultural Objectives</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students will complete their letter by comparing themselves to their favorite character from the story.</td>
<td><strong>Informal:</strong> Conduct question session regarding students’ understanding of personal connections. <strong>Formal:</strong> Students will be graded on their understanding of personal comparison.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Materials and Safety Precautions

- Shooting Kabul
- Worksheet
- Pen/Pencil

*Safety precautions are not applicable to the lesson.

Accommodations for special needs, advanced and English language learners

Accommodations will be made for English Learners and Special Needs students in that the teacher will read through the instructions and provide additional verbal and instructional scaffolding by integrated additional structured material, (starter sentences, advance/similar language pairing) as needed. The teacher will provide regular oral feedback and clarify any confusion as the teacher informally observe their progress when monitoring the classroom. The teacher will also address any comments, questions or concerns as they come up.

Procedures

1.) Students will read the N.H Senzai’s note in the book.

2.) Students will then watch Meet the Author video

3.) As a class we will discuss why the author did not want to write the book.

4.) I will then introduce the assignment by providing students with instructions

5.) We will read through the instructions as a class and answer part A together as a class and determine how we want to greet the author.
Corresponding Questions & Instructions for Letter to the Author

In the author’s note, N.H. Senzai tells readers she did not want to write this book. Write a letter to the author and tell her why you are glad that did write it. Include your answers to the following question in your letter:

1. What are the main components of a letter, including structure and formatting?

2. What is your favorite part of the story? Why?

3. List 3 interesting facts you learned from the story, including at least one-word in pukhtu?

4. Who is your favorite character from the story? Why?

5. What are some similarities between you and your favorite character from the story?

6. What are some differences between you and your favorite character from the story?

7. What are the main components of a letter, including structure and formatting?

Modeling

After reading through the instructions and answering part A as a class, the teacher will share my favorite part of the story in a complete sentence. The teacher will then write his/her favorite part of the story in a complete sentence on the board and insert it into our letter template.

Collaborative

Next, the teacher will ask the class to share one interesting fact from the story and determine as a class how to integrate their answers in the letter as a complete sentence. Students will then work in pairs by sharing their answers for the additional 2 interesting
facts and integrate them as complete sentences into their letters, using appropriate transitions.

**Independent**

- Students will work independently to complete the remainder of the questions on their own by integrating them into their letters.
- Students will write a complete draft with appropriate spelling and context for homework.
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