



LESSON PLAN: SYRIA'S ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST PART III: Syria's Relations with its Neighbors and the United States

Student Handout - Lebanon

Overview: In this activity, you will work in a group to examine the Newshour Interactive Map on Syria (found at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east/syria/map_flash.html). There you will glean information about Syria's relationship with Lebanon.

Directions:

1. Go to the Newshour's "Syria's Role in the Middle East": http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east/syria/index.html.
2. Click your mouse on the map of Lebanon and review the written material along the right side of the map.
3. Gather information to complete the content questions below.
4. After reviewing the content questions, review your findings with your group.
5. In large group, review the Discussion Questions at the end of the page.

Content Questions:

1. After former Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri's assassination on Feb 14, 2005, many Lebanese demonstrators took to the streets in Beirut. What was their anger directed at and why?
2. What does U.N. Resolution 1559 call for and why was it instituted?
3. How has Syria reacted to the demonstrations and the U.N. resolution?
4. What was late-Syrian President Hafez al-Assad's main goal in ordering 6,000 Syrian troops into Lebanon in 1976?
5. Describe the steps Syria took to end the civil war in Lebanon from 1976 to 1989. Evaluate the effectiveness of Syria's attempts at bringing an end to Lebanon's civil war.
6. What was the Taif accord and what did it call for?

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the two points of view below surrounding the Syrian role in the Lebanese civil war. Which view seems to be best supported by the evidence?

- A. Syrian troops were instrumental in quelling the violence of the Lebanese civil war. Their continued presence in Lebanon has kept the peace since the 1990s.
 - B. The continued presence of Syrian troops has caused instability in Lebanese politics and threatens the integrity and success of the Lebanese elections in May.
2. Why did Hezbollah form in Lebanon and what role has this organization served Syrian goals in the Middle East?
 3. How has Syria's relationship with the PLO and radical militants like Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah complicated its relationship with the west and made reconciliation with Israel difficult? Why do you think Syria has these relationships with these radical militant groups?
 4. Summarize the early relationship between Syria and Jordan. What events caused this relationship to deteriorate? How might improved relations between Syria and Jordan be a benefit to the U.S.?
 5. Review the goals of the Ba'ath party in Syria and Iraq. How has the fall of Saddam Hussein made achieving these goals more difficult for Syria? What steps can Syria take to help improve its relationship with Iraq?
 6. Briefly summarize the history of disputes along the 837-mile border between Turkey and Syria. Describe circumstances around and evidence against Syria regarding terrorist attacks in Turkey and how these attacks raise the level of tension between the countries. Explain how the free-trade agreement being crafted between Syria and Turkey could lead to better relations between the two countries.
 7. Describe the difficult position Syria faces in trying to cooperate with the western countries and its neighbors while upholding its position as a "defender of Arab rights" to many people like the Palestinians.
 8. How has keeping its alliances with terrorist groups like Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah threatened Syria's own interests while also threatening the interests of the United States?
 9. Why is it in the best interests of both the Syrians and the U.S. to understand each other better? What actions do you think either country should take to make better relations a reality?