Name: Bonnee Breese

Title: The Women Gather: Films that Focus on Women’s issues in the Middle East and some African Countries

Course & Grade: English Language Arts - World Film Literature, 12th Grade

Length of Unit: 6 to 9 weeks

Overview: This unit will assist in expanding students’ knowledge and understanding of traditions, language and culture of Turkey, Iran, and Egypt from the female perspective. In this way, students will be challenged to question and/or reevaluate representation of Middle Eastern traditions by provoking thought via women in film, the news, and in their communities. Furthermore, By examining film as literary works, and by looking at the handiwork of African and African-American directors, producers and film editors, students will be able to explore implications of societal value of Black people and its effect on self-perception. This is created to lead students to begin to investigate their place in the world and provide them a secure footing to express themselves in the future without denigration of their human rights, as well as, the rights of others – more specifically women of the world.

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| **Stage 1 Desired Results** | | |
| ESTABLISHED GOALS  **9**.2.12 A. Explain the historical, cultural and social context of an individual work in the arts.   1. Analyze a work of art from its historical and cultural perspective. 2. Relate works in the arts to geographic regions:   K. Identify, explain and analyze traditions as they relate to works in the arts  9.3.12. D. Analyze and interpret works in the arts and humanities from different societies using culturally specific vocabulary of critical response.  PA 1.3. 11.Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature   1. Analyze how a scriptwriter’s use of words creates tone and mood, and how choice of words advances the theme or purpose of the work.   CCS W2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content. | ***Transfer*** | |
| *Students will be able to independently use their learning to…*  *understand film technological uses to expand their base of understanding through embracing a cultural/ historical visual knowledge and inquiry in the lives of particular women as seen and explored in the film narrative (dialogue, setting, .* | |
| ***Meaning*** | |
| UNDERSTANDINGS  *Students will understand that…*  *while viewing human images & geographic landscapes listening to dialectic inflections as they read sub-titles there are visual purposes of films and how these same artistic expressions are often times used as a tool for social commentary.* | ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS  Does the role of women in the various films seem familiar to your living? Defend your answer with specific examples from at least 2 films. Discuss your overall views of the social views and landscape (influence/reality). Connect these views with your perspective and the perspective shown in the film. How does the filmmaker use aesthetic function as an opening to discovering something new? Why might filmmakers complete full-length films that cannot be shown in their own homelands? Can we suggest that filmmakers in America produce work that is representative of women’s issues in the country? (Construct a diagram to support your answer, compare it to what was seen in the film from…) Choose familiar religious scenes in the films – explain your choices in relationship to your life? Identify patterns – where we live determines how we live. |
| ***Acquisition*** | |
| *Students will know…*  *cinema of Iran, Egypt and Turkey & religious practices (time period), social commentary & gender roles as viewed in various film; how to write a complex review of foreign film, synthesize information of different places while including their own perspective of living;* | *Students will be skilled at…*  *Following foreign film, reading subtitles while viewing human images (body language) & geographic landscapes; writing film reviews for specific audiences and purpose; gathering relevant information from film; thinking beyond the backyard* |
| **Stage 2 - Evidence** | | |
| **Evaluative Criteria** | **Assessment Evidence** | |
| 1. Identify, Recall, Name, Define, Use 2. Interpret, Compare, Summarize through observation 3. Critique, Formulate, Draw conclusions, Cite evidence 4. Relate, Infer, Distinguish 5. Explain, Assess 6. Integrate, Connect, Prove | TRANSFER TASK(S):   1. Share thoughts with your group and see if you recorded similar ideas from the viewing session – historical, cultural, women’s issues should be highlighted. 2. Review discussion trends in todaysmeet.com – organize questions and answers in the chat room, then summarize them in your own words using specific scenes from the film. 3. Determine filmmaker’s purpose and the affects as seen in the film. 4. Support ideas in distinguishing cultural bias to cultural norm; correlate places using maps 5. Organize and interpret specifically assigned film scene; raise questions of opposition 6. Collate the arts, literature, history, social studies topics within a film’s scope and use it to create a framework for writing, collage making design, film short presentation, | |
| Understanding chat room, event and/or excursion rules  Demonstrating global perspectives  Actively participate in social justice group, organization or movement  Applying Concepts in real life situations - citizenship | OTHER EVIDENCE:  Appropriate use of chat room at toddaysmeet.com  Design a web wiki, blog, film short (Xtranomral.com), pseudo FaceBook page or photo gallery to highlight cultural nuances  Showing empathy for the struggles of women in other countries  Able to conduct a conversation with students in the studied film countries | |
| **Stage 3 – Learning Plan** | | |
| *Summary of Key Learning Events and Instruction*   1. Determine the filmmaker purpose: to challenge, support, question, reveal, and/or express ideas and lifestyles across the regions. A number of films from Middle Eastern countries are marketed specifically to Muslim women for purpose of advertising, carving a new market in specific commodities, and edifying certain stereotypes. Other films of these regions have portrayed a more realistic visual story of the plight of women. 2. BE exposed to and able to comment/reflect upon common characteristic of serious filmmaking in all these countries is its politicization on the one hand and its commitment to depicting social ills and cultural anomalies. For these reasons, students will learn to compare, contrast and analyze the story form fact or fiction to the reality of each countries society. 3. The image of women through the lens of culture, politics, and economics, is sometimes thought to be explainable in terms of an undifferentiated Islam. The Middle Eastern woman, whether Sunni, Shi’ite, Christian, Jewish, Armenian, Druze, or Baha’i, is *imagined* as always veiled, recalling the pseudo-religious taboo in Islam against depicting living forms of women. Students will determine – social class, religious custom, right of passage or male dominance – for the wearing of the veil in iflm and in the lives of women in Middle Eastern and Islam African regions; *The Day I Became A Woman* 4. Identify specific land mass in the Middle East. Students will be able to, by the end of this lesson, create, point out, describe and compare targeted countries in the Middle East for the purpose of mapping. Become comfortable with maps using Google Earth and National Geographic online. Students will be involved in organizing facts, spatial data, social and political issues with regard to climate and land mass. 5. Students will view films from each of the countries, and then create postcards representing characterizations of specified women seen in the films. Use the following suggested films in this lesson (Iranian & Turkish): *The Day I Became a Woman*; *Sara*, *Bashu*…; *Times & Winds* and *I Named Her Angel*. Analyze character traits in the roles of women as depicted in film. Additionally, students will have to determine whether films are of social commentary, documentary, or for the sole purpose of entertainment. 6. Some questions to be answered during viewing (todaysmeet.com): Sometimes many different ethnic and racial groups live together. What problems might this cause? What are some advantages to this situation? How are women viewed by the groups? Which character(s) do you identify mostly (female characters only)? What are the main personality traits of that character? What type of neighborhood is seen in the film, as related to the character? Is climate/landscape/politics a factor in the attitudes of the people? How could you tell? Water as a symbolic reference means…? How is religious imagery used in the film? How does religion relate to the character? Do you think the filmmaker wants viewers to come away with a particular viewpoint? Are there any political issues embedded within the film? How does the film relate to its country’s culture? Specifically, how does it relate to the era in which it was made? 7. Students can create billboard posters for film festival use and promotion in the future. Students can write a reflective essay of the experience of viewing Egyptian film, with a focus on the contributions of women to the country and/or film industry. Students can write a film festival review. Students can conduct a movie review broadcast show featuring film discussion footage and video clips that can late be placed on a podcast site. 8. Women are used/viewed/portrayed/filmed in various ways in cinema. Many times the sentiments portrayed on the screen are those that are directly related to the position of women in a particular society. Other times the cinematic portrayal of women distinctly differs from what is actually a true representation. In films of this unit both African and American there are representations of women as they relate to family (husbands, boyfriends, children, parents), career, politics and society at-large. In the 1975 film *Xala*, students will see and experience the complexity of female relationships found in families who practice polygamy. 9. Compare traits in the roles of women, in the US and in Africa, as visually portrayed in varied movie clips. Four or six African and African-American film clips that your class has not seen in their entirety. This lesson works best when using the same number (2:2 or 3:3) of clips from the continent and the country. 10. Access knowledge of language, diction, dialect and syntax through both literary works and the films viewed. 11. Film analysis skills and film terminology: utilizing both current and historical African and Middle Eastern films, the study focus will on Blacks in film using a predetermined template/rubric that will separate the various facets of movie creation (technical, narrative, and cultural). 12. Clarification of regional rituals, religions, and societal day-to-day activities will be done as research projects for students. In this portion, students will learn about the importance of the griot, as seen in *Keita!* (1994), the African storyteller to kings, queens and their offspring. (Google Chat, Omkprash, ePals) | | |

Filmography - annontated

Borom Sarret/Black Girl. Writ., and dir. Ousmane Sembene. VHS. Armonk: Cine Magnetics Video, 1964. The first film makes excellent satirical points on the class divide, focusing on one taxi cart driver. It is a 20-minute film and it is excellent. B&W. The second film is a 60 minutes tragedy of colonization.

Daughters of the Dust. Prod., writ., and dir. Julie Dash. VHS. New York: Kino International, 1999. Story of a large African-American family as they prepare to move North from the Sea Islands off the coast of Georgia at the dawn of the 20th century. Color.

Hyenas. Writ., and dir. Djibril Diop Mambéty. DVD. Senegal: Kino Video, 1992. A once-prosperous Senegalese village has been falling further into poverty year by year until the village's elders are reduced to selling town possessions to pay debts. Linguère, a former resident and local beauty, now very rich, returns to this, the village of her birth. The elders hope that she will be a benefactor to the village. The plot takes a magnificent and unexpected twist bringing human folly and cynicism into sharp focus. This is a film adaptation of Friedhrich Durrënmatt's play, *The Visit*. Color.

Keita: The Heritage of the Griot. Director: Dani Kouyaté. DVD. San Francisco: California Newsreel, 1994. **Keita** makes the case for an "Afrocentric" education, where African tradition, not imported Western curricula is the necessary starting point for African development. Accompanying this film in the classroom, use the epic of old Mali, Sundiata.

La Petite Vendeuse de Soleil/ The Little girl who Sold The Sun. Prod., and dir. Djibril Diop Mambéty, Ed., Silvia Voser. VHS. San Francisco: California Newsreel, 1999. This is a dramatic story of a young disabled girl who survives by selling newspapers in Senegal. A wonderful film, students will enjoy it. The language spoken is Wolof with English subtitles. B&W.

Mama Africa. Dir. Bridget Pickering, Ngozi Onwurah, and Zulfah Otto-Sallies. DVD. New York: Wellspring Media, Inc., 2002. There are three African shorts included. The introductory narration and between each short is done by Queen Latifah. There is excellent ethical topic material for any classroom that students will be able to relate to and discuss. Color.

Xala/ The Curse. Dir., and writ. Ousmane Sembene. DVD. New York: New York Films, 2005. In a mythical African country, a rich, self-made businessman and member of the post-colonial, ruling elite takes on a third wife to show the world his wealth, only to be stricken by a curse resulting in impotency. His efforts at getting cured lead to disastrous yet comical results. Color.

Bashu, the Little Stranger (Bashu, gharibeye koochak) 1989 Dir. Bahram Beizai. This film though directed by a man is chosen for this unit because of its social and racial implications that students can study. A beautiful story about a woman who stands for a child. It has fantastic cinematography. Farsi with English and Chinese subtitles. (Iran)

Four Women of Egypt. 1997. Dir. Tahini Rached. Four Egyptian women are the subject of this impressive documentary exploration of opposing religious, social, and political views in modern-day Egypt. A great film that will springboard lots of discussion in the classroom. (Egypt)

I Named Her Angel (Ismini Melek Koydum). 2006. Dir. Nefin Dinç. This documentary film tells the story of a 12 year-old Turkish girl, Elif, learning the basics of her religion, Mevlevism. Mevlevis also known as Whirling Dervishes in the Western World, a part of a heterodox tradition of Islam. A very short film that students can embrace. Turkish with English subtitles. (Turkey)

Lemon Tree. 2008. Dir. Eran Riklis. A Palestinian widow fights to keep her lemon grove from being uprooted when Israeli security forces declare it a threat to the Israeli defense minister living next door in this foreign-language drama. Teaming with a young lawyer, the widow takes her case to the Israeli Supreme Court. A good film to bring about discussions on women’s rights in several countries, foreign and domestic. (Israel)

Rebetiko: The Song of Two Cities. 2006. Dir. Nefin Dinç. The film is about a musical form called "Rebetiko" that was created by the Greeks and Turks at the beginning of the 20th century. Resulting from war between Greece and Turkey, refugees who had to leave Turkey brought this music with them to Greece in the 1920’s. A great documentary film discussing the socioeconomics of geographical changes, social and cultural nuances, political upheaval and its effects on generations. (Turkey)

Sara. 1993. Dir. Dariush Mehrjui. Docile and friendly Sara has been hiding a secret from her banker husband, Hessam for many years in this contemporary Iranian take on Henrik Ibsen's renowned play "A Doll's House." This film will give students a comparison to literature that is familiar. (Iran)

Soraida, Woman of Palestine. http://www.nfb.ca/film/soraida\_a\_woman\_of\_palestine# Dir. Tahani Rached, 2004. 26 Mar. 2011. A full-length film on the Internet. This is a wonderful documentary. It was filmed in interview style of women who are captive in occupied Palestine. Arabic spoken with English subtitles. (Israel)

Ten. 2002. Abbas Kiarostami. Ten sequences examine the emotional lives of women at significant junctures. Students will get a great deal of background information after watching this film. It can be viewed in its entirety or either broken into viewing segments for classroom use. A great film about women by a man. (Iran)

The Day I Became a Woman. 2000. Dir. Marzieh Meshkini. An unsettling vision of what it means to be female in Iran. Tracing the stories of three characters - a 9-year-old girl; a young wife who defies her husband; and an elderly woman seeking material comfort. An award-winning film that is a powerful, poetic exploration of the struggle to maintain dignity in the face of second-class status. Farsi spoken with English subtitles. (Iran)

Women Without Men (Zanan-e Bedun-e Mardan). 2009. Dir. Shirin Neshat. Amid the tumult of the American- and British-backed coup that reinstated the Shah in early 1950’s Tehran, the heart-wrenching tales of five very different Iranian women converge in a lovely orchard garden, where they find both freedom and friendship. An adaptation of the magical-realist novella by Shahrnoush Parsipour. Persian spoken with English subtitles. (Iran)

Women’s Prison. 2002. Dir. Manijeh Hekmat. Composed of three segments (set in 1984, 1992 and 2001), The filmdeals with turbulent times in Iranian history and sensitive topics such as crime, corruption, prostitution, drug addiction and homosexuality. Farsi spoken with English subtitles. (Iran)