

LESSON PLAN: DEMOCRACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Procedures

PART I: Opening Activity:

1. Arrange the class into small groups of three students
2. Distribute Student Handout: **"Opening Activity – Spreading Freedom throughout the World."**
3. Review with them the historical background and review any areas or address any questions they might have.
4. Then have students review excerpts from President Bush's second term inaugural speech (see below). The entire speech with audio clip can be found at <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/inauguration2005/index.html> or video clip at White House website <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/01/20050120-1.html>
5. Have students discuss the excerpts in their groups using the discussion questions on their handout. Ask students to review the quotes and comment on the questions listed.
6. Debrief the activity by asking students to summarize their views on the president's policy.

Tell students that democracy exists now in the Middle East in a few countries, but that it comes in many different forms and at different levels of citizen participation. Also point out that the situation in many of these countries is "fluid" and changing with unfolding events. This means that citizens might experience democracy at some time and level while not at others.

PART II: Where is democracy in the Middle East?

1. Distribute the Student Handout **"Where is Democracy in the Middle East?"** to all members of the class.
2. Review with students the first section of the handout.
3. Review the discussion questions on the handout.
4. Form students into small groups of two or three depending on the size of your class. Assign each group to research the government structure of one Middle East country. In addition to the countries of the Middle East you may also pick countries in North Africa as well as Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Research Tasks:

1. Direct students to go to the CIA World Factbook at <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/> and look up the following information on their assigned country:
 - Government Type
 - Constitution (does it have one? Describe the relationship between the people and the government)
 - Legal system
 - Suffrage (voting rights age and gender?)
 - Powers of executive, legislative, and judicial branches and how they are put in power
 - Political Parties (does it have any? Level of participation in the government?)

Students can write their information on the left hand side of the Democracy Assessment chart. If necessary, they can use extra paper.

2. Working in their groups, have students determine the level of democracy of their assigned country using the following "Pillars of Democracy" from the U.S. State Department. Have students place their ratings on the right hand side of the Democracy Assessment chart.

THE PILLARS OF DEMOCRACY

- ✓ Sovereignty of the people
 - ✓ Government based on consent of the governed
 - ✓ Majority rule
 - ✓ Minority Right
 - ✓ Guarantee of basic human rights
 - ✓ Free and fair elections
 - ✓ Equality before the law
 - ✓ Due process of law
 - ✓ Constitutional limits on government
 - ✓ Social, economic, and political pluralism
 - ✓ Values of tolerance, pragmatism, cooperation, and compromise
3. While students are doing their research, draw a long line on the board or with tape along the floor of the room and divide into four sections. Place the following labels in each section:
 - very democratic
 - somewhat democratic
 - only slightly democratic
 - not democratic
 4. Now have one member from the group stand on the continuum line, hold the country sign and provide the following information on the country:
 - Country name
 - Government type
 - Status of constitution
 - Extent of suffrage
 - Structure of government (describe the powers of executive, legislative and judicial and who controls these)
 - Status of political parties
 - Their rating of the country's level of democracy with explanation
 5. Debriefing questions for entire class:
 - a. What aspects of the countries presented surprised you?
 - b. What aspects did you expect to see?
 - c. Which countries' leaders have made progress in democratizing their nation? Which have not?
 - d. Which countries seem to need the most attention for the United States to fulfill the goals of growing democratic movements and institutions outlined in President Bush's inaugural speech?
 - e. What might be some of the difficulties the United States would face if it pursued an aggressive policy of encouraging democracy in these countries?

PART III: Is Democracy Possible in the Middle East?

Background:

In this activity students take a close look at the prospects for democracy in the Middle East and examine diverse foreign policy experts' views on the possibility. Students reflect on the policy experts' views and draw their own conclusions. They refer back to President Bush's second inaugural address (from the opening activity) and make recommendations on what U.S. foreign policy should be.

The activity begins with a NewsHour segment:

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east/july-dec03/democracy_11-07.html

Click the video stream button "background." If you have a projection system for your school computer, you can download the video stream and project it to the entire class. Or you can assign students to watch the background segment on their home or school computers.

Activity Procedure:

1. Divide the class into groups of six.
2. Distribute the student handout "**Is Democracy Possible in the Middle East?**" and the following articles, one to each pair of students in the group of six:
 - "Democracy is not a devil for Islamic parties"
<http://islamicsydney.com/story.php?id=2192>
 - "The Democratic Ideal"
http://www.aei.org/publications/filter.all,pubID.21929/pub_detail.asp
 - "The Trouble with Democracy in the Middle East"
<http://www.cato.org/dailys/11-30-03.html>
3. Have students read the articles and take notes on the fact-gathering grid in each handout. Chart review points:
 - Main point of each article (Is democracy possible/not possible)
 - What historical reasoning is presented to support this view?
 - Examples from other countries or regions that support this view
 - Current reasons the author feels their view is correct
 - Opposition statements cited in article that challenge this view?
 - Who is responsible if democracy is to succeed in the Middle East?
 - What the U.S. needs to do for democracy to succeed?
4. Then have them review the information in their group of six sharing the views from the different authors.
5. Finally, have each group review the discussion questions after the grid and present their views to the class.