

# Misconceptions of Hijab

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Audience: High School

## Lesson Plan

### **Lesson:** Misconceptions of Hijab

**Rationale for the Lesson:** In more recent years, the new wave of Western Feminism ,alongside the global issues in predominantly muslim countries, have resulted in an obscure view of what it means to wear the hijab. The hijab is a head covering worn by many, but not all, Muslim women around the world. To the majority of the public, it is viewed as a sign of oppression and lack of free will on the women’s part. This false ideology is used to further the notion that Islam is an oppressive and violent religion. It is critical to highlight the importance of this misconception as it has led to severe social and political backlash. This lesson ensure understanding of what it means to wear hijab, and addressing this issue from a feminist perspective.

**Standards:** Grade 9-10 History/ Social Studies

1. 9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, and economic aspects of history/ social studies.
2. 6- 8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

**Essential Question/Guiding Question:** What is Hijab, why is it considered controversial, and why do we need to understand this issue?

**Objectives:** Students will be able to understand what the misconceptions of hijab are, what is happening in U.S and around the world as a result of this, and what is being done to address this.

By the end of the lesson, all students will be able to understand what hijab is, and how it is used to express empowerment, as well as why this is an important human rights issue.

**Lesson Opener/Anticipatory Set/Lead-in/Do Now:** Instructor introduces self, opens powerpoint presentation and defines what hijab is, explaining the triliteral roots of the word and explains the purpose of it. Instructor then asks students why they think some muslim women wear it while others don’t. Students should give their feedback based on the question.

### **Step-by Step Procedure:**

**Step1 :** Present short power point on the definition of Hijab, and it’s true meaning to those who wear it. State the triliteral arabic roots of the word that help better define the term ‘hijab’. Ask students :” Why do you think some women wear the hijab while others don’t?” Ask students to write this down on a piece of paper. As a class we will review some answers.( 10 minutes)

**Step 2:** The continuation of the powerpoint will include why there is so much stigma against the hijab, and how it affects these women both socially and politically. During this time students will write down what new information they learned and what they already knew.(10 minutes)

**Step 3:** A video by 'The Guardian' will discuss how hijab does not coincide with oppression and is in fact a feminist statement to many who wear it. While watching, have students write down initial thoughts/ reactions to keep in mind for next activity.(3 minutes)

**Step 4:** After the presentation, students will write down some of the struggles and discrimination that Hijabi women face in the United States, specifically what kind of discrimination and in what places, and what results from recent political controversy (i.e the 'Muslim Ban').( 5 minutes)

**Step 5:** Handout article from 'The Washington Post', Tell students they have 10 minutes to read it have students write down a word/phrase that stood out to them. Break into groups of 3-4 and have each person state their phrase and why it stood out to them.(20 minutes)

**Step 6:** Review this as a class and discuss what we can do to support. Ask students "How would you solve this issue?"(5-7 minutes)

**Step 7:** Brief question and answer session so that students can have any other questions regarding the topic answered. Other students are open to answering questions based on what they learned. If no questions are asked by the students, the instructor should ask a set of 2 or more questions prepared beforehand.(5-7 minutes)

**Step 8:** Hand out flyer/ paper on what organizations/ how to support.(1 minute)

**Material/ Equipment needed:** Pen, note card/ index card, marker, whiteboard, projector and projector screen.

**Assignment:** Students will answer opening question, and answer the questions after the video and presentation. The students will participate in a question and answer session and are welcome to answer questions.

**Assessment:** Students will answer questions before and during the presentation, as well as aid in answering some questions during the Q&A session. This will evaluate their prior knowledge on the topic and what they have learned at the end of the lesson.

**Modification for diverse learners:** This is an interactive lesson that includes lectures, videos, photos etc. There will also be group discussions and individual assessments. During these activities I will walk around to see if there are any struggling students, as well as help any student who is having trouble forming an opinion or assessing the information. The group discussions and individual assignments will aid in evaluating students' knowledge on the topic.

## Women of Cover: Annotated Bibliography

-Abu-Lughod, Lila. *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* Harvard University Press, 2013

In this book, Abu- Lughod sheds light on the recent consensus in the West and in Western Feminism, a message spread by human rights groups and the media:

Muslim Women need saving. These conclusions have to form due to frequent reports of honor killings, disfigurement, and sensational abuse. As an anthropologist who has been writing about Arab Women for thirty years, she challenges these ideas by questioning whether these generalizations about Islamic culture is connected to the hardships these women face, and what motivates people, both individuals and institutions, to feel the need to fight for these women's rights.

-Moghissi, Haideh. *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism; The Limits of postmodern analysis.* St. Martin's Press, Inc. 1999

Addressing the controversial debate on feminism and postmodernism, Moghissi offers a joint analysis of these two topics along with the sexual politics of Islam. This book asks some hard questions concerning those who have taken up and embrace of the Islamic Identity of Muslim women, and choose to ignore the racism of Western Feminism. This book analyzes how Islam has been demonized for its gender roles and practices like no other religion, and goes into detail on Islamic Fundamentalism and Western response. Specifically highlighting the parts of the book on "The Construction of a 'New' Muslim Women", where studies of Women in the Middle East are moving towards a more informed understanding of the complexity of these women's lives. Many scholars in this field consider pre-existing patriarchal and cultural factors in studying the lives of these women, highlighting their "strength and struggle rather than their victimization".

-AlWazni, Anderson . *Muslim Women in America and Hijab: A Study of Empowerment, Feminist Identity, and Body Image.* Oxford University Press. 2015

This article is of a study of 12 Muslim Women living in the Triangle Area of North Carolina. They were all interviewed regarding their voluntary practice of wearing the hijab, were also asked about exercising their choice of hijab. It also questioned their feminist identity and relationship with feminism as it's related to wearing the hijab. Participants were also asked about female empowerment and how the practice of wearing the hijab empowers you, if at all. Whether hijab, and those who voluntarily wear it, not only have a source of empowerment, but a new wave of feminism rejected by the original western definition. This article examines influence from political movements and market capitalism in regards to mainstream images of western feminism and how hijab wearing women challenge those ideals. But also explores body image and how these women view their body in relation to wearing the hijab. Finally, participants respond to social prejudice against muslim women based on the assumptions of patriarchal control and oppression, thus contributing to a new wave of feminist thought.

<http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=dc1b6573-7ad2-4aa9-a06e-5bfb80ba580b%40sessionmgr101&vid=2&hid=122>

-Ahmed, Shireen. Wearing a Hijab isn't The Way You Should Show Support For Muslim Women. The Huffington Post. Jan 30, 2017

This news article originally appeared on 'The Establishment', a new multimedia site funded and run by women. In this article, Shireen addresses gendered Islamophobia- targeted violence against Muslim women- and how it has reached a scary high level in Western Society, in fact, attacks on Muslims in 2016 increased to the highest level in the last 15 years partially due to political rhetoric. In light of these recent events, many non-muslim women wanted to show solidarity by donning the hijab during events such as protests. And although the intentions are good, the author states other ways in which you can support the muslim women. Shireen pointed out that engaging in conversation with a muslim women is not "embarrassing", and that it " would be a relief to be spoken to- as opposed to spoken for."

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/wearing-a-hijab-isnt-the-way-you-should-show-support\\_us\\_588e72afe4b0cd25e4904a5c](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/wearing-a-hijab-isnt-the-way-you-should-show-support_us_588e72afe4b0cd25e4904a5c)

-Segran, Elizabeth. The Rise of Islamic Feminists. The Nation. Dec 23, 2013

As of December 2013, this article examines and discusses Muslim women and their activism and feminism in their Islamic culture. It focuses on the Musawah social movement that is based on the idea that Islam is not biased towards women.

<http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.montclair.edu:2048/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=0e06cf3a-1756-4c5c-aa7f-2e25e9bf5983@sessionmgr4009&vid=5&hid=4213>

-Independent Lense. Muslim Feminism. PBS. 2017

This short article examines the misconception of feminism as a Western construct by stating that Muslim Feminist movement have existed since the nineteenth century. It also reflects on the different feminist movements in different cultural contexts, and gives the example of a 17-year-old girl named Shadya Zoabi, an Israeli Arab who attempts to balance her own dreams, and the challenges she faces that parallel many women around the world. It also sheds light on "Islamic Feminism, a movement concerned with promoting "gender equality within a secular society", that became popular in the early 1990's. This movement strived to challenge existing notions of east vs. west, secular vs. religious, and traditional vs. modern. The example of the ' veiling', the custom of wearing hijab, being viewed as 'oppressive' by non-muslim feminist and reaffirming the myth of Islam's patriarchal practices. Yet religious revivalism in the muslim world has lead to more women wearing the hijab as a sign of a feminist act, a way to "counter cultural imperialism" and define their identity in their own terms.

<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/shadya/muslimfeminism.html>

-Yusuf, Hana .My Hijab has nothing to do with Oppression. It's a feminist statement. The Guardian 24 June 2015.

This short video addresses the widespread misconception about hijab and its threat to progressive values due to the notion of it being oppressive. The denial of the fact that hijab is a result of oppression is in no way denying the reality that some women around the world are forced to wear it. But in this short video, it questions why social and legal pressure viewed as female emancipation? The fact of the matter is, both sides are oppressive, “the liberation lies in the choice”. To the women who choose to wear the hijab, it is empowering to reject the notion of reducing a woman’s value to her sexual appeal. The hijab “resist commercial imperatives that support consumer culture”, and that is why is it so threatening and confrontational in western societies.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1x5Zu18f7U>

-Gani, Aisha. This Muslim Woman Athlete says the hijab ban is “bigger than basketball”. BuzzFeed News. 10 February 2017

Muslim female basketball players continue the fight to lift the ban on “headgear” in playing professional basketball after FIBA postponed the long awaited rule change. For people like Bilqis Abdul- Qadir, a basketball player who broke records as an all-time leading scorer in Massachusetts in her high school career, and in 2010 became the first NCAA Division I players to play in hijab, her dream to pursue a professional basketball career are denied because of her choice to practice the hijab. Working to overturn the ban permanently, Bilqis hopes that the support from many people, including players like LeBron James, will help sway the overturn of this ban in May when FIBA presents a revision of its headgear rule.

[https://www.buzzfeed.com/aishagani/muslim-basketball-players-fight-hijab-ban?utm\\_term=.ncVzwe2JO#\\_puK1ymKN4](https://www.buzzfeed.com/aishagani/muslim-basketball-players-fight-hijab-ban?utm_term=.ncVzwe2JO#_puK1ymKN4)

- Dougherty, Jesse. After Playing all season, Maryland girl held out of basketball game for wearing Hijab. The Washington Post. 13 March 2017

Yet another example of how the rulebook prevented the intersection of two passions, sport and faith, to be combined into one. This is an article about a highschool junior named Je’Nan Hayes who wasn’t allowed to participate in the team’s first regional final appearance. The game took place at Oxon Hill High on March 3rd. A junior in her first season playing organized ball, Hayes wasn’t allowed to play because of her Hijab. The head official informed the coach of a rarely followed rule “requiring documented evidence” that Hayes needs to wear her Hijab for religious purposes.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/highschools/after-playing-all-season-maryland-girl-held-out-of-basketball-game-for-wearing-a-hijab/2017/03/13/63fe82be-0767-11e7-8884-96e6a6713f4b\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.8e61440d5e70](https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/highschools/after-playing-all-season-maryland-girl-held-out-of-basketball-game-for-wearing-a-hijab/2017/03/13/63fe82be-0767-11e7-8884-96e6a6713f4b_story.html?utm_term=.8e61440d5e70)

-Nasseri, Jolaina. The History and Evolution of the Hijab in Iran. academia.edu.

This article introduces and speaks about the standing of Hijab at different points in modern Iranian history. Specifically before and after the 1979 revolution. There is a brief introduction and short Islamic history on Hijab. The article goes on to talk about the state of Iran before the revolution, as well as after Khomeini was overthrown. It addresses women's position in Iran during the banning of the veil, as well as the compulsory veiling of women after 1979.

[http://www.academia.edu/236875/The\\_History\\_and\\_Evolution\\_of\\_the\\_Hijab\\_in\\_Iran](http://www.academia.edu/236875/The_History_and_Evolution_of_the_Hijab_in_Iran)

# Organizations to Support:

- Council on American Islamic Relations(CAIR)
  - Grassroots civil rights and advocacy group
  - Largest Muslim civil liberties organization in America
  - Established in 1994
  
- The Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality (WISE)
  - Faith based global program, social network
  - Grassroots social justice movement
  - Established in 2006
  
- American Muslim Women's Association
  - Based out of Westchester County, New York