

NFB STUDY GUIDE

Exploring Arab and Middle Eastern Communities in Canada Through Film





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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide and the associated NFB films equip educators to have exploratory, meaningful, inclusive and critical conversations with their students about the realities of Arab and Middle Eastern communities in Canada. The guide supports newcomer students' social, academic and psychological integration and development, while inviting all students to challenge their misconceptions, have critical conversations and develop empathy.

RECOMMENDED AGE LEVELS:

SECTION A: STUDENTS AGED 7–11

SECTION B: STUDENTS AGED 12–14

SECTION C: STUDENTS AGED 15–18



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SUBJECT AREAS:

- DIVERSITY: DIVERSITY IN COMMUNITIES
- ETHICS AND RELIGIOUS CULTURE: ETHICAL VALUES
- ETHICS AND RELIGIOUS CULTURE: RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY/HERITAGE
- LANGUAGES: ENGLISH
- FAMILY STUDIES/HOME ECONOMICS: FAMILY DIVERSITY AND CHALLENGES
- FAMILY STUDIES/HOME ECONOMICS: RELATIONSHIPS
- HISTORY AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: ISSUES IN SOCIETY TODAY
- HISTORY AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: POPULATION AND SETTLEMENT (1608–PRESENT)
- SOCIAL STUDIES: COMMUNITIES IN CANADA/WORLD
- MEDIA EDUCATION: POPULAR CULTURE
- LAW AND SOCIETY
- WORLD RELIGIONS
- CIVICS AND CAREERS

KEYWORDS: Assimilation, Assumptions, Belonging, Biases, Canada, Children, Citizenship, Conflict, Cultural Artifacts, Diversity, Home, Immigrants, Integration, Migration, Newcomers, Refugees, Religion, Representation, Racism, Resilience, Settlement, Stereotypes, Westernization, Youth

TEACHING STRATEGIES: Small-Group Discussion, Class Discussion, Active Learning, Peer Learning, Self-Reflection, Critical Thinking, Perspective-Taking, Making Thinking Visible, Visualization, Media Literacy, Emotional Literacy



In Full Voice

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BACKGROUND

At a time when global forced displacement is at an all-time high, this guide invites educators to create inclusive spaces in their classrooms and explore the complex lived experiences of Arab and Middle Eastern communities in Canada.

In recent years, conflicts across Syria, Ukraine and Afghanistan have resulted in high numbers of refugees fleeing from these countries. Millions of people, including children, are continuously forced to flee their homes in search of a better life. Throughout their migration journeys, children and youth face a number of challenges, such as missed schooling, loss and trauma. These experiences, compounded with the challenges of starting a life in a new country, play a role in the urgency of learning and adapting to the unique needs of refugee populations.

Canada continues to welcome and support refugees from across the globe to start anew. For example, in response to the urgent humanitarian crisis in Syria in 2015, Canada rapidly welcomed thousands of Syrians in a short timeframe, many of whom were children and youth. This influx of refugees, and notably Middle Eastern refugees, has been supported through government-funded and other services and programs that facilitate integration.

This influx of newcomers has brought both challenges and opportunities to Canadian classrooms. This guide supports the ongoing work of educators engaged in meaningful cross-cultural learning by focusing on Arab and Middle Eastern communities through a curated selection of NFB films. The film clips, activities and conversations are part of something larger: stitching the social fabric and constructing a national framework for dialogue between and among groups of different ethnocultural and faith-based communities. This helps students strengthen their capacity for active participation in Canadian society. As they engage in the activities presented in the guide, students will broaden their vision of what

Canadian society looks like. They will engage deeply with the concepts and implications of diversity, cross-cultural learning and integration, and their own role in facilitating a stronger sense of belonging for all those who find a home here in Canada.

Educators are increasingly recognized as key contributors to the development and integration of newcomer children and youth. As a result, educators require support to understand this nuanced population and ensure their educational practices follow students' best interests. This study guide has been developed with the intention of equipping educators to support their students' short- and long-term social, academic and psychological integration and development. The guide also helps students understand the unique experiences of their newcomer classmates, and similar populations, by challenging misconceptions and engaging in critical conversations. The overarching goal is for educators to apply inclusive practices and create safe spaces for students. In using this guide, educators will be able to deliver various curriculum objectives through meaningful, relevant, timely and culturally appropriate material.

While engaging with the material in this guide, students will be responsible for critically reflecting on the content and becoming more aware of the impacts of displacement, migration and integration. Students will be encouraged to think deeply about migration and strive to understand what comprises Canada's diversity, and what it means to be an active social agent.

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This study guide offers a set of lenses to learn more about Middle Eastern communities. The films within this guide offer perspectives into both the genuine experiences and constructed dominant narratives surrounding the lives of Middle Eastern newcomers living in Canada. Although the guide is largely about Middle Eastern newcomer experiences, its overarching themes can be applied more broadly to all newcomer groups. In some cases, the modules are relevant to other minority groups that make up any diverse classroom.

In addition to viewing each film, or at least the selected clip for each lesson module, educators should also review the [Selection of Films](#) section in this guide, which includes a detailed chart of the films selected, their summaries, key themes, recommended age groups, recommended subjects and courses, and warnings for sensitive content.

This study guide includes three sections: **A**, **B** and **C**. Each section has a series of module lessons available for the educator.

Section A

is for primary students ages 7–11. This section introduces **migration, culture and citizenship**. The overarching themes taught in this section include migration, citizenship, friendship, home, identity, belonging, cultural artifacts, diversity and multiculturalism. Students will take part in lessons that help them develop empathy and understanding; reflect on meaning-making, the construction of memory and how to support their peers; and explore powerful emotions such as fear, and how to identify and navigate these feelings within themselves and their peers.

Section B

is for students ages 12–14. This section **explores dominant narratives and challenges stereotypes** about Middle Eastern newcomers, while enabling students to reflect on what it means to integrate successfully. The overarching themes taught in this section include culture, religion, integration, discrimination, westernization, community, civil society and gender roles. Sub-themes target media literacy and the role of borders. Students will take part in lessons that require them to challenge social norms and identify false representations (for example, in social media). Through these modules, students will combat misconceptions, challenge dominant narratives and understand the integration challenges Middle Eastern newcomers face.

Section C

is for high school students ages 15–18. This section **critically and deeply examines the impacts of westernization, displacement and world conflict**. The overarching themes taught within this section include conflict and healing, displacement, resistance, westernization, gender roles, assimilation versus integration, intersectionality and media literacy. Students will take part in lessons that enable them to become aware of the impacts of conflict and violence towards Middle Eastern newcomers. Moreover, students will explore what it means to resist various challenges and impacts created through westernization, displacement and conflict. Students will construct an understanding of resistance by exploring resiliency in these populations.

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Educators should carry out both modules prepared in each section in sequential order, as the resource is scaffolded and each module corresponds to a set of themes and overarching learning objectives. Educators should select a module based on their students' age group. In some cases, educators may extract or adapt lessons from other modules based on class profiles, experience, subjects, teaching styles and methods, various learning objectives and instructional intentions. For instance, teachers may wish to incorporate visual arts, drama, media literacy or embodiment activities. However, the modules and film clips have been carefully selected for the suggested age group. Educators are to use discretion when showing students more of the film than the recommended clips.

A NOTE ON THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF THE FILMS

Watching these films may evoke strong emotions due to students' experiences or associations with the topics raised. It can help to openly acknowledge students' lived experiences and provide advance notice of content they might find sensitive or upsetting. This includes being mindful of where students come from, their past and present experiences, their immigration status, whether they are currently experiencing discrimination in the classroom (i.e., bullying) and overall cultural safety.

Cultural safety refers to a respectful, hate-free environment in which students feel safe enough to share their diverse experiences, learn and grow.

Students should feel safe to express their ideas and opinions while being aware of other students in the classroom and any sensitivities that may arise as a result of such discussions. Within this study guide, a "For the Teacher" section provides background about the topic and potential sensitivities to look out for. Students may have emotional responses to the film clips and modules (triggered memories of trauma, sadness, confusion, anger, etc.), cultural sensitivity, disengagement or resistance, among other reactions. This can happen immediately or later. Students of Middle Eastern backgrounds and/or newcomer populations may have increased vulnerabilities.

Educators should be prepared to identify, support and offer resources to students who appear to be struggling emotionally in response to the films. As well, teachers can adapt lessons based on the specific classroom's needs. Teachers are encouraged to educate students on discussing to learn, listening to learn, and how to seek clarification about sensitive topics while maintaining respect. To mitigate these risks throughout the lesson, remind students of the overarching purpose of engaging in the discussions and set aside time for reflection following the lesson. This will help reduce biases and assumptions. Finally, in the case of some students, teachers could consult with parents, guardians or the school principal about topics that may evoke extremely sensitive reactions.



Rupture

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LIMITATIONS

It is important to recognize some limitations of this study guide. Firstly, the films addressed in this guide are merely a selection of films produced by the National Film Board of Canada. While they were carefully chosen to maximize their reach and engagement with the age groups, the films are a small sample of texts; they do not necessarily represent or capture all experiences of Middle Eastern newcomers in Canada. Second, the films may offer perspectives on a number of additional topics or themes not covered in this guide. Thirdly, some educators may have alternative opinions about whether a lesson and/or an associated film is suitable for a particular age group. Finally, the positionality of the author may have influenced the guide's content and themes. The author is a female Middle Eastern educator who is currently completing a doctorate in Education.

SELECTION OF FILMS

The films within this study guide are National Film Board of Canada (NFB) films. The collection of works selected for this study guide includes award-winning creative documentaries, auteur animation, interactive stories and participatory experiences. While there may be additional NFB films suitable for exploring this topic, the selected films are intended to best represent the experiences of Middle Eastern newcomer communities across Canada, covering a wide range of important themes and topics encompassing newcomers' individual and collective experiences.

The following NFB films are referenced throughout this study guide:

- [Arab Women Say What?!](#) (2023), Director Nisreen Baker
- [Things Arab Men Say](#) (2016), Director Nisreen Baker
- [In Full Voice](#) (2021), Director Saïda Ouchao-Ozarowski
- [A Scent of Mint](#) (2002), Director Pierre Sidaoui
- [Rupture](#) (1998), Director Najwa Tlili
- [The Faith Project – Focus and Distraction](#) (2015), Director Christopher Romeike
- [Deyzangeroo](#) (2017), Director Ehsan Gharib
- [Two Apples](#) (2022), Director Bahram Javahery
- [From Far Away](#) (2000), Directors Shira Avni and Serene El-haj Daoud



From Far Away

TABLE A: LIST OF FILMS REFERENCED

The following table provides an overview of the films selected for this guide.

Film Title & Recommended Age Group(s)	Summary	Themes	Recommended Subjects	Associated Sections & Modules
<p><u>Arab Women Say What?!</u></p> <p>Age groups: 12–14, 15–18</p> <p>Sensitive Content</p> <p>Abortion, sexualization of Arab women in films</p>	<p>With unadulterated truth and complexity, Arab Women Say What?! paints an unparalleled portrait of Arab women living in Canada. The film offers a counter-mainstream narrative that embraces the unique experiences and perspectives of eight Arab women sharing their insights, cuisine and laughter. Amid the rhythm of poetry and music, they tackle issues of feminism, politics, exile and the yearning for a sense of belonging.</p>	<p>Cultural Diversity, Multiculturalism, Politics and Government, Feminism, Life in Canada, Westernization, Assuming Gender Roles, Patriarchy, Colonization, Assimilation Versus Integration, Healing, Conflict, Othering, Religion, Censorship, Social Media</p>	<p>Language, Family Studies, Social Studies, Politics and Government</p>	<p>Section B: Module 1</p> <p>Section B: Module 2</p> <p>Section C: Module 3</p>
<p><u>Things Arab Men Say</u></p> <p>Age groups: 12–14, 15–18</p>	<p>This documentary paints a picture of Arab men that is vastly different from what we're accustomed to. In this antidote to mainstream-media depictions of Arabs as terrorists and extremists, we get to meet Jay, Ghassan and their friends, who gather at Jamal's Eden Barber Shop to discuss politics, religion and family over a cut and a shave. Often funny, sometimes sad, this engaging film documents the challenges these men face integrating into Canadian life while preserving their identity and culture.</p>	<p>Identity, Immigration, Religion, Nationality, Conflict, Life in Canada, Discrimination, Racism, Integration Versus Assimilation, Home and Sense of Belonging, Cultural Diversity, Multiculturalism</p>	<p>Language, Family Studies, Social Studies, Politics and Government</p>	<p>Section C: Module 3</p>
<p><u>In Full Voice</u></p> <p>Age groups: 12–14, 15–18</p> <p>Sensitive Content</p> <p>Potentially inappropriate content during stand-up scenes for younger age groups</p>	<p>Muslim women are disconcerting, intriguing, polarizing—and straitjacketed by confluences of ideas in front-page stories. While the media tend to portray them as submissive and silenced, filmmaker Saïda Ouchau-Ozarowski has chosen to distance herself from that caricature, with which she does not identify. She sat down with six Muslim Canadian women eager to talk about what shapes their identities. The resulting documentary, In Full Voice, offers an intimate perspective on the journey of these women, who have a common desire to share their visions of Islam.</p>	<p>Islam, Faith, Extremism, Life in Canada, Integration</p>	<p>Civics, Citizenship, Language, Diversity, Ethics and Religious Culture, Family Studies, Social Studies</p>	<p>Section B: Module 1</p>

<p><u>A Scent of Mint</u></p> <p>Age groups: 12–14, 15–18</p> <p>Sensitive Content</p> <p>Memories of Lebanon and reflections about journey to Canada may provoke some feelings for anyone with similar experiences</p>	<p>This documentary recounts filmmaker Pierre Sidaoui’s immigration journey from the small Lebanese town of Abey to Montreal, the city he now calls home. Sidaoui had a carefree childhood, but civil war forced him and his family to flee Lebanon in 1982, the first in a series of moves that would ultimately separate him from his parents, brother and sisters. Two decades later, Sidaoui pauses to reflect. His precious family photos, carefully kept in a shoebox, bring forth a flood of memories—of family, landscapes, music and war. A touching meditation on the pursuit of happiness and the immigrant experience.</p>	<p>War and Conflict, Life in Canada, Migration, Westernization, Religion, Immigration</p>	<p>Social Studies, Diversity, Family Studies, Language</p>	<p>Section C: Module 1</p>
<p><u>Rupture</u></p> <p>Age groups: 15–18</p> <p>Sensitive Content</p> <p>Domestic violence, abuse</p>	<p>They believed they were creating a household and living a new life, but they were humiliated and tormented. What Fadhila and Roula have in common is that they’re women, Arab, immigrants and have been sexually assaulted by their husbands. In order to break down the walls of silence, they have bravely chosen to tell their stories. Their accounts are complemented by discussions in Montreal with women’s social workers, members of the Arab community and a lawyer specializing in Canadian immigration. To the sound of the melodies beautifully sung by the diva Aïcha Redouane, the film considers the question of unfamiliar cultural values and women’s rights in the current social context. In French with English subtitles.</p>	<p>Women’s Rights, Gender Roles, Migration, Cultural Diversity, Multiculturalism</p>	<p>Diversity: Diversity in Communities</p> <p>Ethics and Religious Culture: Ethical Values</p> <p>Family Studies/Home Economics: Family Diversity and Challenges</p> <p>Family Studies/Home Economics: Relationships</p>	<p>Section C: Module 2</p>
<p><u>From Far Away</u></p> <p>Age groups: 7–11</p> <p>Sensitive Content</p> <p>Students with similar experiences of trauma or struggles integrating in the classroom may experience distress when viewing this film</p>	<p>This short animation tells the story of Saoussan, a young girl struggling to adjust to life in Canada after being uprooted from her war-torn homeland. She has come to seek a quieter and safer life, although memories of war and death linger, memories that are awakened when the children at her new school prepare for a scary Halloween. From Far Away speaks to the power within us all to adapt like Saoussan and to welcome a newcomer.</p>	<p>Fear, Schooling, Integration, Migration, Life in Canada, Halloween</p>	<p>Language, Social Studies, Family Studies, Cultural Studies</p>	<p>Section A: Module 2</p>

<p><u>The Faith Project</u> <u>— Focus and Distraction</u></p> <p>Age groups: 12–14, 15–18</p>	<p>The Faith Project is an immersive media experience that intimately observes the rituals of seven young Canadians from different faith traditions. Religious identity and expression can be very personal topics, but the practitioners profiled in this project offer viewers a deep, privileged understanding of their diverse faiths. The articulate, busy young women and men at the heart of The Faith Project weave faith into their daily lives not as an obligation but as something that is essential to their identity and place in the world. Whether it is smudging or singing, a mandir or a mosque, a Siddur or the Bible, it’s clear how essential spiritual practice is to the bustling, stressful daily lives and identities of these young Canadians.</p>	<p>Faith, Religion, Prayer, Islam, Westernization, Life in Canada, Integration</p>	<p>Diversity, Religion, Family Studies</p>	<p>Section B: Modules 1 & 2</p> <p>Section C: Module 2</p>
<p><u>Deyzangeroo</u></p> <p>Age groups: 15–18</p>	<p>Deyzangeroo is a ritual performed in the Iranian port city of Bushehr. Influenced by the city’s colonial rule by the British and Portuguese, and the African slaves that followed, it is imbued with the terror and magic of the lunar eclipse. The ritual is believed to ward off evil spirits and take back the moon. It works every time. Directed by Iranian-Canadian filmmaker Ehsan Gharib, this animated short features hand-painted animation, time-lapse photography, trick photography using mirrors and the haunting music of virtuoso percussionist Habib Meftah Boushehri.</p>	<p>Faith, Religion, Evil, Rituals</p>	<p>Religion, Diversity, Culture, Family Studies, Art, Drama, Film</p>	<p>Section C: Module 1</p>
<p><u>Two Apples</u></p> <p>Age groups: 7–11, 12–14</p>	<p>When a young woman leaves her homeland in search of a better future, she brings with her a single memento from her past: a ripe apple studded with fragrant cloves. A true labour of love, Bahram Javahery’s animated film is infused with longing and the tender perfume of hope.</p>	<p>Cultural Artifacts, Culture, Memory, Meaning-Making, Integration, Migration</p>	<p>Art, Film, Cultural Studies, Family Studies</p>	<p>Section A: Module 1</p>

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SECTION A:

INTRODUCING MIGRATION, CULTURE AND CITIZENSHIP THROUGH FILM

AGES 7–11

Key Themes: Migration, Citizenship, Friendship, Home, Identity, Belonging, Cultural Artifacts, Diversity, Memory, Fear, Meaning-Making

Subject Areas:

- Social Studies: Communities in Canada and the World
- Family Studies/Home Economics: Family Diversity and Challenges
- Languages: English
- Ethics and Religious Culture: Religious Diversity/Heritage

Learning Objectives:

- Students will understand aspects of the complex experiences of Middle Eastern immigrants, both as they immigrate and for those yet to come to Canada.
- Students will understand and reflect on the concept of migration and its intersecting relationship with topics including culture, home, identity and sense of belonging.
- Students will understand the significance of a cultural artifact and how certain items are valuable to people and cultures.
- Students will think about their role as peers and fellow community members to those who are new to Canada.
- Students will develop empathy and understanding and understand their scope of action as citizens and community members.
- Students will be asked to think critically about various texts



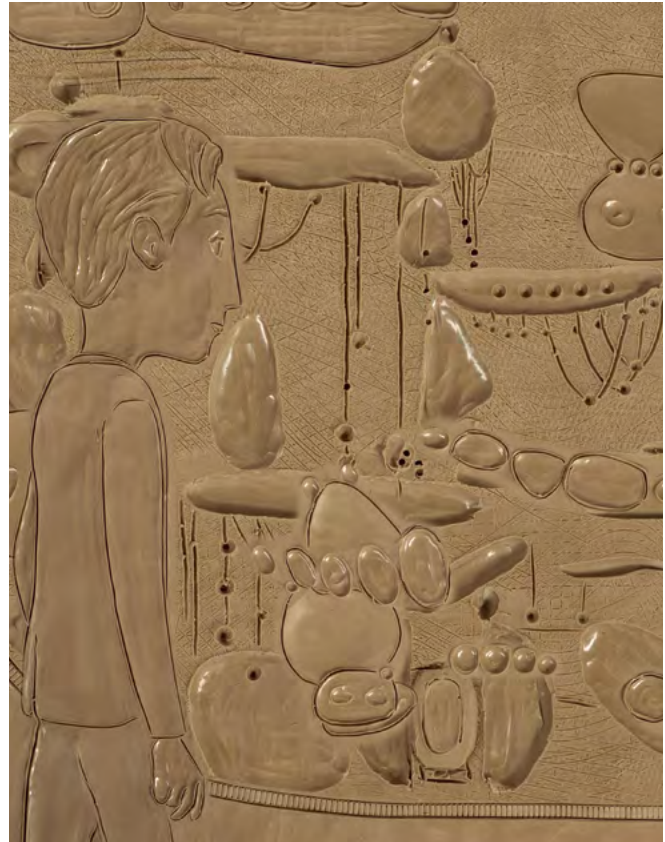
A Scent of Mint

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For the Teacher: In this section, the concept of migration is explored through two modules. These modules focus on the meaning and impact of what it means to leave home and find a sense of home elsewhere. Migration intersects with topics such as “journey” and “home.”

Home can be both a physical space and a psychological space. The concept of home can refer to feelings, such as a sense of belonging. These feelings, despite where a person may physically be, are personally constructed and can change at any time. This perspective allows students to understand that although migration removes a person from their homeland, home can exist elsewhere. The facilitation and support of others can help create a sense of home for newcomers.

Students are not necessarily expected to understand the complex meanings of migration through these lessons. Rather, they are encouraged to get curious about migration, ask questions, and recognize that migration occurs across the globe and can either be forced or voluntary.



Two Apples

Forced migration occurs when someone flees from their homeland to escape dangerous situations, such as war or conflict. **Voluntary migration** occurs when someone chooses to leave their homeland (for example, to accept a job). Both forced and voluntary migration bring up various emotions throughout the migration journey (i.e., pre-migration, during migration and post-migration). Students will engage in an activity to reflect on these emotions, what they may look like and what influences them—including how negative emotions can impact people’s experiences when starting life in a new country.

Regardless of the reason for migration, when people migrate, they often bring various items that remind them of their culture, heritage, homeland or past. These are cultural artifacts. Students will also be invited to reflect on the significance of cultural artifacts and how certain items are valuable because they hold sentimental meaning. These conversations should be organic and follow a student-based inquiry approach to learning.

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MODULE 1: EXPLORING MIGRATION AND CULTURE THROUGH THE CONCEPT OF HOME

Themes: Migration, Journey, Home, Cultural Artifacts, Identity, Belonging, Diversity, Memory, Meaning-Making

Pre-Viewing Discussion: Explore with your students what home means through collective perspectives and brainstorming. The group discussion should revolve around meaningful insights into what home means to them. It is also beneficial to discuss the importance of artifacts (any tangible items) that build or represent a sense of one's culture.

The teacher is encouraged to track the following **prompting questions** on a flip chart, whiteboard or any suitable online platform, to offer a more interactive and visual learning experience.

Prompting Questions:

- What makes a home, home?
- Is home a feeling or a place? How can it be both?
- What feelings does the idea of home give you?

The discussion should eventually transition into introductory conversations around migration. Consider introducing the following about migration:

- Defining migration (definition of the word itself)
- Reasons to migrate (i.e., by choice or force)
- Ways to migrate, such as by foot, boat, train or plane
- Migration journeys (not always easy and vary from person to person)

Viewing: Watch the film *Two Apples*. Then watch the scene from [2:00–3:10](#) again. After viewing this scene, discuss the significance of the apple as a cultural artifact or significant object.

Post-Viewing Class Discussion: Following the viewing of *Two Apples*, educators can carry out large-group discussions to reflect on the film, or arrange small-group discussions through think, pair and share structures. The latter option groups students in pairs and has them reflect on the questions and share their answers in a large or small group.

- What happened when the girl spun the apple in the vase?
- What do you think she remembers every time she looks at the apple?
- Why do you think she decided to pack the apple when she left her country?
- Is there something in your home that is very special to you or your family? If it was not there, would you miss it? Do you think a friend would be able to feel the same way about the same object?

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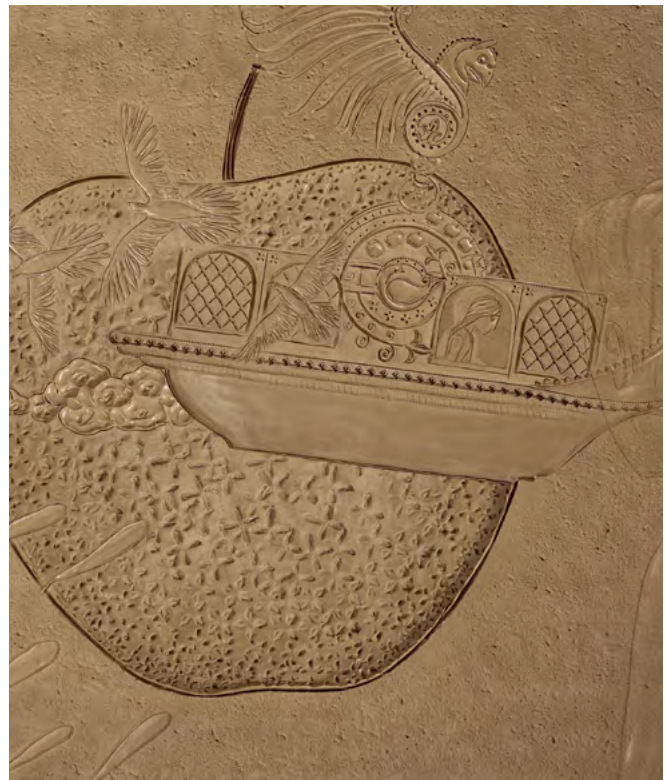
MY APPLE ACTIVITY [\(APPENDIX A\)](#):

Students are invited to draw or paste pictures and write words, phrases or sentences that explain memorable or significant moments at home, and/or aspects of their home. This can be a take-home assignment to be completed with parents or guardians, or an in-class activity. Following the activity, students should be invited to share their apple with the rest of the class. The teacher should pay attention to and comment on:

- Similarities and differences of each apple, and how our homes are both the same and different, despite where we come from or where we live.
- How even though everyone started with the same apple, each student constructed a different meaning when they took it on their own unique journey.
- The idea that home is a feeling and therefore can be mobile, regardless of whether someone migrated to Canada or was born and raised in Canada.
- How home contributes to our sense of identity and culture.
- Why cultural artifacts are sentimental to us on a personal level (they help us construct meanings and remember certain people and memories about our lives).

Note: There is no right or wrong answer here and students should have the ability to select anything. The idea is that a sense of home is subjective and individually constructed. Students may also choose to carry out this exercise by reflecting or commenting on what they wish home felt like. This may be suitable for students who do not want to comment on their situation at home.

Closing: Following this activity, discuss the significance of home as a personal meaning, i.e., the idea that each journey is memorable and we all make memories and construct meanings about people or things in unique individual ways. This will be exemplified through students sharing their apples. It would also be beneficial to circle back to the prompting questions explored throughout the beginning of the lesson to explore the evolution of students' knowledge.



Two Apples

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MODULE 2: BUILDING A SENSE OF HOME IN CANADA

Themes: Migration, Citizenship, Belonging, Newcomer, Refugees, Immigrants, Integration

Pre-Viewing Activity: Following the previous discussion around migration, culture, journey and home, teachers should introduce the concept of refugees and immigrants next. Teachers may wish to share a resource (book, one-pager, etc.) with the class to further introduce them to these ideas. Three suggestions are:

- [Where Will I Live? \(2017\)](#) by Rosemary McCarney, a book about refugees from around the world and their experiences
- [From Far Away \(1995\)](#) by Robert Munsch and Saoussan Askar
 - The National Film Board film selected for this lesson, **From Far Away**, is based on this story
- [“What’s a Refugee?”](#) (n.d.) by Elise Gravel, a graphic one-pager

Following these readings and as part of the pre-viewing activity, teachers are encouraged to explain the difference between being an immigrant and a refugee (being a refugee is not a choice). Immigrants choose to move while refugees are forced to flee. It is up to the discretion of the teacher to comment further on these differences. However, given the age group, the focus should be on newcomers and more specifically, on new children and youth coming to Canada. On this note, teachers should discuss what life may look like for newcomers coming to Canada. Discuss the emotions newcomers may feel and what may trigger such emotions using the following questions:

- How do you think those coming from other countries might feel? How would it feel to start a new life in another country?
- Imagine you had to leave Canada and go to a new school in a faraway place. What do you think you would be thinking and feeling?

Note: Some students may share real experiences and responses to the questions raised above, not imaginary ones. Modifying the question for the student population and applying cultural safety is encouraged.

The film selected for this lesson module will help students to think about how newcomers might feel when they start school in a new country.

Viewing: View the entire film **From Far Away**.

Class Discussion:

- What happened in the film?
- Do you think Saoussan had this experience because she was new to Canada, or could any student have this type of experience during Halloween?
- Did you think the other students in the class knew that Saoussan was a refugee from another country? Do you think they should know? Why or why not?



From Far Away

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ACTIVITY: SAOUSSAN'S EMOTIONAL JOURNEY (APPENDICES B & C):

Put students into groups. Provide them with about two or three copies of [Appendix B](#) (emoji sheet). Have them cut out the emotions experienced by Saoussan at her new school and paste them in [Appendix C](#). Have students populate the emotional timeline of Saoussan's experiences starting at her new school and until the end of the film. If necessary, feel free to go through the film once more, stopping at certain time stamps to allow students to complete their timeline. There may be more than one emotion suitable per visual, and this is okay. Since the handout comprises two worksheets, teachers may wish to assign two groups to complete page one and another two groups to populate the second page.

Teachers are encouraged to access [Appendix D](#), which has notes beside each scene.

Going Deeper: Review the responses of each group as a class. Allow students to discuss Saoussan's emotions throughout the film and reflect on the events that influenced how she reacted in each scene.

Discussion questions:

- “He said there’s nothing to be scared of?”: Have your parents or loved ones ever said something like this to you? Why do you think they would say this? How do you know they’re right?
- Why do you think she was afraid of Halloween? If you were a new student who didn’t know anything about Halloween, do you think you would be scared?
- What other experiences do you think Saoussan has had in her life where she would have been scared?

Closing: Help students develop a sense of agency around their natural desire to support and welcome newcomers. Have students work in groups to either draw a comic or create a skit that exemplifies their answers to the following questions:

- How can we help newcomers feel welcome?
- What kinds of other things could the other students in the class have done to make Saoussan feel more comfortable and welcomed?

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SECTION B:

CHALLENGING DOMINANT NARRATIVES SURROUNDING MIDDLE EASTERN COMMUNITIES THROUGH FILM

AGES 12–14

Key Themes: Culture, Religion, Integration, Stereotypes, Anti-Discrimination, Westernization, Community, Civil Society, Gender Roles

Sub-Themes: Media Literacy, Censorship, Surveillance, Canada, Social Media

Subject Areas:

- Diversity: Diversity in Communities
- Media Education: Popular Culture
- Media Education: Internet and Social Media
- Ethics and Religious Culture: Religious Diversity/Heritage
- Languages: English
- Family Studies/Home Economics: Family Diversity and Challenges
- Social Studies: Communities in Canada/World

Learning Objectives:

- Students will develop an understanding of the plurality of experiences of Middle Eastern and Arabic individuals and communities.
- Students will think critically about media representations, stereotypes and their own perceptions of concepts like terrorism, fanaticism, extremism, displacement and others.
- Students will reflect on the implications of concepts like integration and westernization.



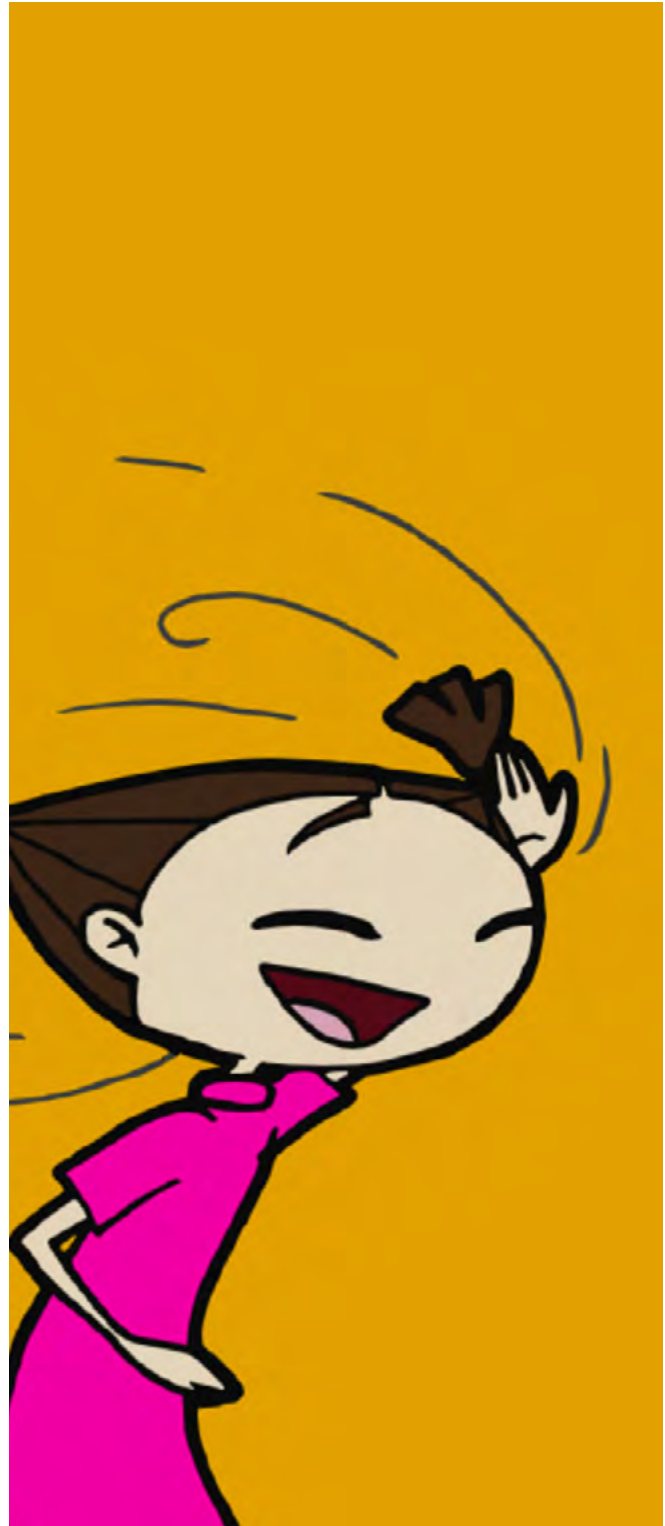
A Scent of Mint

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For the Teacher:

A dominant narrative refers to stories that are commonly repeated over time. This includes perspectives towards a set of people or topics shared through platforms like social media or news outlets. The purpose of a dominant narrative is to achieve a single story through repetition by silencing alternative narratives. An excellent resource to learn more about the impacts of having a single story is Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s TED Talk “The Danger of a Single Story” (2009) ([English/French](#)).

Within the context of understanding experiences of Middle Eastern newcomers, dominant narratives work to cultivate certain perceptions about this group, usually leading to incorrect and unfounded ideas. Stereotypes develop, in part, as a result of dominant narratives that produce falsified or constructed beliefs and opinions about a group of people. To learn more about stereotypes, consider viewing the TED Talk [“Can Stereotypes Ever Be Good?”](#) (Orfano and Densho, 2021). Compounded with stereotypes, dominant narratives can lead to mistreatment, misunderstanding, discrimination and oppression of Middle Eastern newcomers in Canada. At a broader level, this also serves to separate populations from one another, further reinforcing polarizing and opposing camps and ideologies. In the first lesson of this section, students will be invited to deconstruct stereotypes and challenge false representations through engaging in critical reflections and dialogue. The films in this section showcase many of the struggles faced by Middle Easterners living in Canada as they navigate narratives and stereotypes. Simultaneously, the films empower viewers by showcasing the ways in which these challenges can be overcome through retelling a narrative.



From *Far Away*

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The second module in this section invites students to locate and challenge misrepresentation through media outlets such as social media. Students within this age group are immersed in a huge variety of media, including social media platforms, music and film. This module has the goal of helping students continually question and think critically about the world and specific populations being presented to them through media. In addition, students are not merely passive victims of the media, but are also contributors and creators. Assisting students to think critically about the biases that surround them and how they might consciously or unconsciously perpetuate, subvert or counter these biases has powerful implications. The practices of social media platforms and tech companies related to silencing specific communities is well documented. This can take the form of algorithmic governance, surveillance and the creation of echo chambers on social media, leading to polarization and the perpetuation of falsified representations of Arabs and Middle Easterners. Refugees are commonly portrayed in the media through a deficit lens, as helpless and traumatized. The films viewed throughout this section offer a small snapshot into alternative, authentic narratives.

The overall goal of the second module is to equip students with the knowledge and mindset they need to challenge negative social norms conveyed through media outlets, empowering them in the process. It is imperative for classes to engage in this lesson through asking critical questions and reflective dialogue. Thus, the teacher must be prepared to gauge sensitivities around biases, assumptions, dominant narratives, stereotypes and prejudice towards Middle Easterners who may also be newcomers.

Here are some things that teachers can do to prepare for these experiences in the classroom and with their students:

Before proceeding, it is important for the teacher to recognize their own biases and assumptions towards Middle Easterners and/or newcomers living in Canada. Biases and assumptions refer to a set of perceptions, ideologies or personal opinions about something or someone. They are influenced by a person's upbringing and experiences, and external sources, which shape what they believe to be unequivocally true. It is almost impossible not to have biases—especially implicit biases, unconscious negative attitudes and prejudice toward a group (or groups) of people.

Without self-reflection, teachers are at risk of instilling or perpetuating their biases and assumptions about Middle Easterners and/or newcomers upon their students. This ultimately reproduces dominant narratives and stereotypes. Therefore, it is important to reflect deeply on the following question: What do you know and how do you know what you know? Teachers are invited to read and reflect on the following resource: [Speak Up at School: How to Respond to Everyday Prejudice, Bias and Stereotypes](#) (Teaching Tolerance, n.d.). It takes a patient, forgiving and safe environment to become aware of and overcome implicit and explicit biases. In examining their personal biases, students will contribute to a safer space for learning while making room for authentic perspectives of Middle Eastern newcomers living in Canada.

In preparing to teach students about critical media literacy, consider reading "[Preparing English Teachers with Critical Media Literacy for the Digital Age](#)" (Share and Mamikonyan, 2020). Within this resource, Buckingham (2019) explains the critical concept of media education, including how media represents reality and how to unpack the motives behind media production. Furthermore, Buckingham discusses the importance of students asking questions and reflecting on their own interpretations and experiences of the media in a systematic and rigorous way.

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MODULE 1: CHALLENGING FALSE REPRESENTATIONS AND STEREOTYPES

This module is divided into two parts as it requires time. Although both parts focus on meeting the same objectives, part one explores foundational knowledge about stereotypes and how to challenge such misconceptions by asking bold questions. Part two includes an in-depth exercise to prompt students to think critically and challenge false representations and stereotypes.

PART ONE

Themes: Stereotypes, Representation, Dominant Narratives, Biases, Assumptions, Prejudice

Pre-Viewing Activity: Elicit prior knowledge with your class. Discuss: What is a stereotype? How are stereotypes created? What fuels them? Who reproduces them? Why? What conceptions do we have around newcomers? What are biases and how are they cultivated? What shapes our assumptions? If the educator is unable to think of ways to raise these topics, start in a simple way. For instance, consider challenging the following common stereotypes:

- Anyone who dresses in fancy clothing is wealthy.
- Anyone who wears ripped clothing is poor.
- Boys are better at sports than girls.

Of course, the stereotypes listed are not true. However, these dominant statements have been told over and over to make people believe they are unequivocally true. Such stereotypes work to benefit a group of people by granting them power through the marginalization or strategic oppression of others.

Note: Be mindful of the classroom profile. Some of the stereotypes listed above may trigger unwanted attention toward students in the class, leading to potential bullying. It is important to move through this discussion cautiously. If the educator feels the class is not capable of taking part in this discussion in a large-group setting, consider placing students in groups and providing [Appendix E](#) to each group. [Appendix E](#) is a worksheet that prompts students to reflect on stereotypes. Answers can then be taken up as a class. Teachers are encouraged to adapt [Appendix E](#) for any theme or topic, such as dominant narratives, assumptions and biases, to help students understand each one.

Viewing: Watch *In Full Voice* from [8:08–9:05](#). This clip discusses the importance of asking bold questions.

Post-Viewing Questions: Following this scene, ask the class:

- What are bold questions?
- What makes them bold?
- Can the response to this be subjective?
- Why is it important to ask bold questions?
- How can asking bold questions bring us closer to the truth?
- What should we keep in mind if we ask bold questions about another culture?
- How do we remain respectful of others while asking bold questions?

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PART TWO

Once this activity is completed, draw a chart like the one below on chart paper, a whiteboard, bulletin board or any board large enough for everyone's participation. Students should be able to post sticky notes on the chart. Provide each group (or student) with a few pink, purple and turquoise sticky notes (colours may vary). Have students write on pink, purple and turquoise stickies with responses to the titles of each column: "What I know about Middle Eastern communities" (pink sticky), "What I think I know" (purple) and "What I want to learn" (turquoise). Remember to guide your students before beginning this exercise by reading through the comments under each section of the chart, noted for the teacher's reference only. Students should only post what they feel comfortable posting, and participation should not be mandatory. Students should not include their names on the stickies. This approach allows for safe and genuine entries.

After as much time as the class needs, it is up to the teacher's discretion to decide whether students should paste their own stickies on the board. Alternately, teachers can collect all the stickies and paste each one under its respective column.

Teachers should read each sticky note before sharing it aloud or pasting it under a column. Some comments may be disrespectful or inappropriate to share with the rest of the class. If comments are inappropriate, pause the exercise here and spend additional time working through activities such as [Appendix E](#) to educate students about stereotypes, biases and assumptions. Another option may be to discard an inappropriate sticky note, as students may not know their comments are inappropriate and therefore not intend to be disrespectful.

What I know about Middle Eastern communities	What I think I know	What I want to learn
<p>How do you know this? How do you know what you know?</p> <p>Examples: Middle Eastern refugees flee their countries by force due to war or conflict that they need to escape. Most Middle Easterners speak Arabic. Some Middle Eastern women wear hijabs. Not all Middle Easterners are Muslim.</p>	<p>What do you think you know about Middle Eastern communities or Middle Eastern newcomers living in Canada? Why do you think you know this?</p> <p>Examples: People who leave their homes are sad when they come to Canada. It is hard to feel welcomed when you first move to Canada. Learning English is hard as a new student who only speaks Arabic.</p>	<p>What do you want to learn about Middle Eastern communities in Canada? Why do you want to learn this? Bold questions are encouraged while maintaining respect.</p> <p>Examples: How do we make newcomers feel welcomed? What is happening in the Middle East? Why did Canada welcome so many Syrian refugees? Why do some Arab women wear hijabs?</p>

Once the chart is populated with sticky notes, focus on the pink and purple columns first. Locate any comments that may be stereotypical and challenge these. Acknowledge that the pink column entries should be based on personal experiences (i.e., the person identifies as Middle Eastern) or factual knowledge. Read through the turquoise column but do not attempt to answer any questions without factual knowledge. It is okay not to have answers to all the questions raised under the turquoise column. Teaching students to ask critical questions is a crucial step in challenging dominant narratives, combatting stereotypes and correcting misconceptions.

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Viewing: Viewing the film clips will help reassure students of the entries they made in the pink column, clarify whether the entries they made in the purple column were accurate and possibly provide answers to some of the bold questions listed in the turquoise column (or avenues for further discussion). After viewing each clip, invite students to remove their own stickies or post any new coloured stickies onto the existing coloured column chart. It is not necessary to watch all the clips listed below. This can depend on the level of discussion or questions under the turquoise column.

Film Title	Clip Summary	Clip Timing	Bold Questions Raised or Answered Through the Clip
The Faith Project – Focus and Distraction	A man speaks about praying in Canada while praying in a public staircase.	1:50–3:50	Why do Muslims pray? Why do they need to pray in a specific way?
In Full Voice	Two women describe their experiences facing stereotypes about Muslim women in Quebec.	3:40–5:05	What challenges do Middle Easterners face in Canada?
Arab Women Say What?!	A woman and her friends discuss the intersections between topics such as “Arab,” “Christianity” and “Muslim.”	42:01–46:07	What do we mean and who do we refer to when we say “Arabs” or “Middle Easterners”? What happened in Iraq starting in 2003? Why does it feel like it is normal to hear about war in the Middle East?
Arab Women Say What?!	A Middle Eastern woman describes why she came to Canada.	46:07–46:56	Why do some Middle Easterners come to Canada? Or, why do they have to leave their countries?

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Separate students into small groups of two to four people and have them select a few bold questions to answer. The bold questions can either be taken from the turquoise column or created by the teacher. Students are encouraged to research each bold question online or come up with answers to the questions by referencing the film clips. Each group should complete one to two questions that are different from another group. Have each group complete [Appendix F: Answering Bold Questions](#).

Note: If there are not enough bold questions under the turquoise column or the teacher feels as though students are not capable of working on responding to the bold questions asked by their peers, invite each group to answer any of the questions listed in the above chart. The teacher may also consider having more than one group explore the same questions to help bring light to the desired objectives.

Closing: Highlight to students that knowledge is power and stereotypes, dominant narratives, assumptions, biases and misconceptions about Middle Easterners, and cultural groups in general, silence important voices and control and limit the acquisition of knowledge. Therefore, asking bold questions helps us combat stereotypes through critical dialogue, reflection and engagement. Remind students that the conversation does not end here—combatting stereotypes is an ongoing and continuous effort of increasing our exposure and constantly challenging the information that comes our way.



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MODULE 2: MEDIA LITERACY: THE ROLE OF MEDIA OUTLETS IN REPRESENTATION

Themes: Othering, Representation, Misconceptions, Social Media, Media Literacy, Racism, Stereotypes

Pre-Viewing: Discuss representation in the media and how certain cultures or groups of people can be inaccurately depicted. For instance, reflect with your class on Disney’s *Aladdin*, or any other text that misrepresents or inaccurately depicts a group of people. Review any text before sharing with students as some texts may jeopardize cultural safety. Many understandings around Middle Easterners or Arabs are taught and influenced through films like *Aladdin*. Read “[Whatever Disney Has Taught You About Aladdin is False](#)” (Zainab, 2018), which focuses on *Aladdin*, westernization and a variety of misrepresentations. If students are unfamiliar with Disney’s original *Aladdin*, consider showcasing a few clips from the film (if the teacher has access).

For the teacher as a reference, the following are key misrepresentations of Arabs within Disney’s cartoon version of *Aladdin*:

- Stereotypes of how Middle Easterners dress or appear, for example:
 - Jasmine wears sexual and revealing clothing.
 - Villains are associated with darker skin tones, beards, dark hair and heavy accents.
- Extremely prejudiced representations of Middle Easterners, Arabs and women, for example:
 - The “Arabian Nights” theme song says, “where they cut off your ear if they don’t like your face—it’s barbaric, but hey, it’s home.”

- The film pushes Jasmine to do nothing but find a husband, get married and find happily ever after; it offers a false and oppressive representation of Arab women’s lives and sees them as weaker and lesser beings.

Viewing: Watch ***Arab Women Say What?!*** from [53:56–56:50](#). This clip is a scene where women comment on the ways in which media outlets misrepresent Arabs, and how false representation works to other Arabs and Arab women in particular.



Arab Women Say What?!

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Post-Viewing Class Brainstorm:

- What is othering?
 - Deliberately viewing or treating a person different from others or from the rest of the group.
 - Labelling a group or person as not fitting in.
 - Identifying and emphasizing physical, cultural, emotional, religious or other characteristics of a person or group that make them seem strange or different.
 - Strategically othering people such as Arabs through films like *Aladdin*.
 - Using media to mass-produce false representations of people.
 - Those who are othered find it challenging to change misconceptions about them or people like them.
- What do media outlets have to gain in perpetuating certain representations?
 - Instills segregation between people, which creates a division between those with power and those without.
 - North American media companies have a history of othering people to gain power, control and wealth through cultural assimilation.
 - North American media content is disseminated globally, which means these representations extend far beyond this continent.

Viewing: Watch a scene from the film *In Full Voice* from [10:35–13:50](#). This scene discusses the impacts of false representation in the media, which leads to Islamophobia. Watching *The Faith Project – Focus and Distraction* [in full](#) is also recommended. If more time can be allotted, it may be beneficial to view the clips more than once; this will help students remember the scenes for the post-viewing discussion and activity.

Post-Viewing Discussion: First discuss with students that Islamophobia refers to a fear, dislike or feeling of prejudice towards Muslims. Then discuss the following:

- What aspects of the lives of Muslims, Arabs or Middle Easterners are hidden or missing in our current media environment?
- Can you think of a false representation of yourself in the media—for example, your culture, gender, age or anything else about you? How do TV shows, magazines, social media, movies, songs, etc. portray you? (These questions bring the class into the next activity.)

Activity: Students will complete [Appendix G: “Me” Activity](#). Have students draw, write or make a collage of things related to their culture, gender, religion or other aspects of their identity onto a blank person figure, like the one shown in the appendix. Make sure that while doing this, students only use one side of the figure. If students are having difficulty, teachers can prompt them with the following questions:

- What does society expect of you?
- What does it mean to others that you are ___ (e.g., a girl, a boy, an Arab, tall, short, etc.)?

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Students should only represent what they feel comfortable sharing or showcasing. To encourage students and lessen their sense of vulnerability, teachers can create and share an example with their class.

Students are also encouraged to showcase their inner reality and genuine experiences of themselves. Essentially, they are showing what makes them, them. A simple example may be to draw a girl wearing a pink dress on the left side (depicting societal expectations) versus a girl wearing denim jeans and a black top on the right side (depicting a real experience and example of themselves).

Put students in small groups and have them identify similarities and differences between each of their figures. Which representations do they agree with? Which don't they identify with and why? For those they don't identify with (for instance, girls wearing pink), discuss how impactful it is to keep seeing these representations in the media.

Closing: Leave students feeling empowered by asking them to reflect on two different possible societies: one in which we “other” each other and have more and more separation among different groups, and one in which we ask bold questions, learn about one another and find ways of collaborating. Which of these do we want? What characteristics of mass media would support that kind of society? Remind them that the platforms we have today, such as films and social media outlets like TikTok and Instagram, have been created by people just like them—and new ones will be created in the future. Invite students to imagine they are executives leading a future media company. What kinds of stories would they share, how would they choose to structure social media platforms and what kinds of principles or ideas would be at the heart of their work? Who would be part of the team making these decisions?

If this line of questions inspires you, feel free to create a project around this, in which students present their future media platform to the class. If not, simply allow students to lead and conclude this conversation and lesson.



Arab Women Say What?!

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SECTION C:

POST-MIGRATION INTEGRATION: CRITICALLY EXAMINING CANADA'S ROLE IN WELCOMING MIDDLE EASTERN NEWCOMERS

AGES 15–18

Key Themes: Conflict and Healing, Displacement, Resistance, Westernization, Gender Roles and Patriarchy, Assimilation Versus Integration, Intersectionality, Stereotypes, Media's Influence on Perceptions of World Conflict

Learning Objectives:

- Students will become aware of the impacts of conflict and violence on Middle Eastern and Arab immigrants and refugees.
- Students will analyze the impacts of westernization and colonization on Middle Eastern newcomers as well as themselves.
- Students will differentiate between assimilation and integration, and consider their impacts on newcomers and the future of Canada.
- Students will consider what communities, people and governments must do to create environments of increased integration and belonging.
- Students will carry out research on local organizations that support the integration of newcomers.
- Students will analyze the strengths and weaknesses of westernization, who benefits most from it and what is at stake for those who don't succeed in becoming westernized.
- Students will produce their own texts and creative work about the cultural contributions of non-western civilizations.
- Students will analyze the implications of Canada's role in upholding human rights.
- Students will analyze the strengths and limitations of Canada's current immigration system and possibilities for its ongoing improvement.



From Far Away

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Subject Areas:

- Diversity: Diversity in Communities
- Ethics and Religious Culture: Ethical Values
- Ethics and Religious Culture: Religious Diversity/Heritage
- Languages: English
- Family Studies/Home Economics: Family Diversity and Challenges
- Family Studies/Home Economics: Relationships
- History and Citizenship Education: Issues in Society Today
- History and Citizenship Education: Population and Settlement (1608–Present)
- Social Studies: Communities in Canada and the World
- Media Education: Popular Culture
- Law and Society
- World Religions
- Civics and Careers



A Scent of Mint

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For the Teacher: The films examined in these lesson modules show how westernization impacts newcomers such as Middle Eastern immigrants and refugees. In general, westernization refers to the adoption of cultural practices prevalent in the “western” world. Becoming westernized generally happens when people adopt western cultural attitudes and norms, such as western democracy, individualism, materialism and pop culture. Westernization is impactful and profoundly changes people’s thinking and way of life. As teachers move through this material, keep in mind that critiquing westernization is different from critiquing people from the West. Westernized mentalities hold up the West and its approaches and ideologies as the epitome of culture—the best way to live, no matter where someone is from. One of the greatest fears related to westernization, especially for immigrants and refugees, is the loss of identity.

When engaging with students on this theme, it will be helpful to take an inquiry stance around the possibility that every culture has strengths, weaknesses and contributions toward greater global peace and social cohesion. One example is the practice of communal living and mutual support present in many Arab and Middle Eastern communities, as well as the practices of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. These ways of thinking or cultural orientations differ from the individualism of the West. The films in this section also expose students to religious and cultural practices beyond the Judeo-Christian framework of colonized Canada—practices that exemplify how non-western cultural practices are maintained despite living in a westernized world.

World conflict refers to conflict happening across the globe, such as war and invasion, resulting in people fleeing their homes and becoming displaced. A portion of these people become refugees; some are fortunate to come to Canada to start a new life. When refugees come to Canada, some go through mental-health challenges due to trauma they experienced during their migration journeys.

Canada has welcomed, and continues to welcome, refugees from various countries. In 2015, Canada welcomed thousands of Syrian refugees, resulting in greater efforts to care for this unique population. In classroom spaces, this included finding ways to ensure students felt supported and equipped for successful integration.

In general, successful integration refers to the positive ways in which newcomers can feel part of Canadian society. For students, this might be in the form of making friends, learning one of Canada’s official languages, achieving academic milestones or simply feeling welcomed. However, successful integration continues to be an ongoing area of discussion across realms of research and practice. While integration revolves around keeping unique elements of one’s homeland or culture in the process of settlement, assimilation largely refers to a settlement process whereby the newcomer is expected to fully absorb the new country’s way of living, leaving behind components of their culture and way of life. As a country, Canada takes pride in adopting a settlement framework that focuses on integration rather than assimilation. This framework leverages inclusion, diversity, equality and multiculturalism, resulting in a mosaic country. This is different from the melting pot, a metaphor describing members of a society blending as one. A mosaic country refers to one where each cultural group retains their distinct culture while contributing to a nation as a whole.



Deyzangeroo

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MODULE 1: ASSIMILATION VERSUS INTEGRATION

Themes: Integration, Assimilation, Successful Integration, Canada, Settlement

Pre-Viewing: Use a Venn diagram to discuss similarities and differences between the concepts of integration and assimilation.

Viewing: Watch the following film clips, which comment on integration and assimilation:

- **Arab Women Say What?!**, [8:15–12:30](#)
- **Things Arab Men Say**, [8:48–14:05](#)



Things Arab Men Say

Pre-Viewing:

- How do newcomers integrate? How is this different from assimilation?
- In the scene from **Things Arab Men Say**, one of the men mentioned that he prefers assimilation. Why do you think he suggests this and how might his background as a Middle Easterner play a role in this thought?
 - For the teacher: Students' answers may vary, but some countries in the Middle East follow a dictatorship. Therefore, the mentality of "do as I say" may persist for some individuals. However, it seems the man in the film references assimilative practices at home and not necessarily in a broader sense—for example, forcing his kids to learn Arabic. If this comes up organically in discussion, ask your class: If integration is not entirely favoured, what's a good balance between integration and assimilation?
- What differences do you notice in the discussions around integration and assimilation among the men and women? What do you think this stems from?
- From the perspective of the welcoming country, in this case Canada, what approach is easiest to adopt?
 - For the teacher: The students' answer will likely be assimilation.
- What capacities and abilities are required of people, governments and communities when integration is the focus?
 - For the teacher: Students' answers could include things like empathy, consultation, cultural training and awareness, understanding, patience, resilience and assuming the best of one another.

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Research Project: Conduct a small independent case study. Research a local service provider or non-profit organization that supports the integration of newcomers in Canada. Prepare an oral presentation such as a speech, podcast or video recording and share:

- The name of the organization supporting newcomers in Canada.
- The organization’s mission statement.
- A summary of the services they offer.
- Your response to the following questions:
 - In your opinion, what services do you think are most helpful to support the integration journey for newcomers in Canada (e.g., language training, assistance finding employment, mental-health services, etc.)? Explain your reasoning.
 - Which of the services offered through this agency or organization do you think the men and/or women in the films you watched are most likely to access? Explain.
 - There are many aspects to integration (social, psychological, academic, etc.). What do you think may be the hardest and why?
 - In your opinion, what does successful integration mean? What does it look like? Who or what makes it successful, and according to whom?



Arab Women Say What?!

Closing: Have students present their assignments to the class. This assignment could be used for assessment. Once completed, reflect on what it means to integrate successfully. With all this said about integration, what does it look like to integrate and be part of Canadian society? Consider the men and women in the films. How might the successful integration of their children differ from their own? Why or how do these differences matter and what do they have to say about Canada? How does this vision of integration rather than assimilation enrich Canada’s future?

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MODULE 2: EXPLORING IMPACTS OF WESTERNIZATION

Themes: Westernization, Canada, Integration, Assimilation, Globalization, Cultural Rituals

Pre-Viewing: Begin by collectively defining westernization using a word cloud. What do we know about this term? Furthermore, what images come to mind when students think of westernization? Depending on the platform used to generate this word cloud, images could be added to express meanings and understandings of westernization.

Before the film viewing, explain to students that the clips and films they will be watching will help them understand westernization and its impacts through first-hand experiences. Teachers should share the [NFB's description of Deyzangeroo](#), which is also in the summary of films table in this guide, before watching the film.

Viewing: Watch the following with the class:

- **A Scent of Mint**, [9:00–10:40](#)
- The film **Deyzangeroo** [in full](#)
- The film **The Faith Project – Focus and Distraction** [in full](#)

Post-Viewing Discussion Questions:

- What are your impressions of the films?
 - For the teacher: This question welcomes an opportunity for students to share any thoughts, questions, clarifications or challenges from the film viewings. Teachers can adapt this question as needed.

- In your day-to-day life, where and how do you encounter westernization? How does it show up in places, objects, actions and thoughts you engage with regularly?
- What does it mean to be westernized? Is this good or bad?
- Who and what benefit most from westernization?
- Based on the clips and films you watched, what are some ways those in Arab and Middle Eastern communities resist westernization?
- What is at stake for newcomers if they reject westernization?

Intangible Cultural Heritage: Ask students what they think the term intangible cultural heritage might refer to. They can carry out research in pairs based on the UNESCO website [What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?](#). Engaging with this webpage can either be a resource for the teacher, a way to extend the discussion or a separate short activity.



Arab Women Say What?!

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Activity—Persuasive Essay or Photo Essay: Invite students to select one of the following questions and develop either a written persuasive essay or photo essay in response to it:

- What are some of the contributions of the Middle Eastern and Arabic communities across time to human civilizations and our improved quality of life in the fullest sense? (Examples include the concept of banking, the invention of coffee, the work of Hafiz and Rumi, and the birth of mathematics.)
- If settler Canadians (including westernized settlers and non-westernized newcomers) were to adopt some of the traditional practices of Indigenous Peoples on this land, how do you think this would impact their mental health?
- How do some of the practices of Arab or Middle Eastern communities support better mental health, family unity or social cohesion?
- Research a cultural or religious practice of a group from the Middle East or the Arab world and describe the aspects of this practice that exemplify ideas different from those of the West. How does this practice resist westernization?

Photo Essay Option:

Invite students to take photos of various ways in which westernization is prevalent in their day-to-day lives (for example, in fast food they eat, the clothes they wear, music they listen to, places they go, etc.). Students can also take photos of ways they resist westernization in their day-to-day lives (for example, through eating cultural foods, listening to cultural music, taking part in rituals or practices not specific to the westernized world, speaking languages other than English, etc.).

A note for the teacher: If students select to do a photo essay and need inspiration, have them watch **A Scent of Mint** from [44:19–45:10](#) for inspiration. The voiceover that accompanies the photos in the scene may be useful to listen to, as the poem gives insight into the impacts of westernization.

Persuasive Essay Option:

Invite students to write an essay that intends to convince or influence the reader, responding to any of the questions noted above.

Closing: Discuss with students what the long-term impacts of westernization may look like for newcomer Middle Easterners, Canadians, Canada and the global landscape. In other words, what's the finish line for westernization? Allow the discussion to be fuelled organically through student input.



Deyzangeroo

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MODULE 3: CONFLICT AND RESILIENCE

Themes: Conflict, War, Resilience, Integration, Canada

Pre-Viewing: Discuss what it means to be resilient within the context of Middle Easterners and Arabs living in Canada, particularly for newcomer populations. Resiliency is the capacity to recover. These populations face a variety of hardships, usually rooted in the conflict within their country of origin. However, they may continue to face challenges and hardships when they come to Canada and throughout their settlement and integration process. The film *Rupture* offers a glimpse into the realities of these populations living in Canada and how conflict persists, amplifying the significance of being resilient.

Viewing: Watch *Rupture* from [4:45–9:30](#).

Post-Viewing Discussion Questions:

- Do you think it was right for Canadian law to demand Roula’s deportation back to Syria, even though Roula made the decision to divorce her husband due to domestic violence? Why or why not?
- What role does Canada play in either perpetuating or resolving conflict for women like Roula?
- Can you think of other ways in which immigration status might play a role in enabling or disabling access or rights to certain spaces?
- Consider displaced peoples living in refugee camps around the world and human rights being broken in such spaces. Who protects people in these contexts? What would Roula’s options be if she wasn’t in Canada?

- How can we ensure continuity and not rupture through integration?
- Roula’s experience highlights the way Canada’s immigration structure is built for a certain “normal” or “ideal” path toward integration. What aspects of a future immigration system would you build to account for a broader diversity of situations and challenges?



Rupture

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Secondary Viewing: To bring the conversation full circle and consider what it means to be resilient, students can view [Arab Women Say What?!](#) from [1:12:01–1:12:31](#). This scene offers a unique perspective on resiliency through the sharing of poetry. Following this secondary viewing, invite students to reflect on the following questions:

- How does this scene help you to understand what it means to be resilient? How is the creation and sharing of this poem a form of resiliency?
- How can smaller social structures (communities, families, schools, etc.) as well as larger social structures (governments, policies and procedures) influence or support resiliency?
- Are there ways to cope with conflict other than being resilient?
 - For the teacher: While resilience is about having the capacity to recover, it can be more broadly understood as a form of healing—and people heal in many individualistic and collectivistic ways, from therapy to group settings and more.

Closing: Recap the session by reflecting on how various social structures can perpetuate challenges for newcomers or offer solutions. Have students reflect on the experiences of newcomers across the globe and how these experiences may differ from country to country, and why. Secondly, emphasize to students that resilience is a very complex concept and process. Also discuss how resilience is not the only way to heal. Consider many forms of resistance, such as the example of sharing poetry in the secondary viewing. Lastly, invite students to reflect on how we can create positive spaces for newcomers to heal in ways most suitable for them.



Arab Women Say What?!

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ADDITIONAL GUIDES:

- [UNHCR Teaching About Refugees: Guide for Teachers](#)
- [International Organization for Migration: World Migration Interactive Educators' Toolkit](#)
- [International Rescue Committee: How to Support Refugees in the Classroom](#)
- [Kids Help Phone: Supporting Newcomer Youth](#)
- [Alberta Teachers' Association: Promoting Success with Arab Immigrant Students](#)

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT:

- [2023 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration](#)
- [Save the Children: Education Under Fire—How Conflict in the Middle East Is Depriving Children of Their Schooling](#)



Arab Women Say What?!

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GLOSSARY

Assimilation:

Within the context of this study guide, cultural assimilation refers to the process by which Middle Easterners come to resemble a society's majority group through the adoption of their social practices, ideologies, values and overall way of life.

Arab:

Refers to an ethnic and cultural group primarily associated with the Arab world, which spans across Western Asia, North Africa and some parts of the Horn of Africa. Arabs typically speak Arabic and share a common cultural heritage, including traditions, customs and history. The Arab world includes countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Yemen, Oman, Bahrain, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Libya and Sudan, among others. Arabs are known for their contributions to literature, art, science and religion, particularly Islam, which originated in the Arabian Peninsula. Not all Arabic-speaking people are ethnically Arab, as there are various ethnic groups within the Arab world and Arabic is also spoken by non-Arab communities in regions such as Africa and Asia.

Bias:

Biases and assumptions are a set of perceptions, ideologies or personal opinions about something or someone. They are influenced by a person's upbringing and experiences, as well as external sources, which shape what the person believes to be unequivocally true. It is almost impossible not to have biases, especially implicit biases—that is, unconscious negative attitudes toward a group of people.

Conflict:

Can occur at various levels, ranging from interpersonal conflicts between individuals to large-scale conflicts between nations or groups. World conflict refers to conflict happening across the globe, such as war and invasion, resulting in people fleeing their homes and becoming displaced.

Immigrant:

Anyone who voluntarily migrates from one place to another.

Integration:

The process by which people from one culture adopt aspects of another culture, while maintaining their own culture. Rather than losing their culture, they fuse two cultures. Integration is sometimes called a process or journey.

Middle Eastern:

Refers to a geographical region centred on Western Asia and Egypt. Encompasses countries such as Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the various Gulf states. The term also includes parts of North Africa, particularly Egypt and sometimes Libya. This region is characterized by its diverse cultures, languages, religions and historical significance.

Migration:

Refers to the movement from one place to another. Within the context of this study guide, migration refers to both the voluntary and forced movement to Canada by Middle Easterners or Arab newcomers.

Newcomer:

Refers to a person who has recently arrived in a place. This term functions as an umbrella category, referring largely to both immigrants and refugees.

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GLOSSARY

Othering:

Deliberately viewing or treating a person as different from another, or from the rest. Labelling a group or person as not fitting in. Identifying and emphasizing physical, cultural, emotional, religious or other characteristics of a person or group that makes them strange or different. Using the media to mass-produce false representations of people. Whoever is othered usually finds it challenging to change misconceptions about them or people like them.

Refugee:

Conventionally speaking, refers to a person who has fled their country of origin and cannot return due to fear of persecution, and who has been given refugee status.

Resilience:

The capacity to recover. A complex concept and process that may take different forms depending on cultural context.

Stereotypes:

Develop, in part, as a result of dominant narratives that produce falsified or constructed beliefs or opinions toward a set of people. Dominant narratives, compounded with stereotypes, can lead to mistreatment, misunderstanding, discrimination and oppression of Middle Eastern newcomers in Canada. At a broader level, stereotypes also separate populations from one another, further reinforcing polarizing and opposing camps and ideologies.

Westernization:

The process by which a country or society adopts the customs said to characterize the western world.

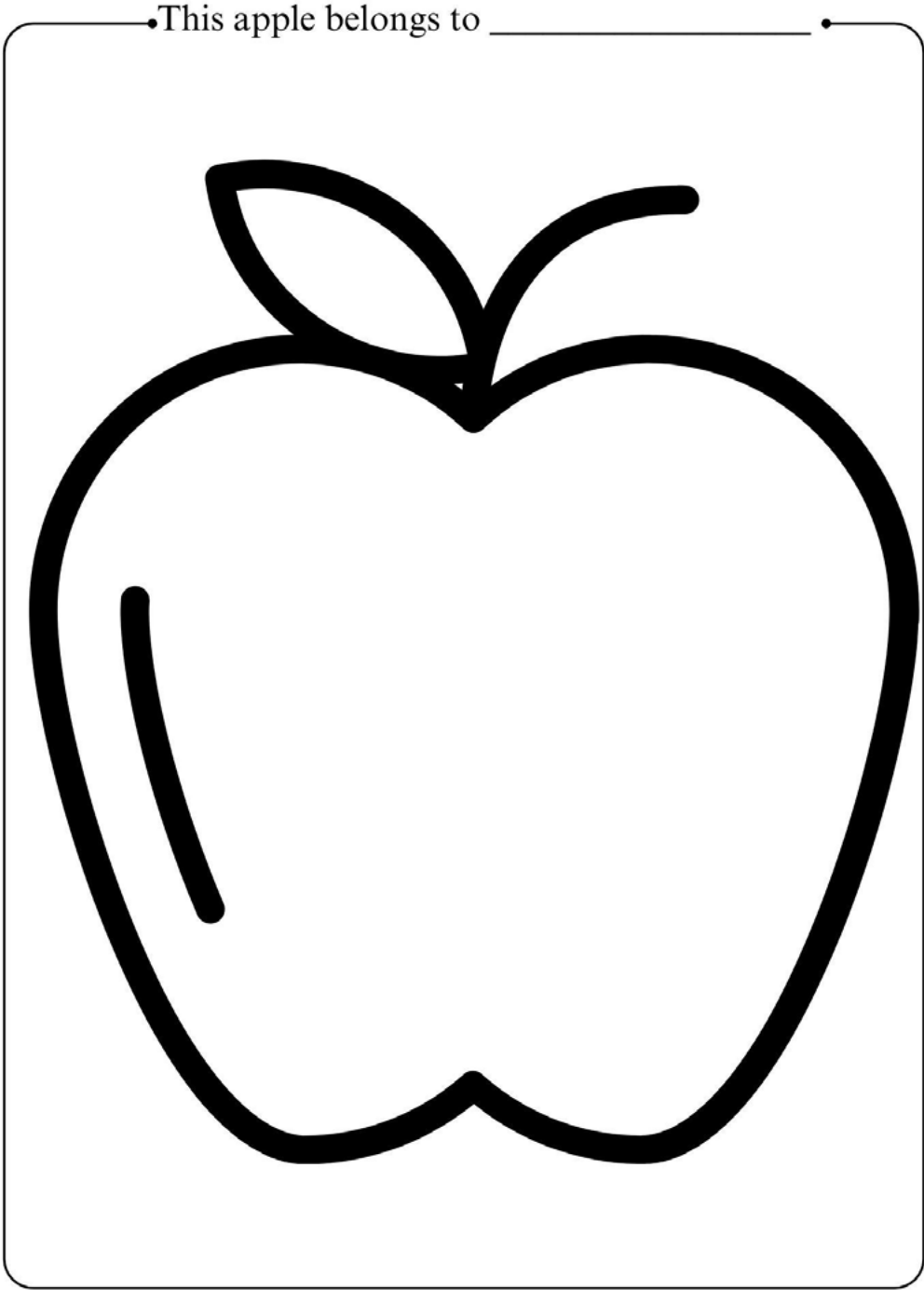
CREDITS

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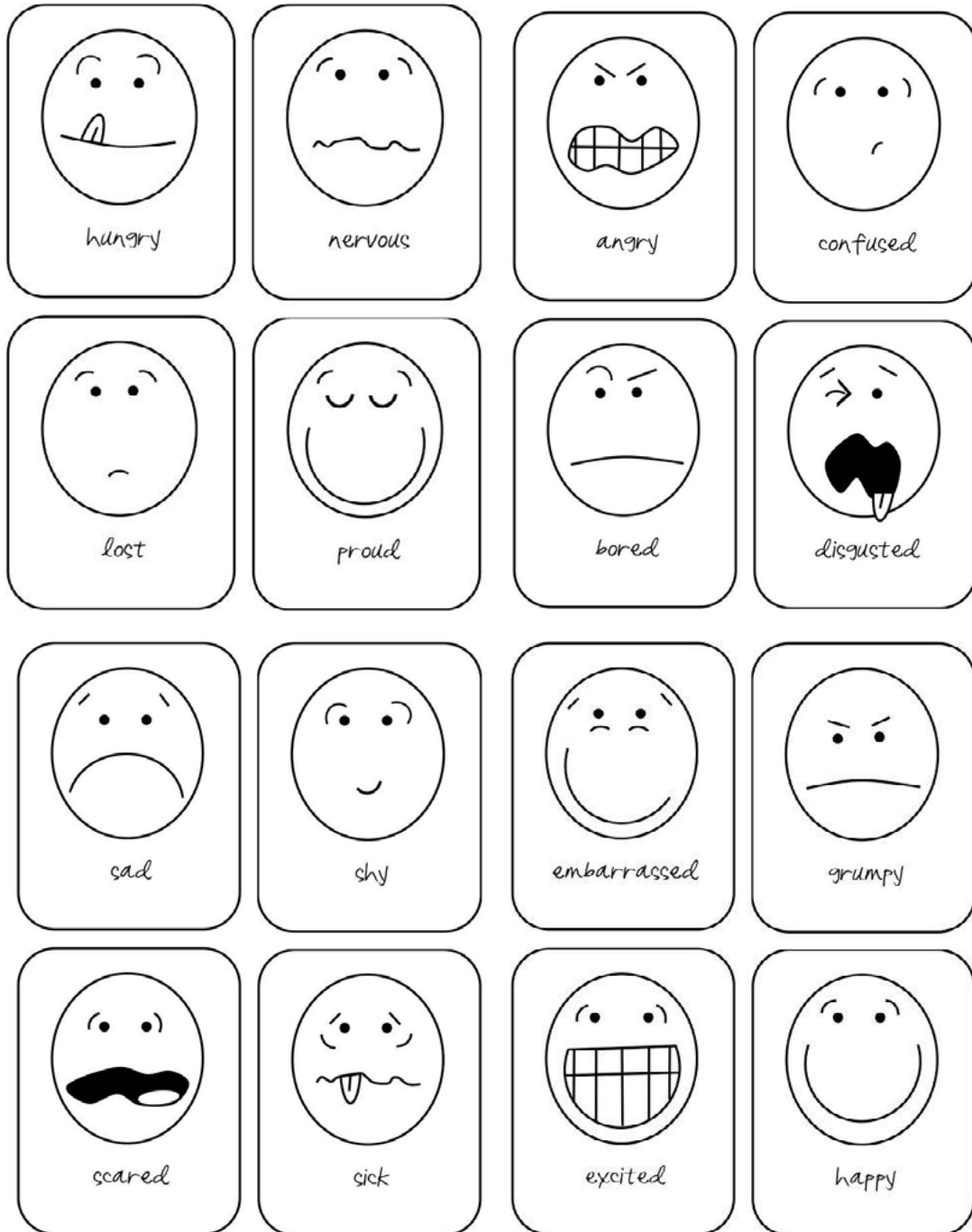
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APPENDIX A: MY APPLE WORK



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APPENDIX B: EMOJI CUT-OUT SHEET



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APPENDIX C: SAOUSSAN'S EMOTIONAL JOURNEY HANDOUT (1/2)

Name: _____

Saoussan's Feelings at Her New School

How did Saoussan feel at her new school? Cut and paste an emoji on the right-hand side, next to each photo.





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APPENDIX C: SAOUSSAN'S EMOTIONAL JOURNEY HANDOUT (2/2)



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APPENDIX D: SAOUSSAN'S EMOTIONAL JOURNEY (TEACHER'S GUIDE) (1/2)

	<p>The scene when Saoussan first enters her new school. Emotions could include feeling Sad, Nervous, Scared or Confused.</p>
	<p>The scene when she spots the pumpkin while about to need to use the bathroom. Emotions could include Confused, Sad, Bored, Shy, Lost, Scared or Nervous.</p>
	<p>The scene when Saoussan spots the skeleton beside the bathroom. She screams and immediately cries. Emotions could include Sad, Scared, Disgusted, Confused, Sick, Lost or Nervous.</p>
	<p>The scene when the teacher runs out to comfort Saoussan as she cries, resulting in her pee accident. Emotions could include Embarrassed, Sad, Scared, Lost, Sick, Nervous or Shy.</p>

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APPENDIX D: SAOUSSAN'S EMOTIONAL JOURNEY (TEACHER'S GUIDE) (2/2)



This is the scene when the teacher and class wait for Saoussan's dad to arrive. It is also when the group, as a whole, attempts to comfort her. Emotions include Sad, Confused, Lost, Embarrassed, Scared, Sick and Nervous.



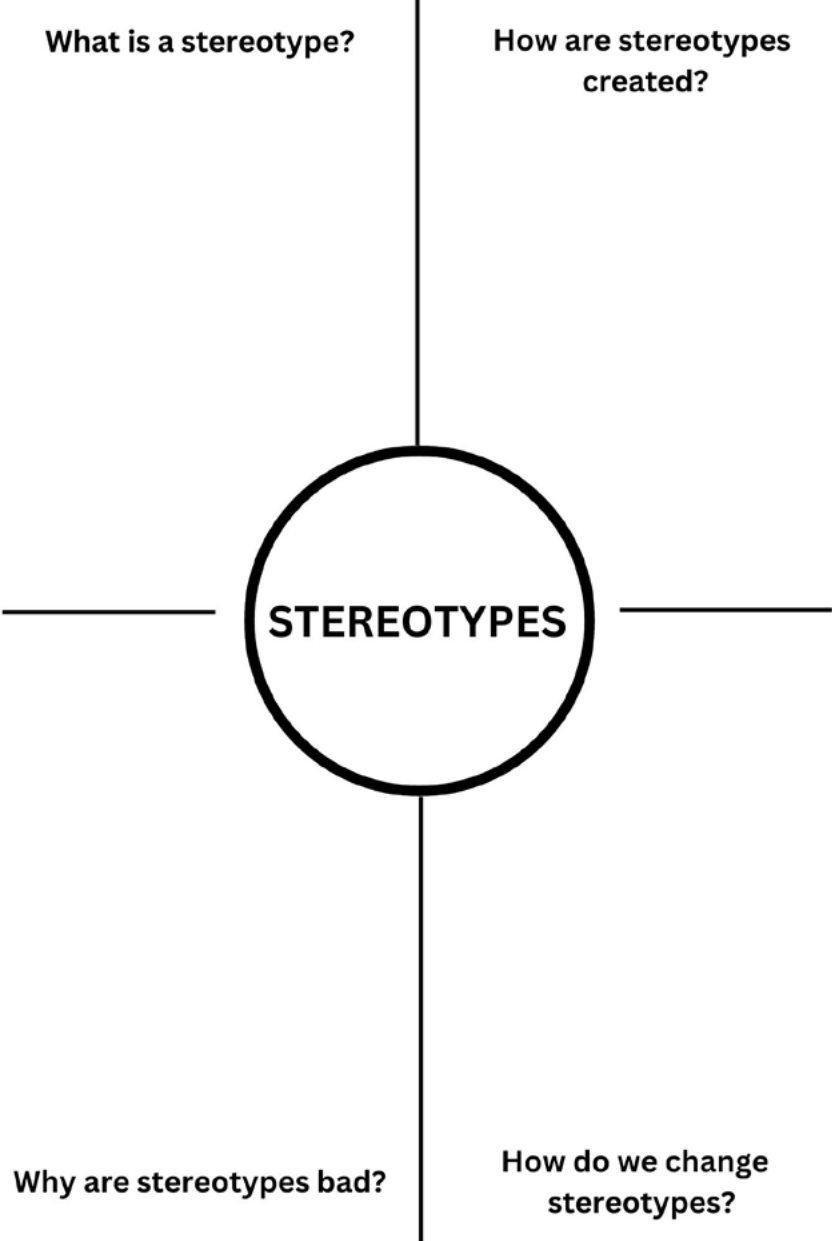
This is the scene where Saoussan's dad teaches her about Halloween in Canada, and points her to the things she might see around that time. Emotions include Proud, Happy, Excited and Confused.



This is the final scene when Saoussan is now used to Halloween and dresses up in her own costume. Emotions include Happy, Excited and Proud.

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APPENDIX E: STEREOTYPES BRAINSTORMING WORKSHEET



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APPENDIX F: ANSWERING BOLD QUESTIONS

Answering Bold Questions

Group Participants: _____

What is your bold question? If you are answering more than one, write down the others.

Use the checklist below throughout your process in trying to find answers to the bold question without stereotyping:

- Let go of any assumptions or stereotypes you might already have in your mind about the question.
- Ask yourselves, how do I know what I know before giving an opinion or stating something about the question.
- Have respect for cultural groups while searching for answers.

1. Type your question into Google. What types of answers were located? Pay attention to the source where you locate your answer.

2. What are some key takeaways or insights that you could share with the class about answers to your bold question? If it was difficult to locate an answer, you could choose to alternatively discuss some challenges or successes related to following the checklist to find answers to your bold question. What made this exercise challenging or easy? Be prepared to share 1 or 2 points with the class.

Bullet Points:

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APPENDIX G: "ME" ACTIVITY

Name: _____

