
History – Enquiry 2: “Out of the blue”: When did 9/11 begin?

Arab lands role play

Understanding Arab hopes for an Arab nation

You could use this activity with pages 4–5 of the booklet **What caused 9/11?** The role play does not involve any students needing to learn lines: they simply respond to the narrative that is provided by the teacher (see overleaf). This could involve miming reactions if preferred.

At the end of each stage in the role play, the students representing an Arab region must discuss what has just been explained in the narrative. They must decide how happy or how angry they feel about their situation. Once they have decided, one of them must place a marker on a “washing line” that has these gradations:

1 – Very happy 2 – Happy 3 – OK 4 – Angry 5 – Very angry

While the Arab characters are deciding where they will put the marker, the rest of the class must also decide where they expect them to put it. The teacher can then lead a discussion with all concerned to ask e.g.

- “Is that a surprise?” “Why?” “Why not?”
- “What would the reasons be for feeling that way?”
(Ask them to refer to specific details from the narrative here.)
- “Could they have reacted differently?” “How?”

Props required

- One washing line (or a line drawn on the board) with gradations as shown opposite (top)
- One marker card to be hung/fastened to the line – it should look like this one shown opposite (bottom)
- Six chairs
- Eleven tabards (these can be made with sugar paper, and folded in half with a hole cut in the centre to allow the tabard to be put over the students’ heads). Each tabard must be clearly labelled as follows:
 - Arabs in Palestine
 - Arabs in Lebanon



**This is how
the Arabs are
feeling**



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- Arabs in Syria
- Arabs in Jordan
- Arabs in Arabia
- Arabs in Iraq
- Ottoman Turks
- Britain
- France
- USA
- Jewish Zionists
- Five sashes (these can also be made out of sugar paper and need to be large enough to place over students’ heads). Three sashes should be labelled “British Mandate” and two should be labelled “French Mandate”.

The sequence of the role play**Introduction**

Explain that you are going to help the students to understand the changing feelings of Arab people at different times in history and that this may help them understand the feelings of some Arab people today, especially towards Western powers such as Britain and the USA. Explain that you need help from some students, but that everyone will need to think as the activity unfolds.

Select 11 students and invite them to the front. Bring six chairs to the front as well. Arrange the chairs so that they face the class in a horseshoe shape, but so that the students who sit on them will be able to talk as a group.

Explain to the class that these six chairs represent six important regions of the Middle East (you may wish to refer to the map on page 4 of the booklet or a modern map of the Middle East). Once the chairs are in place, use the “script” below to guide your narrative.



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Step	Narrative – what the teacher tells the class	Activity – what students do at key points
1	<p>These are six regions of the Middle East. We are using fairly modern names for them. They are: Iraq, Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine.</p> <p>We are going to trace the way the people in these lands have felt at different times in the past. At each stage, one student (representing one of these lands) will be asked to put this marker on this line to represent their mood. Everyone else in the class will have to try to work out where they think the marker should go as well.</p> <p>Listen carefully as I tell the story of what has happened to these Arab people over the years.</p>	<p>As you say each name, hand the correct tabard to a student and ask them to sit on one of the chairs.</p> <p>Show the “washing line” and marker – and how it will work.</p>
2	<p>About 1,200 years ago, in the year 800 AD, the Arab people in these lands were probably living in the most advanced and impressive civilisation in the world, with amazing achievements in science and technology. They were all Muslims and they lived as one people. They were generally well off, many were quite educated and they lived peacefully alongside each other. Their leaders were based in Baghdad in Iraq, but the rulers for each region kept good order based on the Muslim religion and Islamic laws. In fact, this great Muslim empire spread well beyond these six regions all through north Africa and into Spain.</p> <p>Now talk for about a minute or two to decide where on the line to place the marker; be ready to give reasons why it should go there. The rest of the class will also think where it should go and they and I may ask you questions about why you put it where you did.</p>	<p>Students might be asked to react to what is being said through mime and facial expressions if you prefer. (It may help if you break the narrative into small sections to allow them to react to each part.)</p> <p>After a minute or two, one of the students representing an Arab region must put the marker on the line where the group has decided it must go and be prepared to answer questions. Other “Arab regions” can support him/her with the answers.</p>
3	<p>Between about 1000 AD and 1400 AD your great Muslim empire lost its way a bit. Each region started to follow its own ways. You all still followed Islam and shared many customs and generally got on fairly well, but the greatest days of the Arab empire were behind you.</p>	<p>“Arab regions” might mime appropriate reactions if you prefer.</p>



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	<p>By 1600 AD, a new group of Muslims had moved into the region just to the north of you. These people were called “Turks” and we now call the land they moved into “Turkey”. The most powerful of the Turkish families was the Ottomans and by 1700 AD the Ottomans had taken over all your lands and they had become your rulers.</p> <p>You never really liked being ruled by these Turks, but they were Muslims and they certainly kept order well and kept trade going so you just got on with your lives much as before.</p> <p>Time for discussion about where the marker should go on the line now.</p>	<p>Give a student the tabard saying “Ottoman Turks” and ask him/her to stand behind the horseshoe of chairs, dominating the six “Arab regions”.</p> <p>Student representing a different Arab region places the marker at the agreed place on the line. Questions and answers can follow.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>By the start of the 20th century some Arabs in these regions were keen to get rid of their Turkish ruler; they wanted to run their own affairs.</p> <p>They were also pretty fed up with Western powers such as Britain and France, who had started interfering and trying to tell them what to do. The Arabs wondered if Britain and France might even try to take over their lands – as they had done in Africa and India.</p> <p>Then in 1914 came big change: There was an outbreak of war in Europe. The Ottoman Turks were friendly with Germany but this meant that they became enemies of Britain and France (and the USA when they joined the war in 1917).</p> <p>Britain tried to attack Turkey by sea but had no success, so it tried to attack them in their Arab lands. Britain knew that many Arabs did not like being ruled by the Turks. An important British general made a deal with the Arabs – especially the ones from the region we’ve called Arabia. The deal was that if the Arabs would rise up in a revolt against the Turks and fight against them with the British army, the British would set up a great new Arab kingdom after the war was won. The British said that this would be like going back to the days of the great Arab empire.</p> <p>Some Arabs were unsure about the British deal but in the end they went ahead and fought with them against the Turks. In 1918 the war ended and the Turks were beaten. The Arabs could look forward to getting their own nation once again.</p> <p>Time for discussion about where the marker should go on the line now.</p>	<p>Give tabards to students to represent Britain and France. These students might mime appropriate actions, e.g. leaning forward into the circle, offering unwanted advice.</p> <p>Students representing Britain and the Ottomans might mime appropriate reactions... but should not be allowed to mime fighting. It distracts and can get out of hand. Shaking fists at a distance would do!</p> <p>“Britain” could enter the “countries” in the Middle East and mime having a quiet talk with Arabia.</p> <p>“Arab regions” could stand up against the “Ottomans” with “Britain”. (No fighting!)</p> <p>Student representing a different Arab region places the marker at the agreed place on the line. Questions and answers can follow.</p>



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<p>5</p>	<p>There was a big peace conference in Paris in 1919 to decide what should happen to the defeated powers such as the Ottoman Turks, and what should happen to their lands. The three most powerful nations at the conference were Britain, France and the USA – which was by now the greatest power in the world. Together they were known as the “Big Three”.</p> <p>The Arabs were only allowed to send one leader (from Arabia) to the peace conference and he was more or less ignored by the Big Three. It took a long time to make decisions, but by 1920 it became clear what was going to happen in the Middle East.</p> <p>They announced some good news: the Ottoman Turks no longer had any say over Arab nations.</p> <p>But there was also bad news: there was NOT going to be a single Arab kingdom, despite what Britain had promised in the war.</p> <p>There was some other good news though: each of the six Arab regions in the Middle East was to be given the right to become a separate Arab kingdom.</p> <p>But this was followed by some more bad news: these six kingdoms would not be free to rule themselves at first, as the Big Three thought they needed to be taught how to do it. Britain and France were to be put in charge of them for a period of ten to 20 years or so. The special name for these “looked-after kingdoms” was mandates.</p> <p>France would watch over the mandates of Lebanon and Syria; Britain looked after the mandates of Iraq, Jordan and Palestine. Arabia was allowed to run its own affairs.</p> <p>Time for discussion about where the marker should go on the line now.</p>	<p>Give the “USA” tabard to a student, who who must stand alongside “Britain” and “France”. (You could set up a different part of the room with a table and chairs if you wish – as the Paris Peace Conference.)</p> <p>Student representing Turkey can be “banished” and made to sit on the floor.</p> <p>“Arab regions” can pull appropriate faces at each piece of news.</p> <p>Students representing Britain and France place sashes over the relevant mandates and stand behind their chairs.</p> <p>A student representing a different Arab region places the marker at the agreed place on the line.</p> <p>Questions and answers can follow.</p>
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<p>6</p>	<p>Just one more thing... it involves another group of people. These were the “Zionist” Jews.</p> <p>For well over a thousand years, the Jews had been living in all parts of the world since being forced out of their original homeland by the Roman Empire. In the 1890s a new Jewish movement called the “Zionists” had organised Jewish immigration back to Palestine to live there once again. (The name “Zionist” comes from “Zion” – an old Bible name for the Jewish homeland.)</p> <p>In 1917, while the First World War had still been raging, some of these Zionist Jews met a British leader called Lord Balfour. Balfour made a promise that Britain would help the Zionists to set up a new homeland in Palestine after the war. He may have done this as a way of getting wealthy Jews in the USA to support the war against Germany and to get the USA to join the war on Britain’s side.</p> <p>Of course, Palestine did not belong to Britain. It was not even Britain’s mandate in 1917 when Britain offered its support. Britain did insist that nothing must make life harder for the Palestinians if Jews moved to Palestine, but it was hard to know how that could work. Sure enough, after the war ended, Britain and the USA encouraged thousands of Jews to move into Palestine and to occupy land there. The Palestinians had been able to cope with Jewish immigration before now, but the numbers rose quite sharply after the First World War ended.</p> <p>Time for discussion about where the marker should go on the line now.</p>	<p>Teacher points out the student with the “Jewish Zionists” tabard – who should have been asked to sit quietly at a distant corner of the classroom while all the other action has been happening.</p> <p>The student representing Jewish Zionists moves to talk with “Britain”. He or she might mime appropriate expressions/reactions to the Balfour Declaration.</p> <p>At this point – and this is why the use of chairs is so important – the student representing Jewish Zionists must move quietly and peacefully into the Middle East region of six chairs and gently sit down on the chair occupied by the “Palestinian Arabs”. (NB Not on the student’s lap, just on the same chair seat – the effect is to show discomfort and difficulty – not to have a squabble!)</p> <p>A student representing a different Arab region places the marker at the agreed place on the line. Questions and answers can follow.</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>Thank students and allow them to remove their tabards and to return to their normal places. You could round off the lesson by asking students to discuss the role play to summarise why many Arabs would be at least suspicious of Western powers today, in the light of what happened about 100 years ago. It will be important to put across the balanced view, e.g. that Britain felt it had to be sure of winning the war and did not imagine so many Jews would move to Palestine. Point out that the Arab states did have greater independence eventually, even though the West has remained closely involved in their affairs.</p>	