

Child Marriage: A National Crisis

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December 18, 2017

Lesson Plan

Unit Topic:

Lesson: Child Marriage: A National Crisis

Rationale for the Lesson: It is a common misconception that child marriage occurs in war-torn countries, undeveloped countries, or countries where women have little to no rights. However, child marriage is an issue central to the United States, our very own country. The U.S. government is failing at creating laws that not only prevent and stop this crisis, but also protect child marriage victims. It is a violation of human rights as well as women's rights. As American citizens, we must encourage educating the public on child marriage in hopes of changing laws that enable this issue to continue.

Standards:

RH.9-10.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

RH.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

RH.9-10.6 Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

RH.9-10.7 Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.

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.

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.

Essential Question/Guiding Question:

- What is child marriage?
- How is child marriage a form of abuse against women?

Objectives:

- **Students will be able to:**
 - Identify key terms related to child marriage.

- o Perceive the mental, emotional, and physical effects on child marriage victims.
- o Examine U.S. laws that enable the continuation of child marriage.
- o Analyze data of child marriage victims in relation to the U.S.
- o Empathize and connect with stories of child marriage victims.

Lesson Opener/Anticipatory Set/Lead-In/Do Now:

- Instructor will introduce herself and state the lesson title. (2 min)
- Using Powerpoint, instructor will begin with identifying terms related to child marriage such as “forced marriage” and “arranged marriage.” Instructor will compare and contrast the terms and show how the definitions can be blurred. (3 min)

Step-By-Step Procedures with Time Allocations:

- Discuss various reasons why children are forced into marriage, such as force by parents as a result of teen pregnancy, to control their sexuality, or to receive a dowry. (5 min)
- Activity: Ask students to participate in word cloud via sli.do. What effects do you think child marriage victims may suffer from? View results and proceed to next Powerpoint slide. (5 min)
- Proceed with data and discuss the effects of child marriage on victims. This includes the effects on their mental, emotional, and physical health which is often connected to abuse. Proceed to next Powerpoint slide. (5 min)
- Summarize real life story of Yasmin Koenig. Handouts of the story will be provided for students to read in full at home. Powerpoint will have a photo Yasmin on her wedding day. (5 min)
- Proceed with data on child marriage within the U.S., such as which states have the highest rate, the average age, the youngest age, etc. Discuss loopholes in the law as well as NJ State Governor Chris Christie’s stance on child marriage. (5 min)

Lesson Closure:

- Activity: Ask students to form small groups and come up with two ways to stop and prevent child marriage, whether it be raising awareness, implementing a law, creating a protection program, etc. This must be written on paper and will be collected. (10 min)
- Provide a description of Unchained At Last, the only non-profit organization in the U.S. that helps forced marriage victims of all ages. Show a short clip of director and founder Fraidy Reiss that highlights her mission. (5 min)
- Activity: Now that the lesson is completed, what is one word or phrase that comes to mind when you think of child marriage? View results. (3 min)

- Suggest ways the students can become active in raising awareness of the United States's child marriage issue. (2 min)

Total Time: 50 minutes

Materials and Equipment Needed:

- Students must have access to cell phones, laptops, tablets, etc. for activities.
- Students must have a writing utensil and paper.
- Instructor must have access to laptop and projector.
- Printed handouts.

Assignment:

- Read Yasmin Koenig's story.
- Check out the website of Unchained At Last.

Assessment: (how will I evaluate student learning?): For an activity, instructor will ask students to form small groups and come up with ways to stop and prevent child marriage, whether it be raising awareness, implementing a law, creating a protection program, etc. This must be written on paper and will be collected. Instructor will also ask questions use the word cloud feature via sli.do throughout the presentation.

Modifications for diverse learners (how does this lesson make accommodations?)

Teaching Kit

Stolen Innocence: My Story of Growing Up in a Polygamous Sect, Becoming a Teenage Bride, and Breaking Free of Warren Jeffs by Elissa Wall and Liza Pulitzer

\$7.19 Paperback

https://www.amazon.com/dp/0061734969/_encoding=UTF8?coliid=IE6AREO4N043N&colid=2NG9ROWMOXX60

Annotated Bibliography

Alter, Charlotte. "Why It's Still Legal for Underage Girls to Marry in the U.S." *TIME*, vol. 189, no. 22, 12 June 2017, pp. 15–16., eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=1&sid=de384254-a0f7-4801-bc7d-2678525e3e32%40sessionmgr4010&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=123364589&db=mih.

Earlier this year, *TIME* magazine published an article titled "Why it's still legal for underage girls to marry in the U.S." by Charlotte Alter. The article questions why the United States still allows child marriage and various state laws that enable this crisis to continue. Alter states that New Hampshire allows minors to wed only if they have consent from their parents and a judge. A bill was introduced to New Hampshire that would prohibit marriages of minors under the age of 16 and then changed to minors under 18; Republicans vetoed the bill. A point that is central to my topic, Alter says, "It can be easy to think of child marriage as something that happens...in nations notorious for the poor treatment of women...But in the U.S., nearly every state allows at least some people under age 18 to marry" (16). Alter also offers data, stating that in the U.S. between 2000 and 2010, over 167,000 people under 17 were married in 38 states. More shocking data proved that in 27 states there isn't a minimum age for people wanting to get married. While some states are trying to change these laws, our own state governor Chris Christie vetoed a bill that would prohibit minors under 18 to get married! This fact brings my topic even closer to home. The article ends with a disturbing fact—prosecutors most likely won't file rape charges against someone who had sex with a minor and then become married.

Eskind Moses, Marlene, and Manuel Benjamin Russ. "Forced Marriage." *Tennessee Bar Journal*, vol. 50, no. 9, Sept. 2014, pp. 32–34., eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=2&sid=1be707e6-9a78-4272-9835-12dcaac22a10%40sessionmgr4009&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=97602512&db=a9h.

Marlene Eskind Moses and Manuel Benjamin Russ collaborated on an academic journal titled "Forced Marriage." Forced marriage is another term related to child marriage. The authors make a point to differentiate between a forced marriage and an arranged marriage. "In an arranged marriage, either party has the ability to refuse the other," they state, "whereas in a forced marriage, one party must marry without their consent" (32). They make the argument, however, that it can sometimes be difficult to differentiate the two terms because both may involve influence from their religion or family. It is also difficult to know the true number of forced marriage victims in the U.S. because many do not report their situation. The journal continues with a powerful statement—Americans

are unaware or in disbelief of the forced marriage crisis within the U.S.; it is a common misconception that this issue is experienced within other countries. It is also important to state that a forced marriage can happen to anyone in the U.S. regardless of their religion or culture. Although this is a growing crisis, the U.S. is failing to create laws against it whereas countries like the U.K. have been proactive by creating several laws to end this crisis. The authors state that in spite of the U.S. lack of jurisdiction against forced marriages, there has been an increased awareness within the law enforcement. Law enforcement officials are in need of special training to properly handle situations involving forced marriages.

Koenig, Yasmin. "My Mom Took Me Overseas and Forced Me Into Being a Teen Bride." *Seventeen*, 31 May 2016, www.seventeen.com/life/real-girl-stories/a40668/parents-sent-me-to-the-middle-east-to-get-married/.

"My Mom Took Me Overseas and Forced Me Into Being a Teen Bride" is an article published by Seventeen Magazine. Having read this article last year, it was my first exposure to the crisis of child marriage within the U.S. Although this is a teen magazine, I think students will be able to connect and empathize with Yasmine's story. Yasmine was 15 years old when she became a victim of child marriage. She was born in Chicago but her parents were of Palestinian heritage. She discusses her life at home, revealing instances of which her mother and grandmother began to isolate her from friends and the outside world. Yasmine was not allowed to see her friends, have a Facebook account, have a job, or even go to high school. Yasmine went on a sudden trip to Palestine with her mother and grandmother to visit her sisters. However, it was not long before Yasmine met her suitor. She became furious once she knew that her family's plan was for her to be married in Palestine. Despite Yasmine's tears, her family did not break the engagement. Her sisters, who were also forced into marriage, told Yasmine she'll "learn to love" her soon-to-be husband. Once married, she contacted friends through Facebook to tell them about her situation. She was given the phone number to the U.S. Embassy by a friend. Within three months, Yasmine was saved and taken back the U.S. She was in and out of foster homes, but by the time she turned 16, she became officially adopted. Although she was disowned by her biological family, she recently reconnected with one of her sisters. Yasmine is a student at Illinois State University.

Kopelman, Loretta M. "The Forced Marriage of Minors: A Neglected Form of Child Abuse." *The Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics*, vol. 44, 2016, pp. 173–181., eds.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.montclair.edu:2048/eds/detail/detail?

vid=2&sid=87dbdb6a-5dd8-41c4-a35a
e3e52b197bb7@sessionmgr102&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWR

zLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ==#AN=114503360&db=ccm

In Loretta Kopelman's article titled "The Forced Marriage of Minors: A Neglected Form of Child Abuse," she states that child marriages not only violates human rights but it should also be seen as child abuse. She begins her article with a true story of a 14-year-old American girl who's mother brought her to a gynecologist to perform a hymenoplasty. The young girl was reluctantly going to be wed in Yemen, and her mother wanted to ensure her virginity. Kopelman makes a case that the doctor should not have performed the procedure; in fact, it was the doctor's responsibility to report the mother to child services for subjecting her underaged daughter to a forced marriage. Kopelman further states that "health care providers, teachers, police, judges, attorneys, child protective services personnel, and others have duties to prevent or stop child abuse" (173). She details a report done in 2014 by The American Bar Association, a group of lawyers, that declared forced marriage to be "a fundamental human rights violation and a form of family violence and of violence against women" (175). Kopelman then highlights laws in the United Kingdom that the United States should adopt in order to stop forced marriages of minors, such as the Forced Marriage Unit, the Forced Marriage Protection Order, and declaring forced marriage as a crime that leads up to seven years of jail time. Kopelman also offers practice guidelines aimed at health care providers if they have a young patient who is at risk of a forced marriage as well as strategies aimed at American lawmakers to stop forced marriages of minor.

Le Strat, Yann, et al. "Child Marriage in the United States and Its Association With Mental Health in Women." *American Academy of Pediatrics*, vol. 128, no. 3, Sept. 2011, pp. 524–530., pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/128/3/524.long.

The Academy of Pediatrics published an academic journal titled "Child Marriage in the United States and Its Association With Mental Health in Women," by Yann Le Strat, Caroline Dubertret, and Bernard Le Foll. Published in 2011, their research is useful to my lesson plan in order to present statistics regarding the psychological toll that child marriage has on victims. It claims to be the first study to report the mental health of child marriage victims within the U.S. who are now adults. All of the participants are women. The majority of participants have a "low educational level, low income, and living in the South and rural areas of the United States"(524). Almost 77 percent of participants were married. Of these women, more than 10 percent were under the age of 18 years old when married. Over one-half of these women were under 16 years old when married. One in nine of these women were married at 14 years old. The study also reports a high divorce rate, almost 50 percent, within child marriage compared to other women who married as adults. In relation to mental health, more than 50 percent of the participants have had a history of mental health disorders such as major depressive disorder, nicotine

dependence, and antisocial personality disorder. Although this study had limitations, it did find important data that can aid our government, health officials, and the general public in understanding the effects of child marriage and coming up with ways to help victims.

Reiss, Fraidy. "Why Can 12-Year-Olds Still Get Married in the United States?" *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 10 Feb. 2017, www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2017/02/10/why-does-the-united-states-still-let-12-year-old-girls-get-married/?utm_term=.a3f94923ecaa.

The Washington Post published an article titled "Why Can 12-Year-Olds Still Get Married in the United States?" written by Fraidy Reiss. This article may be the most valuable of all my sources because it is because Reiss is the director and founder of Unchained At Last, the only nonprofit organization in the U.S. that helps women of all ages leave forced marriages. I will provide additional information in relation to Unchained At Last for students who'd like to get involved with this organization to help stop the child marriage crisis. Reiss begins the article with a true story of a woman who was forced into marriage by her parents when she was 16 and pregnant. The article provides various statistics and information on U.S. laws regarding child marriage. Unchained At Last received researched data that revealed 167,000 children, most girls and some under 12 years old, were wed between 2000 and 2015 in 38 states. Reiss states that lawmakers are reluctant to change the minimum marriage age in fear of it interjecting with religious or cultural practices as well as believing pregnant teens should be married. Child marriage victims are often forced by their parents in order to prevent premarital sex or to earn money such as a dowry. Although adults escaping forced marriage can seek protection in a shelter, children have more difficulty. Police return children to their homes because domestic-violence shelters do not accept minors and youth shelters contact parents. The article also states the effects forced marriage has on physical health such as an increased risk of diabetes, stroke, cancer, and heart attack. This information is useful in relation to my other source that provides research on mental effects of forced marriage.