



LESSON PLAN

GRADES: 7 - 12

The Mayor Lesson Plan:

A Lesson on Palestinian Culture & Resistance



OVERVIEW

“Make space for joy until we get freedom and independence.” Mayor Musa tells the crowd gathered in the city of Ramallah to watch the lighting of the Christmas tree. These words stand out amidst the backdrop of resistance and violence as Palestinians from Ramallah

push back against the occupation of their land and the annexation of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Thus the crux of David Osit's film highlights and decimates a variety of juxtapositions created by Western media. Palestinians are shown as multifaceted full beings within a modern city. Yet, the occupation still looms large and soon enough, though we think we're watching a film about how difficult it is to be a civil servant, what we get is so much more. The film maker beautifully captures how hard it is for Mayor Musa to run a city while under occupation. More importantly, the viewer comes to understand that though Palestinians must and do resist, there's also a place for joy and hope. And perhaps, it's actually that joy and hope that keeps them going another day. This lesson will help students develop an understanding of the history of Palestine, its culture, and religions through critical analysis of the occupation from the view of the Mayor of Ramallah and its people.

In these series of lessons, students learn new vocabulary terms relating to Israeli occupation of Palestine. They're asked to build upon prior knowledge of the occupation of Palestine utilizing a K-W-L chart. In addition, they will engage in various methods of learning like Venn Diagrams as they compare and contrast Christmas lighting events in Palestine and the U.S. as well as Palestinian and Black Lives Matter protests. Throughout the lessons, there is robust space for student voice as they grapple with in-text and higher order thinking questions. Students will also participate in a debate around the issue of resistance and what it looks like. Learning will be tracked with the use of pre and post knowledge checks utilizing google forms. The lessons can be easily modified and adapted depending on your student needs. However, the use of multimodal activities within these lessons addresses some of the learning challenges that some students may face. Students should walk away from this lesson with a more nuanced view of the occupation of Palestine while building analysis, comprehension, and debate skills.

A Note from Curriculum Creator, Keziah Ridgeway

I would describe myself as an Abolitionist Educator. This term was coined by Dr. Bettina Love in the book "We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom". An abolitionist educator teaches from a decolonized lens while providing students with multiple ways to access learning. An abolitionist educator also doesn't shy away from topics that many people are afraid to touch just because it's a

sensitive matter. I believe that learning history is supposed to make us all uncomfortable. It's in that discomfort that we find new ways to move forward, find solutions and heal. With this outlook, I felt compelled to create this lesson for the documentary as a way to help teachers provide a different view of the occupation of Palestine. Many times, Palestinians are viewed as either victims or extremists and I wanted this lesson, like the film itself, to spotlight their multifaceted identity and humanity. This film will touch on several issues around resistance, protest, local governance and the Palestinian identity.

A Note to Teachers

Teaching about Palestine from a Palestinian lens can be a very controversial thing to do in many schools. However, all students should have the opportunity to see themselves in their classrooms and have their humanity recognized. The vocabulary utilized within this lesson was chosen for a specific reason but many non-Palestinians may take issue with it. Teachers should utilize their discretion when deciding if these lessons are suitable for their classroom. It might also be a great idea to share the lessons with administrators beforehand.

Subject Areas

- Civics
- World History
- Ethnic Studies
- IB Anthropology
- Modern World Affairs
- Human Geography
- Social Studies
- Civics and Government
- Ethnic Studies

Grade Levels: 7 - 12

Objectives:

In this lesson, students will:

- Acquire knowledge of new vocabulary before and after viewing the documentary, "Mayor".
- Examine and identify the religious and ethnic/racial makeup of Palestinians.
- Examine and discuss methods of resistance in BLM protests and protests in Palestine.
- Assess and evaluate the events that lead to Palestinians protesting and defending their city from Israeli soldiers.
- Respond to higher order thinking questions.
- Exhibit and hone active listening skills.
- Exhibit and hone debate/public speaking skills.

Materials

- Film Clips
- [Padlet](#)
- [Google Slides Presentation](#)
- Google Docs
- Google Forms
- [K-W-L Document](#)
- [Venn Diagram](#)
- [Pre-knowledge Check](#)
- [Post-knowledge Check](#)
- 15 Minute Debate Protocol

Time Needed

Five 50-minute class periods.

FILM CLIPS

Clip 1: Introduction to Ramallah (length: 5:39 min)

The clip begins at 00:09 seconds from the start of the film with text on screen that reads, “The Palestinian Territories of the West Bank and Jerusalem”, and ends at 5:48 with the camera on a large Christmas tree in Ramallah.

We are introduced to the Palestinian Territories of the West Bank and Jerusalem which has been occupied by Israel since 1967. It provides some historical background of the area before introducing us to the city of Ramallah. One of the earlier scenes of this clip includes a shot of Christmas lights. We then meet the Mayor of Ramallah, Musa Hadid as he heads to Ramallah City Hall. We get our first glimpse of government conversations as they discuss city branding. In addition, towards the end, there's a montage of scenes that clearly indicate it's time for Christmas. The vintage old hollywood music in the background to many Americans serves as a stark contrast to the arabic language written on various buildings and many women walking about in khimar, the headscarf worn by Muslim women.

Clip 2: Christmas and Resistance in Ramallah (length: 4:29 min)

The clip begins at 12:27 minutes from the start of the film with a shot of shadows cast upon a building with specks of light and ends at 16:56 with the camera on three Palestinian women in the crowd right after the words, “Jerusalem is Palestinian” disappears from the screen..

There are Santas climbing down the sides of buildings at a holiday ceremony. We also see a traditional Palestinian dance called Dabke happening to the beat of techno Christmas music. There is a big Christmas tree that is then lit followed by lots of fireworks. In the speech that follows, the mayor tells the crowd to “make space for joy”. We also learn about Trump's decision to back Israel's move to make Jerusalem its capital from a priest that is sitting with him. The priest also tells Mayor Musa that the Jerusalem decision will be announced at 6pm. On the radio we hear that Trump moving the US embassy to Jerusalem is a flagrant violation of international law and treaties. We later see Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas give a speech about Trump's plan. Palestinians gather to protest this decision and we hear them reciting protest chants.

Clip 3: Celine Dion, A Fountain, and Protest (length: 2:02 min)

The clip begins at 1:01:20 minutes with the Mayor gazing upon the fountain as Celine Dion plays in the background and ends at 1:03:22 with protestors running.

Mayor Musa is seen taking in the choreographed colored fountain as Celine Dion's "My Heart Will Go On" plays. We later see IDF troops going into businesses and homes demanding to see camera footage. Protestors are then seen running after hearing loud bangs, presumably some sort of weapon being shot by Israeli soldiers.

Clip 4: Teargas and Retreat (length: 3:05 min)

The clip begins at 1:08:07 minutes with the words, "they're arresting someone" in text on the screen and ends at 1:11:12 with the Mayor staring out of City Hall's doors.

It appears that Israeli soldiers may have arrested a mute person that can't understand what's going on. The press is seen taking pictures and filming what Israeli soldiers are doing. As the crowd approaches they begin to shoot tear gas. Members of the press seek shelter inside City Hall and find it hard to breathe. Medics are brought in to provide treatment. Palestinians defend their city using mainly rocks and force Israeli soldiers to flee.

Clip 5: Fountain of Joy (length: 1:40 min)

The clip begins at 1:19:18 minutes with a crowd staring at an art installation and ends at 1:21:00 with a choreographed fountain set to Oprah music playing.

Despite the protests and damage done to the area in front of City Hall, the fountain show goes on as planned. The crowd of Palestinians look on as the fountain moves through its choreography set to opera music. This final shot highlights the resilience of the Palestinian people and harkens back to the lighting of the Christmas tree celebration when the speaker at the end told the crowd to make space for joy.

ACTIVITIES

Introductory Activities

Before any teachers begin a unit, they should ascertain students' prior knowledge and vocabulary proficiency:

Pre-Knowledge Check

Step 1: Students should complete a [pre-knowledge check](#).

K-W-L Chart

As students are filling out their K-W-L (an example you can use is linked in the “Materials” section), teachers can share these questions to help them begin writing: What do you know about Israel and Palestine. What words come to mind when you think of Palestine/Israel?

Step 1: **What I Know** column with anything you know about Palestine and Israel with sentences and/or words.

Step 2: Then fill in the **What I Want to Know** Column.

Vocabulary Analysis

City Branding, Occupation, Colonization, Resistance, Dabke, Nelson Mandela, Apartheid, Black Lives Matter, Protests Chants

Step 1: Have students in groups try to determine the definition of each word on a [padlet](#) (please make a copy).

Step 2: Once each group is done, the class will vote on the group definition they like the best by clicking on the “like” button.

Learning Activities

Reading Comprehension

Step 1: Do Now - “All Palestinians are Arab and Muslim.” Is this statement true or false? Explain your answer.

Step 2: Teachers, spend a few minutes asking students to share their answers and discuss student responses.

Step 3: Ask them where did/do they learn about Palestinians.

Step 4: Create a google slide presentation with a picture of a Black/Afro Palestinian and two other people who *could* be Palestinian. Have students choose who they believe is actually Palestinian.

Step 5: Create a google slide presentation with three photos of Palestinians and ask students to guess if they're Palestinian and guess their religion.

Step 6: Watch Clip 1 of "Mayor"

Step 7: Students will read two articles about the demographics of Palestine by religion and race/ethnicity. Students should answer the following questions while reading:

[Article 1](#)

- ☐ What are the main religions practiced in Palestine?
- ☐ What is the Palestinian population worldwide?
- ☐ Many descendants of refugees who fled Palestine in 1948 are prohibited from coming back. Why might the Israeli government not want those Palestinians to return?

[Article 2](#)

- ☐ What is the population of Afro-Palestinians?
- ☐ What challenges Afro-Palestinians face?

Step 8: Exit Ticket - What are some new things you learned today about Palestinians? Why do you think a lot of what you learned today was new to you? What role does the media play in shaping your perception of Arabs and Palestinians?

Venn Diagram, Discussions, Seven Word Summary

Introduce students to the Venn Diagram and briefly tell them how to use it. Tell them to jot down any similarities and differences from the videos.

Step 1: Do Now: What religious holidays do you celebrate? What do you do during the celebration? Teachers', spend a few minutes asking students to share their answers and discuss student responses.

Step 2: Have students fill in the [Venn Diagram Chart 1](#).

Step 3: Watch Clip 2 of “Mayor”. Pause it at 14:03.

Step 4: Find a short clip of a Rockefeller Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony and show it to students (try to find one that highlights the music and some aspects of the tree lighting).

Step 5: Have students utilize the Venn Diagram to write down the similarities and differences of the two events.

Step 6: Classroom Discussion Questions - Share out some similarities and differences you noticed while watching the clips of Christmas tree lighting ceremonies in Ramallah and New York City. Did anything surprise you about the Palestinian tree lighting ceremony?

Step 7: Start clip at (14:03). [Venn Diagram Chart 2](#).

Step 8: Watch a series of BLM Protest Clips and continue to fill in the second Venn Diagram chart:

- ☐ For clip 1, find a clip from John Boyega’s BLM Protest Speech.
- ☐ For clip 2, find a clip of protestors chanting Black Lives Matter.
- ☐ For clip 3, find a clip of police firing tear gas, rubber bullets at protestors.

Step 9: Discussion Questions - What is going on in these clips? What are the similarities and differences with “Mayor” clips we saw earlier? Give students time to formulate a response to each question.

Step 10: Exit Ticket - In seven words, summarize what you’ve learned today. On your way out the door, drop your exit tickets in the “exit ticket” box.

Venn Diagram Completion

Step 1: Do Now - What do you know about Jerusalem? Teachers, spend a few minutes asking students to share their answers and discuss student responses.

Step 2: Share some information regarding some background on Jerusalem in the form of a powerpoint or google slide or notes on the board. See slides 33 & 34 of google slide powerpoint.

Step 3: Complete filling out of Venn Diagram 2 while watching Clip 3 and Clip 4 from "Mayor".

Step 4: Have students share any new similarities or differences from Venn Diagram 2?

Fifteen Minute Debate

Step 1: Share with the class the debate topic beforehand and ask for two volunteers to participate.

Step 2: Present debate protocol before previous class ends and also post it on google classroom the night before so that the two student participants will be familiar with the format. Let the rest of the class know that their job is to pay attention because they will need to choose who has the best arguments at the end of the debate. Tell students to take notes in their notebooks.

Step 3: Debate Protocol -

- ☐ **First Round** - Each speaker has two minutes to introduce the topic and state their position.
- ☐ **Second Round** - Each speaker has two minutes to explain their position with evidence and respond to any claims the opposing side has brought up.
- ☐ **Third Round** - Each speaker has two minutes to close out.

Step 3: Exit Ticket - Who do you think won the debate? Write down their names on a piece of paper and hand in before leaving.

Wrap Up Discussion and Exit Ticket

Step 1: Do Now - Watch Clip 5 Fountain of Joy

Step 2: After watching the clip, have students answer the accompanying question to the following quote by Mayor Musa: **“Make space for joy until we get freedom and independence.”**

How does the final clip relate to the quote from Mayor Musa at the beginning of the movie? Teachers, spend a few minutes asking students to share their answers and discuss student responses.

Step 3: The entire class will engage with the following discussion questions many adapted from the Media Literacy Questions for Analyzing POV Films:

- ☐ What did you think of yesterday's debate?
- ☐ Is Mayor Musa serving as a politician an act of resistance? Why? Why not?
- ☐ Who do you think was the target audience for this film?
- ☐ When was this film made? Since then, has anything occurred that is relevant to the claims or focus of the film?
- ☐ Why might Palestinians have a statue of Nelson Mandela in the city of Ramallah?
- ☐ How might others see this film in a way that differs from the way you see it?
- ☐ What have you learned from this film? Why might this film matter to you?

Step 4: Have students complete the What I Learned column of the K-W-L Chart and turn it in.

Step 5: Have students complete the [Post Knowledge Check](#).

RESOURCES

[Media Literacy Questions for Analyzing POV Films](#)

- This list of questions provides a useful starting point for leading rich discussions that challenge students to think critically about documentaries.

[More than a century on: The Balfour Declaration explained](#)

- This explains the controversial 1917 Balfour Declaration which established a homeland for Jewish people in Palestine, despite only constituting at the time, 10%

of the total population.

[The controversial US Jerusalem embassy opening, explained](#)

- This article explains the Jerusalem controversy that occurred in 2018, the same year that the film Mayor was being filmed.

[Out of Place by Edward Said](#)

- A book in which Said struggles to come to terms with the dissonance of being an American citizen, a Christian and a Palestinian, and, ultimately, an outsider.

[The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine by Ilan Pappé](#)

- Ilan Pappé's groundbreaking book revisits the formation of the State of Israel. Between 1947 and 1949, over 400 Palestinian villages were deliberately destroyed, civilians were massacred and around a million men, women, and children were expelled from their homes at gunpoint.

[Mornings in Jenin by Susan Abulhawa](#)

- Mornings in Jenin is a multi-generational story about a Palestinian family. Forcibly removed from the olive-farming village of Ein Hod by the newly formed state of Israel in 1948, the Abulhejos are displaced to live in canvas tents in the Jenin refugee camp.

[BDS Movement](#)

- Utilizing the same tactics as activists who successfully helped to end South African Apartheid, Palestinians and allies provide education around what Israeli companies to avoid in the hope that this economic pressure will bring about the end of occupation.

[Playgrounds For Palestine](#)

- Playgrounds for Palestine is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization registered in Pennsylvania, USA. It was established in 2001 by Susan Abulhawa as a measure to uphold the Right to Play, enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Standards

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.

W.9-10.2d Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.

W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization and analysis of content.

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.

SL.11-12.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

SL.11-12.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis and tone used.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Keziah Ridgeway is a Philadelphia area educator, activist, wife, and mother. She has a Bachelor's degree from Temple University and a Master's of Education from Saint Joseph's University. Currently, she teaches African American History as well as Social & Cultural Anthropology at Northeast High and was a 2020 recipient of the prestigious Lindback Teacher Award in Philadelphia, PA.

