Module 19: Challenging Muslim Representation in Popular Culture

Note to Educators

The Teaching Beyond September 11th curriculum project seeks to capture the events of the two decades (2001-2021) following 9/11 as a means for youth to understand the post-9/11 global order. Developed by a team of educators from the University of Pennsylvania in collaboration with inter–-/national scholars, practitioners, and community activist leaders, each stand-alone module is grounded in at least one of six identified themes and is anchored in an event in a particular year following 9/11. The curriculum does not need to be taught sequentially. Lessons within a module may be taught sequentially or individually unless specified.

The curriculum is ideal for advanced high school and early college students. Educators are encouraged to adapt lessons to meet the needs of their classroom and student academic level. The curriculum framework at the end of this document highlights guiding questions for students to grapple with and enduring understandings that we wish for students to glean from these lessons.

Module 19: Challenging Muslim Representation in Popular Culture

Primary Theme: **Media & Representation**
Secondary Theme: **Public Opinion, Perception & Anti-Muslim Sentiment**
Year in focus: **2019**
Grades**: 11 and 12 and freshman college**
Entry points (subject area): **Media Studies**

Module Context

Anti-Muslim sentiment existed long before 9/11 and along with it negative and inaccurate portrayals of Muslims in both live-action and animated movies and television. One of the most common tropes promoted on-screen is that of the violent terrorist (usually a man) whose "character development" involves torture, kidnapping, hijacking, or bombing. In contrast, Muslim women are portrayed as lacking agency altogether and in cases where they are not–they are hyper sexualized. Unfortunately, these tropes have only been reinforced in movies and television against the backdrop of U.S. foreign policy toward Muslim majority countries.

While harmful stereotypes and tropes are rampant in media, the media landscape is changing. In 2019, the American-Comedy show, *Ramy*, premiered on Hulu, featuring a first-generation Egyptian-American Muslim millennial protagonist from New Jersey. The British-television sitcom, *We Are Lady Parts*, which aired as a pilot in 2018, features a punk rock band which consists entirely of Muslim Women. *Man Like Mobeen*, a British comedy-drama released for BBC Three in 2017, follows a former drug-dealer turned primary caregiver for his younger sister who attempts to live a good life as a Muslim. While criticisms of these television shows exist (as with any creative project), these series stand out because they feature Muslim protagonists that are complicated and ever-evolving. Furthermore, the creators of these shows– Ramy Malek, Nida Manzoor, and Guz Khan–draw on their own experiences as Muslims.

Media influences public awareness and discourse to the extent that even fiction can play a significant role in the political reality and daily lives of Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim. Only 53% of Americans say they personally know anyone who is Muslim and 52% say they know "not much" or "nothing at all" about Islam.[1] Therefore, the images produced and promoted on-screen have the ability to tap into our collective consciousness; they can perpetuate and normalize discrimination, hostility and violence toward Muslims or they can help to fight it.

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[1] Pew Research (2021): [Muslims are a growing presence in U.S., but still face negative views from the public](#).

The two lessons in this module focus on media representation and portrayals of Muslims in works of fiction. Lesson activities draw on newer television series in order to challenge anti-Muslim tropes and emphasize that significance of representation.

Module Goal

Students will engage in independent and group learning to synthesize different types of information from various sources in order to understand the harmful effects of stereotypes and tropes in popular media juxtaposed with the humanizing effects of representation. They will learn about how the media landscape is changing and should continue to change so that it reflects narratives and storylines that accurately reflect the lives of Muslims, challenging the notion that Muslims are a monolithic group.

Module Overview

This module provides students with opportunities to explore portrayals of Muslims in recent television series. Over the course of two lessons, students will analyze how Muslim protagonists in recent shows (including *Ramy* and *Man Like Mobeen)* attempt to counter anti-Muslim tropes. Students will use survey data, quotes, and Riz Ahmed's House of Commons (UK) speech to discuss why media representation matters and how a lack of meaningful representation influences the lived experiences of marginalized communities.

Lesson 1 - Discarding anti-Muslim tropes in Popular Media
In this lesson, students will use a case study approach and jigsaw activity to investigate popular television shows released in recent years depicting Muslim protagonists and supporting characters. The lesson starts with a focus on anti-Muslim tropes that are common in movies and television. In order to counter these tropes, students will learn about shows such as *Ramy, Man Like Mobeen, United States of Al, Sort Of,* and *We are Lady Parts,* all of which attempt to go beyond anti-Muslim tropes. For each show, they will infer how the content might resonate for individuals who identify with the characters as well as for individuals who might not identify with the characters. The lesson aims to reveal why tropes are problematic and the importance of creating characters that transcend stereotypes and tropes.

Lesson 2 - Re-Presenting for Representation's Sake: Why it Matters To See Ourselves On-Screen
In this lesson, students will engage in a gallery walk featuring quotes and data from surveys and studies that promote representation of Muslims on-screen. Riz Ahmed's House of Commons (UK) speech about representation in media anchors the lesson and serves as a springboard for thoughts, questions, and epiphanies promoting representation. This lesson ends with a classroom discussion in which students synthesize the takeaways derived from their gallery walk and understand the value of representation in media.

Curriculum Connections

Module 5: Freedom of Speech
Module 7: Understanding Islamophobia
Module 18: Muslim Women and Representation

Lesson 1. Discarding Anti-Muslim Tropes in Popular Media

Overview, Background Resources and Materials

In this lesson, students will use a case study approach and jigsaw activity to investigate popular television shows released in recent years featuring Muslim protagonists and supporting characters. The lesson starts with a focus on anti-Muslim tropes that are common in movies and television. In order to counter these tropes, students will learn about shows such as *Ramy, Man Like Mobeen, United States of Al, Sort Of,* and *We are Lady Parts,* all of which attempt to challenge anti-Muslim tropes. For each show, they will infer how the content might resonate for individuals who identify with the characters as well as for individuals who might not identify with the characters. The lesson aims to reveal why tropes are problematic and the importance of creating characters that transcend stereotypes and tropes.

Note to educator: The provided lesson materials include six cases. It is recommended that *Man Like Mobeen* be used at the college level due to mature language (profanities) used in the clip. If using only four cases, we recommend using either *United States of Al* or *Transplant*.

Background reading for educators before Lesson 1

It would be beneficial for educators to review the following resources. These resources may also be used as a supplementary reference list for students as per the educator's discretion.

1. Alhassen, M. (2018). *Haqq & Hollywood: Illuminating 100 years of Muslim tropes and how to transform them.* Pop culture collaborative. http://popcollab.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/HaqqAndHollywood_Report.pdf
2. Aslan, R. (Speaker) [Vox]. (2017). Why American TV needs a Muslim modern family [video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KURTpn0Nuzs
3. Bridge Initiative Team. (2018). *Factsheet: Common anti-Muslim tropes*. Bridge: A Georgetown university initiative. https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-common-anti-muslim-tropes-2/
4. Horkeheimer, M. & Adorno, T. (1944). *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception.*

Key Terms in Lesson 1
- **Monolithic:** used to describe single, very large organizations that are very slow to change and not interested in individual people.
- **Narrative:** a story or a description of a series of events.

- **Representation:** the way in which media, such as televisions, film, and literature, portray types of people or communities, shaping how audiences perceive them
- **Transformative Storylines:** transformation stories examine the hero's process of change as they evolve through the stages of the plot, reacting to events and stimuli, becoming a different person from how they started out.
- **Trope:** common and overused themes in media that have become cliches and obstruct the portrayal of complex narratives.

Materials Needed for Lesson 1

1. Slide deck for Lesson 1
2. Anti-Muslim Tropes list (1 per Jigsaw and Expert Group)
3. Discarding Anti-Muslim Tropes Graphic organizer (1 per student)
4. Six (Digital) TV Program Cases (1 per student, each student in a Jigsaw Group receives a different Case)
5. Students will need their computers/tablets/phone as well as headphones to access videos and links in TV Program Cases
6. Secret Life of Muslims Video: What does it meant to be Muslim? There are 1.7 Billion Answers. https://www.vox.com/videos/2016/11/21/13697910/what-is-a-muslim (to be projected for the class)

Lesson 1. Discarding Anti-Muslim Tropes in Media

Learning Plan

Opening – 10 minutes

[Lesson 1 Slide Deck, Slide 2]

Open the lesson with a think-pair-share activity. Before informing students of the steps, ensure that all students have a partner. For classes with an odd number of students, you may choose to partner with a student or form a group of three.

Inform students that the lesson will involve **a media analysis of television series depicting a range of characters** but to start, **prompt students to imagine their own life turned into a television series or biopic by a major production company**. Encourage students to think of the moments, situations, and experiences in their life that might be featured in the television series or movie. Finally, **ask students to craft a title for the television series or movie considering the major themes and topics they know it will include**.

[Lesson 1 Slide Deck, Slide 3]

Once students think of a title for their own television series or biopic, **ask students to craft a title for their partner regardless of whether they know them well or not**.

[Lesson 1 Slide Deck, Slide 4]

After each student has crafted two titles (one for themselves and one for their partner), **invite students to share the titles with their partners and discuss the titles they prefer more and how it might feel if someone who knew nothing about them were to craft a title for them instead.** In the last stage of the activity, invite two to three students to share with the entire group.

As students share their answers with the whole group, listen closely to their explanations and reasoning. Encourage all students to elaborate on their responses, calling on their partners to elaborate when relevant, too. Conclude with the two points below before transitioning to the next section:

1. **Individuals are far more likely to prefer the titles they create themselves or those created by people close to them rather than outsiders who know very little about them**. After all, we know ourselves on an individual level better than anyone else let alone people who have never

met us. While some of you might have preferred the titles your partners chose for you, consider the variables that might have influenced your preference--Do you and your partner know each other well? Do you have things in common? Does the title truly capture your life or is it catchy/creative/provocative?

2. **Consider whether there are any television series or movies that feature characters like you-- characters that look like you, sound like you, and resonate with you**. In today's lesson, we will analyze representations of Muslims in the media today. While there are many countries that have sizable television and film industries like India, Mexico, Nigeria, South Korea, and Turkey to name a few, this lesson will feature English language television series produced by media companies in Australia, Canada, Great Britain, and the United States.

Key Concepts – 5 minutes

Set the stage. Explain that on-screen representation of Muslims (in English language media) has generally improved since 9/11 but depictions of Muslims in the media still fall short. Even when storylines depicting Muslims seem complex, they are oftentimes predictable.[2] Furthermore, Muslim characters are rarely seen in popular feature films and TV stories and when they are, simplified tropes are used to inform the development of Muslim characters.[3] (Educator note: See Module 18, Lesson 1 as a reference)

State the primary goal for the lesson. Explain that there is not one single narrative that can fully capture the experiences of all people. Invite students to think back to the warm-up and the title they chose for their feature films. Explain that while some of their stories might resonate with their peers, in some cases, they might not. Similarly, storylines depicting Muslims may or may not resonate with other Muslims. Despite this, certain storylines rely heavily on tropes while others attempt to transform storylines of Muslims making them more intricate and complex. **The goal of this session is to distinguish between harmful tropes and transformative storylines of Muslims in mass media.**

Introduce the topic of tropes, starting with a definition as well as a list of common anti-Muslim tropes. To start, explain that tropes are common and overused themes in media that have become cliches and obstruct the portrayal of complex narratives. [4]

[Lesson 1 Slide Deck, Slide 5] Ask students to review the list of common anti-Muslim tropes on their handout and on the slide. Explain that students will need to refer to the list of common anti-Muslim tropes as they complete the performance task.[5]

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[2] Alsultany, E. (2012). Arabs and Muslims in the Media.
[3] https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-muslim-rep-global-film-2021-06-09.pdf
[4] https://popcollab.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/HaqqAndHollywood_Report.pdf
[5] Bridge Initiative Team. (2018). Fact-Sheet: Common Anti-Muslim Tropes. https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-common-anti-muslim-tropes-2/

Application – 30 minutes

Note to educator: The provided lesson materials include six cases. You may choose to use one to model the completion of the graphic organizer for students and then circulate the remaining four to five cases for the activity. This part of the lesson involves Jigsaw, a collaborative activity in which students work independently and collaboratively in a Jigsaw Group and an Expert Group[6].

Consider whether students might benefit from seeing you model the independent portion of the Jigsaw in Step 2. If you choose to model the activity, select the Case featuring the series Ramy (2019) to guide students through how they should use the materials provided and think out loud as you answer the graphic organizer. This is an optional step.

[*Optional:* Lesson 1 Slide Deck, Slide 6: *Ramy* Description]
[*Optional:* Lesson 1 Slide Deck, Slide 7: Graphic organizer]

If you choose not to model this part of the activity, you may still use the Ramy (2019) case by swapping one of the other six cases with it; offering it to students as a second case if they successfully complete their analysis of the first case assigned to them; or forming Jigsaw groups of five--this option requires modifying the graphic organizer and giving students more time to complete Step 3 and Step 4.
[Lesson 1 Slide Deck, Slides 8 – 11] Project instructions for the activity and relay the general steps for a Jigsaw activity to students, familiarizing students with the materials and steps before they complete the Jigsaw with additional examples.

[Lesson 1 Slide Deck, Slide 8] **Step 1 (1 min):** Divide students into groups of 4-6 per group (depending on number of cases being used) and **distribute one graphic organizer per person**. Refer to these groups as Jigsaw groups.

[Lesson 1 Slide Deck, Slide 9] **Step 2 (9 mins):** [Independent work in Jigsaw Groups]. Assign one TV Program Case to each person in the Jigsaw Group (e.g. *Ramy, Sort Of, We are Lady Parts, Man Like Mobeen, United States of Al,* or *Transplant).* **Ensure that each person in the Jigsaw group has received a different case.** The person assigned to the TV Program Case is responsible for reading the information in their Case, later they will be expected to discuss the content in their Case with an Expert Group and Jigsaw Group. As students **study their assigned cases independently** (including watching linked videos using their personal electronic devices and headphones), they should think about the corresponding questions in the graphic organizer and refer to the list of common anti-Muslim tropes.

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[6] Adapted from: https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Jigsaw-Instructions.pdf

Jigsaw Groups Example (if 4 Cases are used)

Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Group 4		Group 5

[Lesson 1 Slide Deck, Slide 10] **Step 3 (10 mins):** Instruct students to meet in Expert Groups. Expert Groups were assigned the same Case in the previous step, so when they convene, they have a shared understanding of the Case. Students will compare their answers and work together to gain an understanding of their Case informed by multiple perspectives. Students also have the opportunity to address any gaps in their understanding during this step. Students should answer all the prompts corresponding to their Case in the graphic organizer they received during this step.

Expert Groups Example (if 4 Cases are used)

Case A Group		Case B Group		Case C Group		Case D Group

[Lesson 1 Slide Deck, Slide 11] **Step 4 (10 mins):** Students return to their Jigsaw Groups. Each student presents information about their Case with their Jigsaw Group. Meanwhile, other students listen, take notes in their graphic organizers, and ask questions of the expert. Students take turns sharing.

Debrief – 5 minutes

Following the Jigsaw activity, invite students to continue synthesizing the information shared in Step 4.

[Lesson 1 Slide Deck, Slide 12] Ask students to reflect on the following question: **Why is it important for media portrayals of Muslims to go beyond tropes?** Encourage students to share their responses. Finally, inform students that **anti-Muslim tropes are problematic for Muslims and others who may be perceived as Muslims because they are inaccurate**. It is **unfair to think of Muslims as a monolithic group**. Furthermore, when individuals, who have little exposure to real Muslim communities, see anti-Muslim tropes reappear in media, their understanding of Muslims and Islam can be shrouded by them. In many cases, these Muslim characters are not even written by Muslims themselves. In some cases, even "own voices" can be perpetuate harmful stereotypes. (Students who have viewed clips from *United States of Al* in particular may wish to provide specific examples.)

To conclude, inform students that they'll hear directly from Muslims what it means to be Muslim in their own words. Then play video (3 mins) Video 1: What is a Muslim?

Extension Activities for Homework

Option 1:

Short Reflective Essay (250 words): Elaborate on your response from class, answering: Why is it important for media portrayals of Muslims to go beyond tropes? Include supporting evidence in your response, drawing on information from any of the materials provided during the lesson.

Option 2:

Research Activity and Essay (250 words): Invite students to read the article, "How Hollywood Can Better Represent Muslim Characters and Storylines" by Sue Obeidi and Evelyn Alsultany, which describes the Obeidi-AlSultany Test. Then choose a television series and conduct research on the cast and production crew and watch at least one complete episode to evaluate the series using the Obeidi-AlSultany Test. Following your research and evaluation, summarize your findings in a short essay. While you may choose any production, three options that don't require streaming services include: *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, *East of La Brea*, *Halal in the Family*.

Lesson 1. Discarding Anti-Muslim Tropes in Media

Student Handouts and Supplementary Teaching Materials

1. Lesson 1 slide deck preview (please download slide deck as separate file)

2. Lesson 1 handout 1: **List of Anti-Muslim Tropes** (1 handout per Jigsaw and Expert group)

3. Lesson 1 handout 2: **Discarding Anti-Muslim Tropes graphic organizer** (1 per student)

4. (Digital Handout) **TV Program Cases Preview** (1 Case per student in Jigsaw group, <u>assign digitally</u> so students can access links). (please download TV Program Cases as separate file)
   a. Man Like Mobeen
   b. Ramy
   c. Sort Of
   d. Transplant
   e. United States of Al
   f. We Are Lady Parts

Lesson 1 Slide Deck (12 slides)

Discarding Anti-Muslim Tropes in Popular Media

Module 19, Lesson 1

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Think

Imagine that you have been approached by a production company interested in creating a television series or movie about your life. The TV series/movie would capture the most important moments, situations, and experiences of your life.

What would the title of the series/movie be?

Think

Craft a title for your partner (without consulting them).

What would the title of the series/movie depicting their life be?

Pair Share

Share both titles with your partner.

Which title do you prefer more: The one you created for yourself or the one your partner chose for you? Explain.

How would you feel if someone who understood nothing about you or your life created the title for you instead? Explain.

Common anti-Muslim tropes include:

❏ Muslim men, and sometimes women, as violent terrorists (associations include use of torture, kidnapping, highjacking, bombing).
❏ Muslim men, especially depicted as wealthy sheikhs, being lascivious (hyper-sexual).
❏ Muslims, especially women, lacking agency and in need of saving.
❏ Muslim women hiding behind hijab, niqab, or burqa.
❏ Black Muslims as domestic terrorists.
❏ Muslims as only Arab or brown.
❏ Muslims as being intolerant toward other religions.
❏ Islam as a monolith.

Ramy

Questions on Graphic Organizer:

What do you notice about the TV Series? Describe what you see and hear.

What tropes does the TV series attempt to challenge?

Think of someone who shares aspects of the main character's identity (age, gender, race, etc.). How might they feel about seeing this character on screen? Explain.

Think of someone who does NOT share aspects of the main character's identity (age, gender, race, etc.). How might they feel about seeing this character on screen? Explain

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Step 1
Jigsaw Groups (1 min)

Get into small groups
(4-5 depending on number of case studies).

This group is your **Jigsaw Group**.

| Group 1 | Group 2 | Group 3 | Group 4 | Group 5 |

Step 2
Jigsaw Groups (9 mins)

Begin to look **independently** over the materials distributed to you.

Read the information in your assigned TV Program Case and begin to answer the questions in your graphic organizer.

Step 3
Expert Groups (10 mins)

Meet with your peers who received the same Case you did. This group is your **Expert Group.**

Compare your answers and work together to address any gaps.

| Case A Group | Case B Group | Case C Group | Case D Group |

Step 4
Jigsaw Groups (10 mins)

Return to your **Jigsaw Group.** Take turns presenting information about the Case you received.

As you listen, ask questions and take notes in your graphic organizer. Each person has about **one minute** to share.

| Group 1 | Group 2 | Group 3 | Group 4 | Group 5 |

Why is it important for media portrayals of Muslims to go beyond tropes?

Common anti-Muslim tropes include:
- ❑ Muslim men, and sometimes women, as violent terrorists (associations include use of torture, kidnapping, highjacking, bombing).
- ❑ Muslim men, especially depicted as wealthy sheikhs, being lascivious (hyper-sexual).
- ❑ Muslims, especially women, lacking agency and in need of saving.
- ❑ Muslim women hiding behind hijab, niqab, or burqa.
- ❑ Black Muslims as domestic terrorists.
- ❑ Muslims as only Arab or brown.
- ❑ Muslims as being intolerant toward other religions.
- ❑ Islam as a monolith.

Discarding Anti-Muslim Tropes in Popular Media: Anti-Muslim Tropes

Common anti-Muslim tropes include:

1. Muslim men, and sometimes women, as violent terrorists (associations include use of torture, kidnapping, hijacking, bombing).
2. Muslim men, especially depicted as wealthy sheikhs, being lascivious (hyper-sexual).
3. Muslims, especially women, lacking agency and in need of saving.
4. Muslim women seen as hiding behind hijab, niqab, or burqa.
5. Black Muslims as domestic terrorists.
6. Muslims as only Arab or brown.
7. Muslims as being intolerant toward other religions.
8. Islam as a monolith.

Sources:
Bridge Initiative Team. (2018). Fact-Sheet: Common Anti-Muslim Tropes.
https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-common-anti-muslim-tropes-2/
Maytha Alhassen, (2018). Haqq [Truth] and Hollywood: Illuminating 100 Years of Muslim Tropes and How To Transform Them. The Pop Culture Collaborative https://popcollab.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/HaqqAndHollywood_Report.pdf

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Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

Discarding Anti-Muslim Tropes in Popular Media, Graphic Organizer

Directions: First, read the information in the Case assigned to you. Click the links in the Case to learn more about the TV series featuring a Muslim character as the protagonist. Then answer the questions below using the information provided. Use this page for Step 2 and Step 3.

Name of TV Series: _____

1. What do you notice about the TV Series? Describe what you see and hear.	2. What tropes does the TV series attempt to challenge?
3. Think of someone who shares aspects of the main character's identity (age, gender, race, etc.). How might they feel about seeing this character on screen? Explain.	4. Think of someone who does NOT share aspects of the main character's identity (age, gender, race, etc.). How might they feel about seeing this character on screen? Explain.

Directions: Listen to your peers share their findings and takeaways about their Case. As they share, jot down notes about how the TV series challenges anti-Muslim tropes. Use this page during Step 4.

Name of TV Series:

Notes:

Name of TV Series:

Notes:

Name of TV Series:

Notes:

Reflection Question: Why is it important for media portrayals of Muslims to go beyond anti-Muslim tropes? Use examples from any of the TV Series you learned more about in class to support your answer.
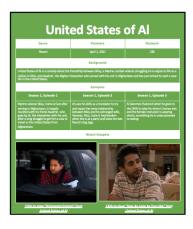
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Preview of Cases.

Complete cases can be downloaded as a separate file to be distributed to students electronically. Not that each case is two pages.

Lesson 2. Re-Presenting For Representation's Sake: Why it Matters to See Ourselves On-Screen

Overview, Background Resources and Materials Needed

In this lesson, students will engage in a gallery walk featuring quotes and data from surveys and studies that promote representation of Muslims on-screen. Riz Ahmed's House of Commons speech about representation in media anchors the lesson and serves as a springboard for thoughts, questions, and epiphanies promoting representation of Muslims in the media. This lesson ends with a classroom discussion in which students synthesize the takeaways derived from their gallery walk and articulate the value of representation in media.

Background reading for educators before Lesson 2:

It would be beneficial for educators to review the following resources. These resources may also be used as a supplementary reading list for students as per the educator's discretion.

1. Alsultany, E. (2012). *Arabs and Muslims in the media: Race and representation after 9/11.* New York University. Ch. 1 (Challenging the terrorist stereotype)
2. Rashid, H. (Moderator), Abiade, K., Latif, F., Neggaz, M. (Speakers) [New York University]. (2018). Beyond Islamophobia: Storytelling as a force for change [video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yv7oJWYrR5A
3. Kabir, N.A. (2010). Is the media biased against Muslims? *Young British Muslims: Identity, culture, politics and the media.* Edinburgh Scholarship Online.
4. Khan, A., Pieper, K., Smith, S., Choueiti, M., Yao, K., Tofan, A. (2021). Missing and maligned: The reality of Muslims in popular global movies. https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-muslim-rep-global-film-2021-06-09.pdf

Key Terms in Lesson 2:

- **Essentialism:** the belief that groups of people, such as men and women, have different basic characteristics that cannot be changed.
- **Misrepresentation: a** false or misleading statement or a material omission which renders other statements misleading, with intent to deceive.
- **Representation:** the way in which media, such as televisions, film, and literature, portray types of people or communities, shaping how audiences perceive them.
- **Underrepresentation:** inadequate representation; representation in numbers that are disproportionately low.

Materials Needed for Lesson 2

1. Slide deck for Lesson 2
2. Video projector to show Riz Ahmed's House of Commons Speech:
   https://www.facebook.com/RizAhmed/videos/10154393155118997/
3. Transcript of Riz Ahmed's House of Commons speech (1 per student)
4. Anticipatory Statements handout (1 per student)
5. Thoughts, Questions, Epiphanies graphic organizer (1 per student)
6. Gallery items (print-outs can be pinned around the room; will require students to use phones to access QR codes to sites. Alternatively, can be set up on computers or tablet stations around the room. Download as separate file for computer display for 8 stations).
7. Extension Activity: Sana Amanat (2014). The Importance of Diversity in the Comic Book Universe. Ted Talk (Video)
   https://www.ted.com/talks/sana_amanat_the_importance_of_diversity_in_the_comic_book_universe/transcript

Lesson 2. Re-Presenting for Representation's Sake: Why it Matters to See Ourselves On-Screen

Learning Plan

Pre-Class Reading
Assign the following articles to students to read before class. Ask them to jot down the salient points.

Lesson 2, Handout 1: Transcript of Riz Ahmed's House of Commons speech

Note to educator: Prior to beginning this lesson, print gallery items and display them around the room or set up computer/tablet stations. You will need a total of 8 stations.

Opening – 5 minutes

Open the lesson with anticipatory statements. As you begin this lesson, encourage students to think about the media they consume and the narratives that are amplified in television and film (including those featured on streaming services). Inform students that they will begin the day's lesson with a set of statements. After reading the statements, students should decide whether they strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree with each statement. Distribute the handout with the statements.

[Lesson 2 Slide Deck, Slide 2 and Anticipatory Statements Handout] Inform students they will have five minutes to read each statement, decide on their position and consider their reasoning for choosing *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *agree*, or *strongly agree*. Ask students to mark the appropriate box with a check mark on their handout.

[Lesson 2 Slide Deck, Slide 3] Read each statement aloud and invite all students to respond using hand signals. For strongly disagree, students should respond with two thumbs down, for disagree they should respond with one thumb down, for agree they should respond with one thumb up and for strongly agree, they should respond with two thumbs up. After each statement, invite students to share their reasoning with the class.

Before moving on to key concepts, convey to students that **mass media can simultaneously make certain demographics of people feel seen while making others feel excluded.** Feeling unseen or excluded in media can stem from **racist and essentialist tropes** (as was discussed in Module 19, Lesson 1) or **misrepresentation and/or underrepresentation**. Despite seeing more diversity in TV shows and films, many people STILL feel left out. Overly simplified and inauthentic portrayals of Muslims can be

problematic too. The key takeaway to convey is: **Diversity on screen does not always result in representation if those portrayals are inaccurate or simplistic**.

Key concepts overview – 10 minutes

Set the Stage. Ask students **to guess which year an Oscar for best lead actor/actress was awarded to a Muslim performer**. Invite students to shout out answers and reveal that you asked a trick question, since the Oscar has not yet been awarded to a Muslim performer. Explain that the first Muslim actor to win an Oscar was Mahershala Ali in 2017 for best *supporting* role in the film, *Moonlight* and that more recently, Riz Ahmed was the first Muslim performer (and the first person of Pakistani-origin) to be *nominated* for best actor in 2021 but did not win.[7] In addition to acting, Ahmed is also a rapper and advocate for Muslim representation in media. Explain that the UK House of Commons (similar to the House of Representatives in the US) speech (assigned for pre-reading) was given by Riz Ahmed.

[Lesson 2 Slide Deck, Slide 4]

State the primary goal for the lesson. Students will **analyze information derived from the gallery items displayed around the room in order to articulate the importance of representation in mass media with a specific focus on Muslim portrayals in media**. During the lesson, they will be presented with a variety of types of data (excerpts from studies, surveys, and interviews) which they will synthesize in order to better understand why Muslim representation matters in media. Students will be presented with this information in a **gallery walk format** during which they will walk around the room in groups (or alone) taking notes in a **Thoughts, Questions, Epiphanies graphic organizer**. Explain that **thoughts** encompass connections, ideas, reactions, or concepts that any portion of the information presented brings to mind. **Questions** include general, clarifying, or extension questions the student would like to pose to the group concerning the information presented. **Epiphanies** include any noteworthy realizations or greater consciousness about the information presented.

Distribute the **Thoughts, Questions, and Epiphanies graphic organizer.**

To model, refer to the transcript you assigned for pre-reading and share an example of your own thoughts, questions, and epiphanies with students using the graphic organizer. Then invite students to add on.

Optional: Though students should have read the transcript prior to the lesson, prior to modeling how to complete the graphic organizer, you may want to have students read or listen to the transcript in class. Consider playing the video of Riz Ahmed's speech to the House of Commons (1:39 - 11:41) as students refer to the transcript.

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[7] The Academy Awards, also known as the Oscars, were first awarded in 1929 and remains one of the most distinguished awards in the entertainment industry.

Application – 25 minutes

Identify where all the Gallery Items are displayed around the classroom for students so they know where they are located. Invite students to walk around and view each gallery item; students may use their phones and headphones as needed as they jot down their thoughts, questions, and epiphanies to help them articulate why Muslim representation matters in media. Notify students they will have 15 minutes in total.

Invite students to return to their seats and encourage them to share their thoughts, questions, and epiphanies during an open discussion on why Muslim representation matters in media. During the 10-minute discussion, encourage students to elaborate and clarify, support ideas with examples, build on and challenge ideas, and conclude with their final takeaways.

1.To elaborate and clarify, ask…
a. Can you elaborate on…?
b. What do you mean by…?
c. ….How so?
2.Or to support ideas with examples:
a. Can you give me an example?
b. Why do you say…?
3.Or to build on/challenge ideas:
a. What are other ideas?
b. What might be other points of view?
4.And to conclude:
a. How can we bring this all together?
b. What key idea can we take away?
c. Why does representation matter?

Debrief – 10 minutes

[Lesson 2 Slide Deck, Slide 5]

Pose the following question to students and allow them to write their answers independently: **Why does Muslim representation matter in mass media, especially following the events of September 11?**

Extension Activities or Homework

Option 1: Ask students to analyze lines from Riz Ahmed's song titled, "Sour Times." Ask: What might be the message he is conveying in these lines? Encourage students to draw from the lesson to answer the question and make a connection to representation in media.

"In these sour times
Please allow me to vouch for mine
Bitter taste in my mouth, spit it out with a rhyme
I'm losing my religion to tomorrow's headlines"

Students can optionally listen to the song here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EfXvKKflBoM

Option 2: Ask students to watch the [TedXTalk by Sana Amanat, "The Importance of Diversity in the Comic Book Universe"](#) and similarly respond with a thought, question, or epiphany on a discussion board or other collaborative space. Following submission of their own response, students should respond to a peer.

Lesson 2. Re-Presenting For Representation's Sake: Why it Matters to See Ourselves On-Screen

Student Handouts and Supplementary Teaching Materials
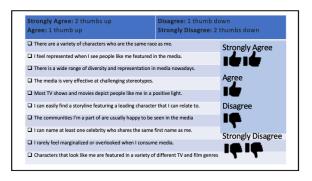
1. Lesson 2 slide deck preview (please download as separate file)
2. Lesson 2 handout 1: **Anticipatory Statements about Representation** (1 per student)
3. Lesson 2 handout 2: **House of Commons Speech Transcript** (1 per student)
4. Lesson 2 handout 3: **Thoughts, Questions, Epiphanies graphic organizer** (1 per student)
5. **Gallery walk items** (8 pages; please download as separate file)

Lesson 2 Slide Deck (5 slides)

Re-Presenting for Representation's Sake:
Why it Matters to See Ourselves On-Screen
Module 19, Lesson 2

Teaching Beyond September 11th © 2021 The University of Pennsylvania

After reading each statement, decide whether you strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree and mark the appropriate box with a check mark.

☐ There are a variety of characters who are the same race as me.

☐ I feel represented when I see people like me featured in the media.

☐ There is a wide range of diversity and representation in media nowadays.

☐ The media is very effective at challenging stereotypes.

☐ Most TV shows and movies depict people like me in a positive light.

☐ I can easily find a storyline featuring a leading character that I can relate to.

☐ The communities I'm a part of are usually happy to be seen in the media

☐ I can name at least one celebrity who shares the same first name as me.

☐ I rarely feel marginalized or overlooked when I consume media.

☐ Characters that look like me are featured in a variety of different TV and film genres

Strongly Agree: 2 thumbs up
Agree: 1 thumb up
Disagree: 1 thumb down
Strongly Disagree: 2 thumbs down

☐ There are a variety of characters who are the same race as me.

☐ I feel represented when I see people like me featured in the media.

☐ There is a wide range of diversity and representation in media nowadays.

☐ The media is very effective at challenging stereotypes.

☐ Most TV shows and movies depict people like me in a positive light.

☐ I can easily find a storyline featuring a leading character that I can relate to.

☐ The communities I'm a part of are usually happy to be seen in the media

☐ I can name at least one celebrity who shares the same first name as me.

☐ I rarely feel marginalized or overlooked when I consume media.

☐ Characters that look like me are featured in a variety of different TV and film genres

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Gallery Walk

As you view the Gallery Items, write down your:

(*) Thoughts: Ideas, reactions, concepts that the information brings to mind.

(?) Questions: General, clarifying, or extension questions concerning the information.

(!) Epiphanies: Any noteworthy realizations or greater consciousness about the information.

Why does Muslim representation matter in mass media, especially following the events of September 11th?

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Why Does Muslim Representation Matter in Mass Media?

Riz Ahmed's House of Commons Speech

Directions: Read the transcript of a 2017 speech delivered by Riz Ahmed to journalists and British Members of Parliament at an event hosted by Channel4 at the British House of Commons. As you read the transcript, annotate sections that provoke thoughts (*), questions (?), and epiphanies (!).

I mean, like it or not, and more than we probably like to let on, there's a lot more that actors and politicians, creatives and those in government have in common. Disproportionately, perhaps for better and some would say worse, we both have a big hand in shaping culture and we both do that the same way: by telling stories.

Now, as a lot of the politicians in the room might know, it's sometimes the most fantastical and unrealistic stories that make the biggest impact. But even in those stories, what people are looking for is a message that they belong; they're part of something; that they are seen and heard and that despite -- or perhaps because of the uniqueness of their experience, they are valued, they want to feel represented. That's really what we do, that's what we have in common, that's the game we're in. We're here to represent; it's that simple. And in that task, it pains me to say we have failed.

It's been a noble failure, we've been taking large strides in the right direction, sometimes a bit slower than we'd like, sometimes a bit too incremental, sometimes not really seizing the bull by its horns but we have fallen short of the mark and when we fail to represent, people switch off. They switch off on telly, they switch off at the ballot box, and they retreat to other fringe narratives, just sometimes very dangerous.

Now everywhere the old order is in flames, right? Whether in film and television, with the advent of streaming and a globalized marketplace or whether at the ballot box with the ascendance of populism -- some people like to call it. Whether we like it or not, a new national story is being written right now about who we are, the story we tell to ourselves and we tell to the world about who we are as Britain tries to redefine its place in the world really matters. Will it be a story that looks inwards and backwards? Will it be a story that looks outwards? And ahead to the future? As thousands of qualified doctors and nurses huddle on our shores as refugees, do we spot a threat or an opportunity? When Nollywood explodes and China dominates the international box office do we think, "Okay. Too much competition, let's retreat back to our tried and tested formula of all-white period drama" or do we spot an opportunity in these global developments? Do we have a look at the multicultural goldmine we're sitting on and spot an opportunity?

We're in search of a new national story. It needs updating. The old one stopped making sense to people, it stopped giving meaning to the complex reality and the new realities that they're facing and I'm here to ask for your help. I'm here to ask for your help in finding a new national story that embraces and

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Riz Ahmed's House of Commons Speech (3 pages)

empowers as many of us as possible rather than excluding us and alienating large sections of the population. In this, whether we like it or not, we need each other.

Now... what's at stake. I just want to take a moment to kind of reframe what we're talking about; what's at stake here I mean, in this age of populism it can sometimes seem like talking about diversity is kind of swimming against the current, going against the grain, "is political correctness gone mad?" and all that kind of thing, right? It's an added extra, it's a frill, it's a luxury. That's what diversity can sound like. The very phrase actually turns me off a little bit. It sounds like there's a call, a benchmark, against which everything is measured and then there's a little bit of something you could sprinkle on top. A little bit of salt, a little bit of spice... It's something you can live with, but you can also live without. And to me that really doesn't put into focus how crucial what we are talking about really is.

We're talking about representation, not diversity. Representation is not an added extra. It's not a thrill. It's absolutely fundamental to what people expect from culture and from politics. What's at stake isn't just whether or not I get the next acting role I want (although that would be nice). What's really at stake here is much, much bigger than that. After the Brexit vote, hate crimes went up 41%. Against muslims, it went up 326% percent. In the 1930s, we had a very similar situation to what we have today. Political polarization, economic disenfranchisement after a big financial crash, rising inequality, systematic scapegoating of certain minorities. What's at stake here is whether or not we will move forward together or whether we will leave people behind. That's what's at stake if we don't step up and represent.

Now if we fail to represent, I think we're in danger of losing out in three ways. 3 E's. One, is we're going to lose people to extremism, second, we're going to lose out on an expansive idea of who we are as individuals and as a community and thirdly, we're going to really lose out on the economic benefits that proper representation can bring to our economy.

Let me just start off this first point of extremism. I remember when my mom and my sister are here right now; I remember when they'd be watching TV downstairs in the lounge and I'd be upstairs you know, playing my Game Boy or whatever and all of a sudden I'd hear one of them call out and they're watching TV: "Asiaaaaaaaaan!" And you quickly press pause on the Game Boy, turn it off and run downstairs just to go and look: Sanjeev Bhaskar in "Goodness Gracious Me"; Meera Syal, "Bhaji on the Beach." Parminder Nagra, "Bend it Like Beckham" Jimi Mistry, "East Is East." If you're used to seeing yourself reflected in culture, you really... I really want you to just take a minute to kind of understand how much it means to someone who doesn't, to see themselves reflected back. Every time you see yourself in a magazine, at a billboard, TV, film, it's a message that you matter, you're part of a national story, that you're valued, you feel represented.

Now, if we fail to represent people in our mainstream narratives, they'll switch off, they'll retreat to fringe narratives to filter bubbles online and sometimes, even off to Syria. In the mind of the ISIS recruit, he's a version of James Bond, right? In their mind everyone thinks they're the good guy. Have you seen

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some of these ISIS propaganda videos? They're cut like action movies. Where's the counter narrative? Where are we telling these kids that they can be heroes in our stories? That they're valued?

I saw an interesting survey recently. It was a Gallup Poll it was a survey of a billion muslims, and it took years and years to get done. I'm citing Dalia Mogahed. And it was really interesting: they asked a billion Muslims what are their key grievances with the "West" - I've problems with that term - but what are the key grievances? And number one was - conversation for another day - you know, the disconnect between the West-stated values and their foreign policy. We'll talk about that another day (if you'd invite me back). But number two on the list of grievances was the depiction of Muslims in the media. I mean that's massive. I mean, of a billion Muslims in the world that is a number two grievance. This isn't just a signal to give me more acting work. It's something that should give us pause and realize how important it is to feel represented. Now that's extremism - It's not just important to show people themselves and to send a signal that they are valued and worthwhile and represented. It's also really important, I think, to show people characters and stories that don't resemble them at all.
If we don't, we lose out on the second E, an expansive idea of who we are. We've all lived this experience, right? Watching a film, TV show, is story where there's a little hero or heroine taking on a massive challenge, insurmountable odds right? Through a steep learning curve, some hard lessons and noble sacrifices it's just about making it through, save the day and in the end, maybe even lose their lives. We're in floods of tears. The character we've been watching is a fish. Or a bunny rabbit, or an alien. The power of stories to allow us to relate to experiences that don't resemble our own is phenomenal and every time we see those experiences, it reminds us than what unites us is far, far greater than what divides us.

Culture is a place where you can put yourself in someone else's shoes; and a one-size shoe shop just doesn't make any sense. You know, a sociologist I was taught defined a nation as an imagined community, right? Our community coheres only within the bounds of our imagination, as far as our imagination will stretch. I believe we really need to step up to the plate and to push our imagination to be as broad as our community actually is.

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Riz Ahmed's House of Commons Speech (3 pages)

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Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

Anticipatory Statements about Representation: Agree or Disagree?

Directions: Think about the media that you consume and the narratives that are amplified in television and film. Read the statements below and decide on your position. For each statement, circle whether you *strongly disagree, disagree, agree,* or *strongly agree.*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. There are a variety of characters who are the same race as me.				
2. I feel represented when I see people like me featured in the media.				
3. There is a wide range of diversity and representation in the media nowadays.				
4. The media is very effective at challenging stereotypes.				
5. Most TV shows and movies depict people like me in a positive light.				
6. I can easily find a storyline featuring a leading character that I can relate to.				
7. The communities I'm a part of are usually happy to be seen in the media.				
8. I can name at least one celebrity who shares the same first name as me.				
9. I rarely feel marginalized or overlooked when I consume media.				
10. Characters that look like me are featured in a variety of different TV and film genres.				

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Anticipatory Statements about Representation (1 page)

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Anticipatory Statements about Representation (1 page)

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

Riz Ahmed: Why Does Muslim Representation Matter in Mass Media?

Thoughts, Questions, Epiphanies Graphic Organizer

Directions: As you engage in your Gallery Walk, jot down thoughts (*), questions (?), and epiphanies (!) that you have for each Gallery Item.

Thoughts (*)	Questions (?)	Epiphanies (!)
Gallery Walk, Item _____		
Thoughts:	Questions:	Epiphanies:

Gallery Walk, Item _____		
Thoughts:	Questions:	Epiphanies:

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Thoughts, Questions, Epiphanies Graphic Organizer (2 pages)

Gallery Walk, Item _____		
Thoughts:	Questions:	Epiphanies:

Gallery Walk, Item _____		
Thoughts:	Questions:	Epiphanies:

Gallery Walk, Item _____		
Thoughts:	Questions:	Epiphanies:

Gallery Walk Items Preview

Note to Educator: This is a preview of the Gallery Walk stops available to download as a separate file. Print these sheets and display them on the walls in your classroom (alternatively, set up computer/tablet stations). Encourage students to use their electronic devices to access the webpages by scanning the corresponding QR codes. For multimedia items, invite students to use their headphones when listening. As students are walking around the gallery, ensure they are jotting notes down in their Thoughts, Questions, and Epiphanies graphic organizer. Students are encouraged to make at least five stops.

Gallery Walk, Item E - Why does representation matter?

Description	Data from two separate surveys done by Pew Research Center, one surveying Christians in Western Europe and another surveying Muslims in America.
Source	https://www.pewforum.org/2017/07/26/findings-from-pew-research-centers-2017-survey-of-us-muslims/pf_2017-06-26_muslimamericans-00new-04/

Majorities say they know not too much, or nothing at all about Islam, Judaism

% who say they know _____ about ...

	Christianity		Islam		Judaism	
	A great deal/some	Not much/ nothing at all	A great deal/some	Not much/ nothing at all	A great deal/some	Not much/ nothing at all
Austria	83%	17%	32%	68%	27%	72%
Belgium	86	14	50	50	35	64
Denmark	88	12	46	54	33	67
Finland	92	8	32	68	30	69
France	77	23	42	57	33	66
Germany	81	19	38	62	33	67
Ireland	81	18	32	67	28	70
Italy	84	18	25	74	24	76
Netherlands	72	28	29	71	23	77
Norway	94	6	60	39	51	48
Portugal	86	15	24	74	17	82
Spain	82	18	28	72	17	83
Sweden	86	14	50	49	40	60
Switzerland	79	21	37	62	34	66
United Kingdom	82	18	37	63	32	67
MEDIAN	83	17	37	63	32	67

Note: Don't know/refused responses not shown.
Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.
"Being Christian in Western Europe"
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Most Muslim Americans say U.S. media covers Islam unfairly

	U.S. Muslims	U.S. general public
U.S. media coverage of Islam and Muslims is generally ...	%	%
Fair	27	39
Unfair	60	53
Depends/don't know	13	8
	100	100
Do American people see Islam as part of mainstream society?*	%	%
Yes	29	43
No	62	50
Other/don't know	9	7
	100	100

*Muslims were asked whether the American people as a whole see Islam as part of mainstream society. General public respondents were asked whether they personally view Islam as part of mainstream society.
Source: Survey conducted Jan. 23-May 2, 2017. U.S. general public data from survey conducted April 5-11, 2017.
"U.S. Muslims Concerned About Their Place in Society, but Continue to Believe in the American Dream"
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Gallery Walk, Item F - Why does representation matter?

Description	Transcript of an interview between Nida Manzoor, the creator of 'We are Lady Parts' and Sue Obeidi and Dr. Evelyn Alsultani.
Source	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HNcdccCBbpk

Sue Obeidi: Tell us about the inspiration and how you came up with 'We are Lady Parts'.

Nida Manzoor: So, the idea for the show, I think, came about because I was feeling a sense of frustration with the kinds of representation of Muslim women that I was seeing and also that I was being asked to write. I'd had a few interviews as a new writer where I was being asked to look at sort of the tragedy of what it means to be a Muslim woman. I was being asked to write things about like honor killings and forced marriages as though that was the norm of experience so I was very keen when I was reflecting myself to create something that I felt reflected who I was and the women I knew. And so that's what drove me to come up with the show, 'We are Lady Parts' and to think of these characters because you know, it was so important for me to write a show that showed a kind of breadth of Muslim women expressing themselves differently, but none of whom are having a crisis of faith. I wanted to show them with joy and humor, but also with a kind of complexity and darkness as well, so that's what the show allowed me to do.

Dr. Evelyn Alsultany: As you were pitching and producing, were you getting any pushback about maybe adding old tropes into the storyline and story arcs or you know, it happens a lot, where you know when it's so perfect that sometimes, you know suggestions are made to kind of make it less authentic. Were you getting any kind of that feedback?

Nida Manzoor: Yeah, a little bit. And that was what was so interesting because it was a test for me to see how companies reacted to the show. If they were like, 'oh, maybe it should be more dramatic, maybe it's too silly,' it's like, no, no, I want it to be silly or you know, actually most of the thing was wanting it to be more serious or maybe we should go a bit darker here and it's like, it really quickly enabled me to take it off the table from places that I didn't think were really getting it, you know and it was just really wonderful when I met Surian because she was just like, yes, I want to make this show that you've ripped. She really embraced it, so I felt very lucky. Actually you know, it was quite weird because I'm a new writer, so it was strange to have this sort of confidence to say no to companies that were interested, but you know, it's that thing, when it's so important to you and you want to do it right. And I'd rather not do it than do it wrong. And that really kind of emboldened me to say no to people maybe in a way that I wouldn't for other ideas that didn't have that personal connection.

Dr. Evelyn Alsultany: What's so powerful about 'We are Lady Parts' are the universal themes. And so I was wondering if you would talk about that--that perhaps that is instructive for people who want to do better representations of Musims to think about universal themes, so in this case these women, their agency, trying not to be who the other people want them to be, but finding out their own voice and who they are.

Nida Manzoor: No, yeah, absolutely. You know, I really wanted their faith to be just an aspect of who they were, not their defining characteristic. And that they're a band and they want to get gigs is sort of enough and that it's that as well as like women who want to have their voice and have their voice heard and you know, I felt like I wanted it to be universal and we don't have to reach for that. It's just the truth of who you are so in a way it was so freeing to be able

to write these women just being people and it felt so right and for me, just actually it was like the first time I felt I could really express myself in this really honest and open way. That was just really nourishing for me as a writer.

Gallery Walk, Item G - Why does representation matter?

Description	Transcript of Episode 6 of Behind the Lens: Nijla Mu'min Creates a Black Muslim Coming of Age Story.
Source	NPR. (2018). Nijla Mu'min Creates a Black Muslim Coming of Age Story. Behind the Lens. https://www.pbs.org/video/nijla-mumin-creates-a-black-muslim-coming-of-age-story-exuzqp/

Scan QR code to watch video.

This film is just me wanting to give a voice to a story that always lived inside of me.

NIJLA MU'MIN
Director/Writer, 'Jinn'

Gallery Walk, Item H - Why does representation matter?

Description	Clip from part of an interview led by PBS NewsHour's Amna Nawaz and Kashif Shaikh, co-founder and president of Pillars Fund, an organization focused on building up American Muslim civic institutions and amplifying Muslim narratives.
Source	PBS NewsHour. (2021) WATCH: How American Muslims have been represented in popular culture post-9/11. https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/watch-live-muslim-representation-in-popular-culture-post-9-11 For specific clip: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2yYbe2uEPAM&t=384s

Scan QR code to watch video.

WATCH: Muslim portrayal in American pop culture

PBS NEWSHOUR

Appendix to Module 19: Muslim Self-Representation and Popular Culture

Curriculum Framework

Goal

Students will be able to use their independent learning to understand how the media landscape is changing and should continue to change so that it reflects narratives and storylines that accurately reflect the lives of Muslims, challenging the notion that Muslims are monolithic group. Students will engage in independent and group learning to synthesize different types of information from various sources in order to understand the harmful effects of stereotypes and tropes in popular media juxtaposed with the humanizing effects of representation.

Essential questions

1. How can popular media counter harmful Muslim tropes?

2. How does a lack of representation in mass media impact the lived experiences of minoritized groups?

3. How does the existence of harmful tropes in mass media shape perceptions of people who are Muslim and those perceived as Muslims?

Understandings

Students will understand that…

1. Popular film and TV have historically failed to represent Muslim protagonists, and representation has most often been in the form of harmful tropes.

2. Recent series have attempted to counter harmful tropes by featuring Muslim protagonists that break pervasive Muslim stereotypes.

3. Misrepresentation or underrepresentation of minoritized groups shapes public perceptions about those groups, often with harmful effects.

Knowledge

Students will know…

1. How media, including popular TV shows, shape public perceptions about Muslims and those perceived to be Muslims.

2. How, historically, portrayal of characters who were Muslim failed to include meaningful character development and instead promoted harmful tropes.

3. How, in recent years, some popular TV shows have featured Muslim protagonists that directly challenge harmful tropes.

4. Despite significant progress, Muslim stereotypes persist in popular culture and media.

Skills

Students will be able to...

1. **Explore** portrayals of Muslim protagonists in popular TV shows.

2. **Consider** the importance of meaningful representation in popular media.

3. **Connect** their understanding of Islamophobia to underrepresentation and misrepresentation of characters who are Muslim.

4. **Build** on information from surveys, interviews and speeches to communicate the importance of media representation.

Summary of Performance Tasks (Assessment)

1. **Representations of Muslims: Debriefs and whole-class discussions:** In each lesson, students will apply key concepts in groups or individually, then return to the whole class space to articulate their findings, takeaways, and questions about the importance of media representation.

2. **Graphic Organizer:** After reading about and reviewing footage from TV shows that feature Muslim protagonists, students will complete a graphic organizer to describe how these characters are portrayed.

3. **Thoughts, Questions, Epiphanies handout:** As they engage with quotes, survey data, and articles through a Gallery Walk, students will record their thoughts, questions, and epiphanies about the importance of representation.

Common Core Standards

History/Social Studies 11th and 12th Grade

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1
Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7
Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g. visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9
Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Comprehension and Collaboration:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1
Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

_____

About the Contributors

Madina Wahab is an Afghan-American from Queens, New York who has been actively involved in the education space as a teacher, teacher-trainer, and curriculum developer. She is currently a Curriculum Development Associate at Girl Up, United Nations Foundation, where she creates educational resources for youth advocates working to advance gender equality globally. She holds a B.A. in English Literature and a M.A. in TESOL from CUNY's Hunter College as well as a M.S.Ed. in International Educational Development from the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education.

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