

Representations of the Middle East and Islam in U.S. Public Education

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Motivating Questions

- *What* are the dominant representations of the Middle East and Islam in the U.S. public high schools?
- *Why* are these the dominant representations?
- *How* do these portrayals impact students' views of Arabs and Muslims?

Methodology

- Textual and visual analysis of six most-widely used high school world history textbooks
- Textual analysis of social studies standards for Texas, California, Florida, and Washington D.C.
- Interviews with textbook authors, state standards writers, teachers, and high school graduates

Textual and Visual Representations

Textbooks and state standards perpetuate the “*rise and fall*” narrative of the Middle East and Islam by praising the cultural, academic, and artistic achievements of the Middle East and Islam until the 1600s and then subsequently categorizing the modern region and religion as plagued by perpetual violence and oppression.

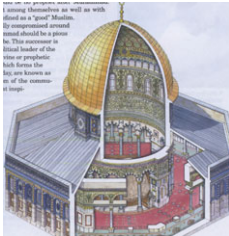
Rise and Fall



Muslim mathematicians and astronomers study the stars.
Image scanned from World History: Patterns of Interaction pg. 275



A member of the Taliban loading a weapon.
Image scanned from HMH Social Studies World History pg. 1151



A diagram of the intricate architecture of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.
Image scanned from Pearson World History pg. 311.



“Many copies of the Quran are beautifully decorated, such as the one shown here.”
Image scanned from McGraw-Hill World History and Geography.



“Two Afghan girls quietly wait for food at a refugee camp on the Afghanistan-Iran border.”
Image scanned from HMH Social Studies World History pg. 1293.

“Saddam Hussein...turned Iraq into a brutal police state, in which critics were tortured and killed.”
Image scanned from Pearson World History pg. 1056.

Politics of Representation

