One World Unit: Exploring Religion in Israel
Learning Activity: Religious Similarities & Differences
Subject Area: Social Studies
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Focus Area(s): Israel, Middle East, Religion, Geography, Culture, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Middle East Conflict.

Grades: 7 - 9
Duration: 1-2 class periods

Common Core State Standards:
Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10
Writing: 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

Materials: Copies of the One World Reflection, Exploring Religion in Israel, and copies of the Religion Log. Additionally, select readings or research sources for students to gather information to answer questions on the Religion Log that cannot be answered from the One World Reflection.

Objectives: (LW – Learner Will)
1. LW share prior knowledge of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.
2. LW research and record information about the foundations of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.
3. LW identify similarities and differences between Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.

Learning Activity Overview:
Students will use the One World Reflection and accompanying exercises to increase their understanding of and ability to identify the similarities and differences of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.

Unit Resources
Unit Resources promote student documentation of understanding the One World Reflection. These Unit Resources accompany each Learning Activity in the Unit.
• Previewing the Reflection (before students read the Reflection)
• Understanding the Reflection (After students read the Reflection, either in class or for HW)
• Reviewing the Reflection (After the Learning Activity is completed)
• Reflection Response (For students to respond to the One World Student Ambassador)

In addition, this One Word Unit can be implemented to coincide with the ELA and Science Learning Activities if they are available in this Unit. Teacher should coordinate with those teachers to ensure this cross-collaboration.

Reflection Prompt:
In the seventh paragraph, Yoni writes, “I thought about stereotypes and how fundamentalism, regardless of faith, reinforces a belief of superiority of one’s way of life over another's. In any faith or religion, this can be dangerous.”

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Essential Question(s):
1. What is the origin and foundation of the major religions in the Middle East?
2. How are these three major religions similar and different from each other?

Procedure:
Step 1: Prior Knowledge: Islam, Christianity & Judaism (25-30 minutes)
Either on a handout or on the board, create three Venn Diagrams, each with a small circle in the middle with the name of each of the three religions we will explore in this Learning Activity. Then create a wider circle (leaving room for yet an even wider circle around that). In the first inner circle, lead a class discussion, recording prior knowledge the students know or feel they know about each of the three religions. Allow responses to drive a discussion and narrow responses as to recording (either by you or a selected student) concisely. A similar activity before this step (previous class or evening’s homework) can be the Unit Resource, Previewing the Reflection.

Step 2: Expanding the Venn Diagram through the One World Reflection (25-30 minutes)
Using a read aloud, individual reading, or small group reading format that is most appropriate for your class, have the class read the One World Reflection, Exploring Religion in Israel. Check for understanding with questions that align with the reading or by using the Unit Resource, Reviewing the Reflection. Then, using the outside circle of the Venn Diagram, repeat what students learned about each of these religions from the reading.

Step 3: Religion Log: Comparing the Three Religions in Israel (30 minutes)
Introduce the Religion Log. Have students (possibly in groups) answer any questions that can be answered from the Venn Diagram of the One World Reflection reading. Review as a class. Then identify, or as a class brainstorm, what resources students should (and should not) use to gather the rest of the information on the Religion Log.

Step 4: Religious Similarities and Differences Paper (1-2 class periods)
Using the Venn Diagram and Religion Log, students are to write a short paper aligned with your writing practices in the class. We suggest a paper with multiple paragraphs that outline the following points addressed in both class activities:
1. Identify the three major religions in the Middle East that were identified in the One World Reflection. Where were they founded and how long have they been around?
2. Identify and explain one religious holiday and the holiday’s significance to the religion.
3. Share examples of how the three religions are similar and different from each other.

Students Demonstrate Understanding By:
• Participation in the Venn Diagram activity
• Completion of the Religion Log
• Completion of assigned Unit Resources

Global Extension Activities
A multitude of extension activities exist for this Learning Activity. Here are a few:
• Engage in an in-depth study of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Address the historical issues that have contributed to the conflict over the past 100 years.
• Create a time line of major events that have taken place over the last 100 years.

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