
Middle East Enlightenment

Segment Length: 5:33 minutes

Lesson Description:

Is peace in the Middle East possible? How about freedom? How can either be possible with the rampant fundamentalism? In this video, John Stossel examines the spread of Western/Enlightenment ideals and the movement away from fundamentalism.

Concepts & Key Terms:

Fundamentalism – in a religious context, is the rigid adherence to religious teaching and the intolerance of other views.

Enlightenment – a philosophical movement that dominated in Europe during the 18th century, centered around the idea that reason is the primary source of authority and legitimacy, and advocated ideals such as liberty, progress, tolerance, constitutional government, and separation of church and state.

Theocrats – religious leaders with political power; rulers who are religious authorities and who put their religious authority ahead of individual rights.

Caliphate – a unified Islamic state led by a caliph, a political and religious leader considered a successor to the Prophet Muhammad.

Repression - the act of holding something or someone back, or holding something or someone down.

Arab Spring – a series of anti-government protests and rebellions over the course of two years that resulted in more than 60,000 deaths.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- explain the struggle for freedom in the Middle East
- discuss the growing influence of Western/Enlightenment ideals in the Middle East
- propose a course of action to increase freedom in the Middle East and elsewhere
- evaluate the efforts of Ideas Beyond Borders to impact the future of the Middle East

Preview Activity and Questions:

Distribute copies of the K-W-L worksheet to the class. Have students fill in the K and W sections. After showing the video, have students complete the L section and answer the question at the bottom of the worksheet.

Viewing Guide:

We recommend that teachers show the video twice: once to allow students to view it and focus on the issues presented, and once to allow them time to complete the viewing guide. After they complete the viewing guide, allow students a few minutes to work in pairs sharing and verifying answers.

Answers to Viewing Guide

1. religious
2. resentment
3. freedom, liberty
4. theocrats
5. beheaded, rooftops
6. peace, prosperity

Middle East Enlightenment

Viewing Guide

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____

Teacher _____

Directions: As you watch the video, fill in the blanks with the correct words.

1. In Egypt, Iraq, and other Muslim countries, the number of people who say they are not _____ has increased.
2. ...they see the destruction and the militias, or you cannot hold hands with this woman and you cannot listen to music. Then that develops a lot of _____ against the establishment.
3. This is the first time in which actually the ideas of _____ and _____ are available in Arabic.
4. Sometimes, _____ burn the books.
5. Some of them believed, to some extent, in the concepts that ISIS advocated for, in terms of establishing a caliphate and establish religious law. But then they lived under it and they see a _____ woman and there is gays being thrown from _____.
6. Arab people, as anyone else, most of them want to live in _____ and _____.

Now, take a few moments to reflect on the video and answer the questions below:

List some of the examples mentioned in the video of persecution that occurs in the Middle East.

Based on the video, is Faisal's group, Ideas Beyond Borders, helpful to people in the Middle East? _____. Please explain. _____

Discussion and Analysis:

1. Why do many citizens in the Middle East not have the freedoms we have in the United States?
2. What are “Western ideals”? To what era can many of those ideals be traced?
3. John Stossel said that fundamentalism in some Muslim countries puts religious obedience over freedom.” What does he mean?
4. To what does Faisal attribute the decline of religion in young people’s lives in the Middle East?
5. How could the internet impact the way people in the Middle East view religious rule? Why might older people not be as influenced?
6. Why do you think Faisal started Ideas Beyond Borders *after* he left Iraq?
7. Why would translating and distributing articles and books about rights be popular in the Middle East? Why would it be unpopular?
8. Is there a difference between criticizing religion and criticizing religious rule? Please explain.
9. How might Western or Enlightenment ideals lead to a prosperous society?
10. Does the separation of church and state in the United States prevent religious doctrine from becoming law? Are there any examples of laws that indicate that is still not completely true?
11. Faisal said that some people believed in what ISIS advocated, but seeing women beheaded and gays thrown from rooftops made them question religious rule. Why?
12. Do you believe most people desire peace and prosperity? What makes countries such as the United States relatively peaceful and prosperous?
13. Should this video change the views of those in the United States who complain about how bad it is here?
14. What do you think, is the Middle East moving toward better days or will rule by fundamentalists stop Western/Enlightenment ideals from taking hold?

Discuss These Lines from the Video

1. Gays and lesbians are arrested, prosecuted, and even tortured.
2. They’ll throw acid in girls’ faces if they don’t wear burqas.
3. In the last few years, more people in the Middle East have begun to protest their countries’ repression.
4. They want individual rights. They want freedom of speech.
5. Sometimes, theocrats burn the books.

6. This is the first time in which actually the ideas of freedom and liberty are available in Arabic.
7. They see the destruction and the militias, or you cannot hold hands with this woman and you cannot listen to music. That develops a lot of resentment against the establishment.
8. Arab people, as anyone else, most of them want to live in peace and prosperity.

Quotes for Discussion:

When we lose the right to be different, we lose the privilege to be free. – Charles Evans Hughes

Fundamentalism—of any variety—is a form of illiteracy, in that it asserts that it is necessary to read only one book. – Mal Peet

Because of the great differences in our ways of thinking, it is inevitable that we have different religions and faiths. Each has its own beauty. And it is much better that we live together on the basis of mutual respect and mutual admiration. – Dalai Lama

The need of the moment is not one religion, but mutual respect and tolerance of the devotees of the different religions. – Mahatma Gandhi

The internet is becoming the town square for the global village of tomorrow. – Bill Gates

An unexamined faith is not worth having, for fundamentalism and uncritical certitude entail the rejection of one of the great human gifts: that of free will, of the liberty to make up our own minds based on evidence and tradition and reason. – Jon Meacham

Fundamentalism takes different forms in different religions, but there is one striking similarity in all forms of fundamentalist thought. Each wishes dearly to hold in check all varieties of 'modern' or 'decadent' thinking. – Jay Parini

I read a book one day and my whole life was changed. – Orhan Pamuk

Access to computers and the internet has become a basic need for education in our society. – Kent Conrad

Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same. – Ronald Reagan

Activities:

1. Have students finish the K-W-L chart in class or for homework.
2. Have students complete the Obedience or Choice worksheet.
3. Show students the following video and then have the class discuss it.
 Locked Out! Roots of the Arab Spring
https://www.izzit.org/products/detail.php?video=locked_out

4. Have students research and prepare a slideshow that compares attempts to prevent the dissemination of ideas on social media in the United States with similar efforts in the Middle East.
5. Produce a “man-on-the-street” video in which you ask people what they think is the biggest problem in the Middle East. In lieu of person-to-person interviews, students can ask their online friends or conduct online video interviews.
6. Research and create a list of 10 books that would be helpful to bring about change in the Middle East. Briefly explain why you included those books on your list.
7. Read *The Discovery of Freedom* by Rose Wilder Lane (available as a PDF online), and write an essay comparing the beliefs Arabs leaders wrote about and the advancements they made that the author wrote about to what is taking place in the Middle East today.
https://cdn.mises.org/The%20Discovery%20of%20Freedom_2.pdf
8. What was the Middle East like before the spread of theocratic fundamentalism? Research and explain what brought about Islamic fundamentalism.
9. Write a persuasive essay in which you discuss the fight over fundamentalist rule in the Middle East and explain which side you think will eventually win and why you think that.
10. Research and create a slideshow about what features are included in the personal freedom category and the economic freedom category in Cato’s Human Freedom Index, and how those features are important in the debate over fundamentalist rule in the Middle East.
<https://www.cato.org/human-freedom-index-new>

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____ Per _____

Teacher _____

Middle East Enlightenment K-W-L Chart

Directions: Complete the **K** and **W** sections prior to watching the video. After you have seen the video, complete the **L** section and answer the two questions below the K-W-L chart.

| K | W | L |
|--|--|--|
| What I know about problems in the Middle East... | What I want to know about problems in the Middle East... | What I've learned about problems in the Middle East... |

Why is this video titled "Middle East Enlightenment"? _____

Do you share Faisal's optimism? _____. Why / Why not? _____

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____ Per _____

Teacher _____

Middle East Enlightenment

Obedience or Choice: Pros & Cons Table

Directions: After reviewing the video and discussing it in class, complete the chart below.

| OPTION | PROS | CONS |
|---|------|------|
| Freedom to choose what people can read, watch, and say. | | |
| Prohibit the dissemination of ideas that others find offensive or don't agree with. | | |

Which of the two choices is best for a society? Please explain why.
