



RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

Within our schools, within our peers, within our
country

Dec. 18, 2017

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Religious Tolerance Lesson Plan

Unit Topic: Religious tolerance in American public schools.

Lesson: Religious Tolerance: Within Our Schools, Within Peers, Within Our Country

Rationale for the Lesson:

- With today's political climate, it seems more than necessary to address religious tolerance. Despite having the fundamental right to practice religion, people in our country are being discriminated against and harassed every day for their beliefs. The most devastating of these occurrences are within schools. Students should become aware of minority religions in our country, how they are all essential peaceful, and the detrimental effects of religious intolerance. The purpose of this lesson plan is to acknowledge the positive (and similar) intentions of the four major religions in the U.S., disprove stereotypes, and open a discussion about bullying and preventions. The goal of this lesson is to create a pathway to a more positive and accepting future.

Standards:

Key Ideas and Details:

- 6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

- 6-8.7 Integrate visual information with other information in print and digital texts.
- 6-8.8 Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

Essential Question/Guiding Question:

- What is religious discrimination, who is most susceptible to it, and how can we, as a society, prevent it from happening in our community?

Objectives:

- Students will be able to name and understand the general beliefs of four major religions in the U.S.
- Students will understand how to recognize religious discrimination and bullying in schools, as well as prevention techniques.
- Students will be encouraged to sympathize with their peers, and relate events happening within schools to what is happening in the world, in regards to religious tolerance.

Lesson Opener/Anticipatory Set/Lead-In/Do Now: Instructor should vaguely introduce him or herself to the class, leaving out specific parts of their identity. Instructor then asks students to participate in “filling in the blanks” by allowing the class to make assumptions about him or her.

The instructor will ask for volunteers to guess and write specific aspects of their lives on the board, such as age, religion, where they are from, and job title. After humoring any incorrect answers and introducing themselves further, the instructor segues into defining “stereotypes”. This opening activity is a light and fun way to get students participating in the discussion and actively thinking about new vocabulary words.

Step-By-Step Procedures:

- Opener: Stereotyping (5 minutes)
 - Instructor conducts stereotype activity.
 - Humor some of the assumptions students have made, verifying or denying some that have been written.

Activity 1: PowerPoint Discussion and Handout

- Define “stereotype” to the class, and recognize how they could potentially be harmful.
 - A stereotype is an assumption made about a group of people based off their religion, skin color, ethnicity, gender, background etc. Stereotypes are often offensive, as they typically group people together in unflattering ways.
- Handout (5-10 minutes)
 - Give students a handout with five of the United States’ major religions.
 - Put students in groups of three or four and ask them to jot down bullet points of prior knowledge they have of each one. (3 min)
 - Instructor asks for volunteers to share what they already know about some of the religious groups. (3 min)
 - Instructor acknowledges any ill-informed notions or aspects of minority religious that were not mentioned. (3 min)

Activity 2: Video and Discussion (10 minutes)

- Video (5-6 minutes)
 - Show class a 3-minute cartoon, which discusses a Jewish woman’s history of being bullied in school and her positive opinions on informing the public of other faiths in order to prevent bullying or general misconceptions.
 - Instructor asks class to identify the lesson of the video. (2 minutes)
 - Instructor asks class if they believe that children get bullied for their religion, today. (2 minutes)
- Bullying in America today (5 minutes)
 - Slide show includes different and current stories of children being bullied, harassed, and discriminated against for their religions in schools.
 - Instructor asks students why they think religious bullying can be dangerous, and what they think the causes are.
 - Continue by explaining detrimental effects of bullying and discriminating against students that identify as religious minorities.

- The purpose of this step is to acknowledge the problem to students, not upset them. The instructor should keep the tone light-hearted, while still bringing attention to the seriousness of the issue.
- Five major religions: Info and slideshow (3-5 minutes)

Activity 3: Game (10-15 minutes)

- Instructor separates classroom into different teams
 - Number of teams is dependent on the size of the class
- Instructor will pull up a slide with an aspect of a religion and ask teams to guess which of the five major religions in the United States it is referring to.
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 - For example, “Which religion’s sacred text mentions Jesus Christ 25 times and the Virgin Mary 34 times?” (The answer is Islam).
- Whichever team has the most correct answers win.
- The purpose of this step is to lighten the mood, keep all students actively participating, and bring attention to the peaceful and positive similarities between the religious majorities and minorities in our nation.

Activity 4: Lesson Closure/Closing Activity

- Conclusion: What can we do? (5 minutes)
 - Instructor asks class to suggest ways to promote religious tolerance
 - Instructor gives a few suggestions, such as including a friend from a different religion in your family’s holiday celebrations.
 - Instructor repeats how religious intolerance is present in public schools, and teaches students different methods to prevent or help the epidemic.
- Art Activity (5-10 minutes)
 - After putting students into groups of two or three, the instructor hands each group a different photo depicting some sort of religious art, artifact, or architecture.
 - Instructor asks students to discuss the following questions with their partners: (1) Is this picture from a Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or Hindu tradition? (2) When do you think it was created? (3) Where would it be displayed? (4) What theme or message does it portray?
 - Depending on time, the instructor can either open this activity up to a class discussion, or have different groups exchange pictures and discuss answers.

Materials and Equipment Needed:

- White board/dry erase markers
- Handout
- PowerPoint
- Pictures for art activity
- Optional: Prizes for game activity

Assessment: Based off of the closing assignment, consider how students reevaluated their initial conceptions of the religions found in the United States.

Modifications for Diverse Learners (how does this lesson make accommodations?): By citing current examples of religious intolerance in public schools, students will become more aware of the epidemic, and more likely to notice religious minorities being discriminated against. This will also push the class to understand sympathy. By including a game or fun activity, students will more actively participate, making them more likely to obtain this information.

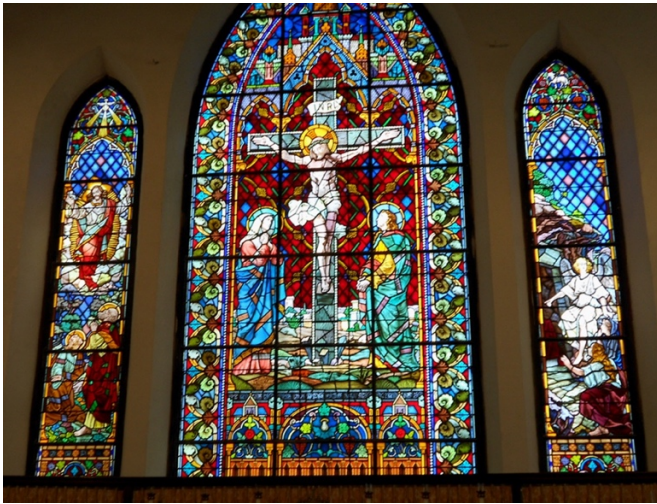
What You Know: United States Religions

Fill in the following columns with information you already know about these four major religions in the United States. This could include certain holidays celebrated, apparel worn, food eaten, sacred texts, etc.

Christianity	Judaism	Islam	Hinduism

Art Activity

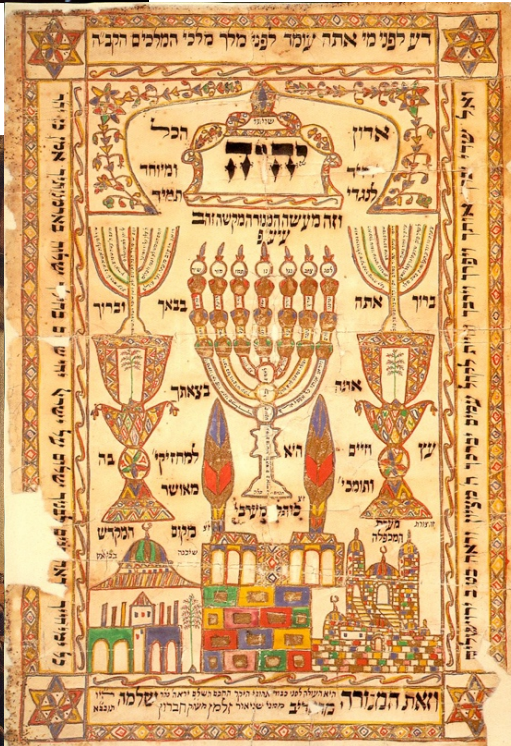
Christian Art:



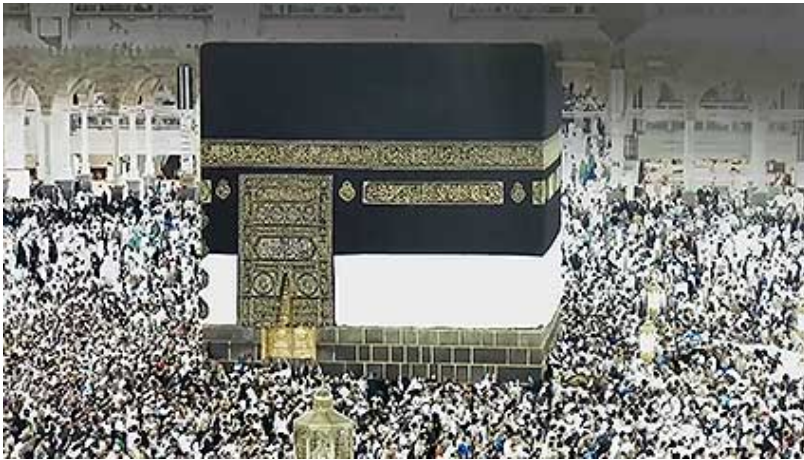
Hindu Art:



Jewish Art:



Muslim Art:



Annotated Bibliography

1. Abo-Zena, Mona M. "Faith from the Fringes: Religious Minorities in School." *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 93.4 (2011): 15–19. JSTOR. 6 Oct. 2017

This citation comes from a professional magazine found on an academic data base, *The Phi Delta Kappan*. *The Phi Delta Kappan* is a source for those interested in K-12 education, and this particular article tackles the issue of religion in schools. This specific article initially addresses the prevalence of Christianity amongst public schools and how the majority religion differs from minorities. Furthermore, the writer continues to express the correlation between academic performance and religious expression, mental health statuses among religious minorities, and social effects of discrimination minority religions face in schools. The conclusion discusses "how educators can help", with bulleted aspects of the education system to consider, in respects to religious minorities. Overall, the magazine's easy-to-read format and visual organization make this article a wonderful source for students, as well.

2. Blumber, Antonia. "The U.S. Has Started Tracking Religious Discrimination in Schools." *Huffington Post Religion*. The Huffington Post, 12 Sep. 2016. Web. 2 Oct. 2017.

This article from The Huffington Post is reporting on the U.S. Department of Education's participation in the religious discrimination epidemic. The article informs readers of several upsetting statistics and numbers regarding religious minorities facing bullying, violence, and hate crimes. Furthermore, it gives information on the Office for Civil Rights' new requirements for schools to report the number of incidents involving religious-based bullying and harassment. Now, more than ever, it is more accessible for students to find their official

rights regarding religious identity and for schools to take further action. The article also offers links to websites with legal information, online data collection platforms, and an updated online complaint form for educators and schools systems.

3. CCTV America, “Hajj”. *Encyclopædia Britannica*, The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. 16 Nov 2017. www.britannica.com/topic/hajj

This photo is of Mecca in Saudi Arabia, and is from an online encyclopedia page discussing hajj. This photo contributes to the art activity of the lesson plan, as a depiction of Muslim art.

4. Chandrashekar, Gowri, Image of Mrs. Chandrashekar Creating a Mandala at Mylapore Festival, *Shreshar Blog*. Asha, 17 Aug 2011. <http://shreshar.blogspot.com/2011/08/to-you-madras-for-giving-me-beautiful.html>

This particular image was taken from a blog. It is an image of Mrs. Gowri Chandrashekar at the Mylapore festival with her award-winning kolam, or mandala. This photo contributes to the art activity of the lesson plan, as a depiction of Hindu art.

5. Da Vinci, Leonardo. “The Last Supper”. *Wikipedia*, 12 Dec 2017, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Last_Supper_\(Leonardo_da_Vinci\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Last_Supper_(Leonardo_da_Vinci))

This is an online image of Leonardo da Vinci’s “The Last Supper” (circa 1490). This photo contributes to the art activity of the lesson plan, as a depiction of Christian art.

6. Dehejia, Vidya, "Hinduism and Hindu Art." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*.
New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000

www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/hind/hd_hind.htm

This is a page from the Metropolitan Museum of Art's website, dedicated to Hindu Art. In this particular segment, a specific image of a statue of Ganesha was used as a depiction of Hindu art for the art activity of the lesson plan; however, this page also provides readers with a basic overview of the Hindu religion, as well as several beautiful pieces of Hindu art.

7. Dupper, David R., Shandra Forest-Bank, Autumn Lowry-Carusillo. "Experiences of Religious Minorities in Public Schools Settings: Findings from Focus Groups Involving Muslim, Jewish, Catholic and Unitarian Universalist Youths." *Children & Schools* 1 (2015): 37-45. Web. 6 Oct. 2017.

This was an article about a focus group conducted in 2014. David R. Dupper, Shandra Forest-Bank, and Autumn Lowry-Carusillo surveyed a number of participants, all identifying as a religious minority in their area. While separated into homogenous groups in order to feel more comfortable, the students answered the following questions:

"(a) At any time during your school career, have you ever been called names, insulted, or attacked in school because of your religious beliefs/faith? If so, please describe what happened to you. (b) Have you ever witnessed someone else being called names, insulted, or attacked in school because of their religious beliefs/faith? (c) If a teacher or school administrator was present during this bullying episode, did he or she attempt to intervene in any way? If so, how?"

The students all seemed comfortable answering such questions, and the results were very disturbing. This article recalls several upsetting stories regarding harassment and bullying among students and their peers. The outcome of the focus group resulted in researchers further analyzing religious discrimination; thus, the article continues to discuss minority status, peer participation, and precursors.

8. Forest-Bank, Shandra S., Dupper, David R. "A Qualitative Study of Coping with Religious Minority Status in Public Schools." *Children and Youth Services Review* 61.1 (2016): 261-270. Web. 6 Oct. 2017.

This article, similar to the precluding one written by two of the same writers, further explores religious minorities in schools. This study observes fifty middle and high school students, identifying as Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, and Universalist Unitarian. While the article explores negative incidences and discrimination, it also touches on importance of religious affiliation and community among adolescences, students struggling to have (or not have) friends from other religions, and methods students, teachers, and parents use to prevent religious discrimination and bullying. The section that references the importance religious beliefs hold in adolescences is of extreme importance. These writers are not pushing all middle and high school students to develop a certain religious affiliation, rather they are emphasizing how monumental this aspect is of some students' lives. Thus, this article brings into perspective how detrimental bullying based on religious identification can be for a child.

9. Mendelowitz, Shneur Valman, “Shiviti”. *Richard McBee*. Artist Courtesy Library of Congress, 19 Nov 2010. <http://richardmcbee.com/writings/jewish-art-before-1945/item/menorahs-in-jewish-art>

This is an online image depicting Shneur Valman Mendelowitz’s artwork, *Shiviti*, created mid-19th century, ink on paper, portraying a golden menorah and Hebrew calligraphy. This photo contributes to the art activity of the lesson plan, as a depiction of Jewish art.

10. Michelangelo. “The Creation of Adam”. *Wikipedia*, 5 Dec. 2017, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Creation_of_Adam

This is an online image of Michelangelo’s “The Creation of Adam”. This photo contributes to the art activity in the lesson plan, as a depiction of Christian art.

11. “Religious Landscape Study” *Pew Research Center*” *Religion & Public Life*, 3 Nov. 2015, www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/

Pew Research Center is a wonderful source for information on religious practices in the United States, as well as a provider of current events regarding human rights. The cited page provides results from a survey of more than 35,000 Americans from all 50 states, in which participants were asked about their religious affiliations, beliefs, practices, and social and political views. The results offer an accurate insight to the religious and political climate of the country.

12. Stell, Rip, An Image of a Stain Glass Fixture and a Star of David Art Piece. *Journal Record*. The Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art, journalrecord.com/tag/sherwin-miller-museum-of-jewish-art/

This image is a photograph of the front lobby of the Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art. This photo contributes to the art activity, as a depiction of Jewish art.

13. Stopbullying.gov Staff. "Considerations for Specific Groups." *Stopbullying.gov*, 2016. Web. 6 Oct. 2017.

This source is from the government-organized website, stopbullying.gov. This website provides specified aspects of bullying, such as who is at risk, warning signs, effects, and general definitions. Additionally, the source focuses on groups susceptible to harassment, such as LGBTQ youth, children with disabilities and special needs, and those practicing certain religions and faith. The page regarding religion, faith, and diversity gives general examples of hatred and sections of the Civil Rights Act that protects this sort of discrimination. The website, in all, is a wonderful source for information on bullying.

14. Storybooth. "Hated and Bullied for What I Believe." *Youtube*. Youtube. 15 Aug. 2017. Web. 6 Oct. 2017.

This video is an educational cartoon by the company "Story Booth." It tells the story, narrated by a seventeen-year-old girl, about her experiences facing discrimination as a Jewish child in school. The purpose of this video is to introduce the topic to students in a lighthearted manner. The narrator concludes her personal story by explaining her philosophy; that is, that all religions should be introduced to each other in a friendly, welcoming manner. By bringing up the point

that most of her peers were uneducated about Judaism, she furthers her point by exemplifying peaceful aspects of every religious sect.

15. Unknown Artist, Image of Synagogue in Mondovi, *J-Italy*, 2017. www.j-italy.org/explore/regions/piedmont-l/mondovi-l-p/

This is a photo from a synagogue in Italy, depicting a golden menorah, Hebrew calligraphy, and intricate artwork. This photo contributes to the art activity of the lesson plan, as a depiction of Jewish art.

16. Unknown Artist, Stain Glass Window Displayed at Christ Church Cathedral in Nassau, Bahamas. *ChurchPOP*. Roger W., ChurchPOP Editor, 16 Sep 2015, churchpop.com/2015/09/16/21-beautiful-stained-glass-windows/

This is an online image of a beautiful stain glass window displayed at Christ Church Cathedral in Nassau, Bahamas. This photo contributes to the art activity of the lesson plan, as a depiction of Christian art.

17. Unknown Artist, “The Kiswa on the Prophet’s Tomb”. *Free Islamic Calligraphy*, 2017. freeislamiccalligraphy.com/portfolio/the-kiswa-on-the-prophets-%EF%B7%BA-tomb/#

This is an online image of Islamic calligraphy. This photo contributes to the art activity of the lesson plan, as a depiction of Muslim art.

18. Wertheimer, Linda K. *Faith Ed.: Teaching About Religion in an Age of Intolerance*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2015. Print.

This is a book written by Linda K. Wertheimer, a Jewish woman, mother, and wife. She introduces her writing by recalling stories of her childhood in which she was bullied for being a religious minority in her town. She continues to talk about similar incidences that have occurred around her, as well as hate crimes that were committed involving her Jewish son. Wertheimer's personal experiences add to the passion she has about teaching tolerance to children in schools.

She continues to cite real examples of discrimination and hate crimes occurring amongst children in schools. She uses these stories, sources, and statistics to emphasize a need to educate the youth on minority religions, bullying preventions and the detrimental effects of religious-based hate crimes. Her powerful message regarding how religious minorities are at risk in their school environments, and her plan to bring an end to the epidemic, is exactly what is supposed to be portrayed in this lesson plan.