

## Part 4: Understanding Anti-Muslim Racism in Media

### Lesson 4

#### Essential Question

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How do US media perpetuate controlling narratives that fuel anti-Muslim racism? In what forms has anti-Muslim racism/sentiment manifested itself in US media?

#### Enduring Understanding

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US media often relies on biased news coverage that perpetuates stereotypes and cultivates anti-Muslim fears in the US public. The casting and writing of racial stereotypes in film and television also reinforce anti-Muslim racism.

#### Learning Outcomes

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*Students will know:*

- US media reinforce controlling narratives that fuel anti-Muslim racism.
- Biased news coverage contributes to anti-Muslim racism.
- Muslim representation in film and television is often racist and perpetuates stereotypical narratives about Muslims.

*Students will be able to:*

- Identify biases in news reports (oral, written, graphic).
- Explain how representation in film and television reinforces controlling narratives and reduces Muslims to dehumanizing stereotypes.

#### Standards:

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- **CCSS.RH.9-10.2:** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source;
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.2:** Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.
- **ISBE SEL standards 2B:** Recognize individual and group similarities and differences.
  - 4a. Analyze the origins and negative effects of stereotyping and prejudice.

#### Vocabulary:

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- Bias
- Perspective/Point of View

**Time:**

50-60 Minutes

**Materials:**

- *Homeland* image, for digital display or copies for students
- Videos and images for gallery walk
- Poster paper or whiteboard for gallery walk
- Graphic Organizer handout
- Markers

**Procedure:**

1. **Opener:** Display [picture](#), a poster for the tv show *Homeland*. Ask students: What impressions do you get from this picture? What is implied? Is it racist? Why or why not?
2. **Introduce media pieces for Gallery Walk:**
  - a. Teachers can set up laptops at various locations in the classroom to display videos/images (if available).
    1. **Videos**
      1. [CNN Student News, May 27, 2016](#)
      2. [CNN 10, November 28, 2017](#)
      3. [Aladdin clip](#) (Prince Ali song, available on YouTube)
    2. **Images**
      1. [Massacre at Chios, 1824](#)
      2. Katy Perry, [Dark Horse photo](#)
3. **Students will work in small groups** of 3-4 students to identify purpose and biases in each media piece using the graphic organizer.
4. **Group Discussion**
  - a. Teacher should reflect on the content of the small-group discussions, highlighting important points that students brought up. Teacher should also bring up the key/talking points that did not come up. \*See list of key talking points below.
  - b. Teachers should also use this space to draw connections between institutional racism (covered in Lesson 1) and how it affects the lives of Muslims in America (Lesson 2).
5. **Reflection**
  - a. At the end of class, bring students back together for a quick reflection. You can ask students to share with the whole class or have them reflect with a Quick Write/Journal Prompt.
  - b. In what forms has anti-Muslim racism/sentiment manifested itself in US media? Cite evidence. Provide examples.

## Talking Points

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- *Homeland* is considered an “American spy thriller” television series based on the Israeli television series, *Prisoners of Wars* (whose original title in Hebrew means “abductees”). Fun fact: *Homeland* producers hired artists to graffiti the tv set so it would look like a refugee camp. As a form of political protest, the artists spray painted statements critical of the show’s portrayal of Muslims. For example, artists spray painted “*Homeland* is racist” in Arabic. Because the producers didn’t know Arabic, these images appeared in the show.
- Portrayal and perpetuation of negative images of Muslim people have real effects on the lives of people--on both personal and institutional levels.
- The problem with controlling/dominant narratives of Muslims is that they are often singular **and** false. They depict Muslim people as dangerous, violent, radical, militant. The controlling narratives also portray Muslim people as oppressed victims (specifically women). Muslims are essentialized - reduced - to these traits and treated monolithically. These narratives carry cultural weight and significance--they not only influence the way we think about people, what we allow to happen to them, and what we imagine people deserve. They also influence policies and laws that impact Muslim peoples’ lives.
- When consuming media, it is important to understand not only the message, but the framing of that message: What language is being used? What visual aids are utilized as supplement? What is the impact? Who is the audience? What myths and stereotypes are driving the narratives at play? You can visit <https://namle.net/> for more information.
  - **Audience & Authorship:** Who made this message? Why was this made? Who is the target audience (and how do you know)? Who paid for this? Who might benefit from this message? Who might be harmed by it? Why might this message matter to me? What kinds of actions might I take in response to this message?
  - **Messages & Meanings:** What is this about (and what makes you think that)? What ideas, values, information, and/or points of view are overt? Implied? What is left out of this message that might be important to know? What techniques are used? Why were those techniques used? How do they communicate the message? How might different people understand this message differently? What is my interpretation of this and what do I learn about myself from my reaction or interpretation?
  - **Representations & Reality:** When was this made? Where or how was it shared with the public? Is this fact, opinion, or something else? How credible is this (and what makes you think that)? What are the sources of information, ideas, or assertions?

## Alternative Methods

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- **Opener:**
  - Start a class discussion after reading/ viewing [Transcript of The Danger of a Single Story](#), a TED Talk by Chimamanda Adichie ([Video](#))
- **For additional texts to analyze**
  - Use *Time for Kids* magazines with students to identify the ways media stereotypes Muslims and other marginalized groups.

- **For building connections between the activity and content:**
  - [Haqq and Hollywood](#): Illuminating 100 years of Muslim Tropes and How to Transform Them, a visual companion to the article by Maytha Alhassen.
    - This text traces how anti-Muslim sentiment is perpetuated in film and television over the last century. It also highlights positive representation in contemporary media and solutions to the issues of representation and stereotyping.
    - This is a great text to use for a jigsaw activity with students, as it can easily be split up between small groups of students.
  - Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People, a documentary based off the book by Dr. Jack Shaheen (2006)
    - This documentary traces the history of the representation of Arabs in the media as violent, ignorant, or greedy, the origin of these narratives, as well as why it is so important today.
    - Run Time: 50 minutes