

Middle Eastern Women: Their Lives in Harems

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Overview

It is difficult to find information about Middle Eastern women in history because men wrote down most of what is written in the history books. Without this information and understanding, the western world places general stereotypes on women who come from a different social class, occupation and point of view. As educators, our job is to make sure that we present and make available information on all social classes and from multiple points of view for our students.

This unit will explore the lives of women who lived in harems in the Middle East. It will also discuss the misconceptions commonly held by westerners in regards to harems. There are several images throughout the unit that depict harems as well.

Rationale

Seventh grade students in the Philadelphia School District take a social studies course called Eastern Hemisphere. Students study the five continents in the eastern hemisphere and there is only so much time allotted to study this entire time period and our textbooks rarely mention or discuss women's views, struggles or lives. This unit will allow for an exploration of women who lived in harems during the Ottoman Empire; it will discuss their lives within the palace.

Still, the most difficult aspect of understanding harems may stem from the fact that everyone has a different view of harems. Some authors give the impression that "entering the harem is a nightmare: dark, evil, serpentine." In another place we see "bright colors, the loud chirp of birds and the laughter of women echoing off tile." Which is it (Chamberlin, p. 6)? And so, this is the problem: the first author views the harems as the antagonist to his goals while the other is the viewpoint of a woman "who has discovered the harem as the passage to her dreams of power" (Chamberlin, p. 6).

Chamberlin goes on to state that the women who have been in seclusion have done so to fight corruption and exploitation of themselves and those of their children in the

patriarchal system (p. 7). Chamberlin states that the issue of veiling is not a religious institution, but rather it is pre-Islamic, polytheistic and goddess centered (p. 7). This unit will seek to uncover the truths as to what went on in harems. It will also provide a discussion on the misconceptions of harems and veiling.

Background

Historical Context

The word *Harem* is derived from the Arabic *haram*, and it means “unlawful,” “protected,” or “forbidden” (Croutier, p. 17). In its secular use, “*harem* refers to the separate, protected part of a household where women, children, and servants live in maximum seclusion and privacy” or “a place where women are separated and cloistered” (p. 17). A harem is “a place in a noble and rich house, guarded by eunuch slaves” (p. 17). The Turkish proverb stated: “Our private lives must be walled” (p. 41). Learning information about the harems is difficult because of this strict code of privacy, but there were literate women in the harems and they did write about their lives.

Information on Harems

Harems began before the Ottoman Empire – Muhammad segregated his wives from non-related men. But before the time of Muhammed, harems grew in number. One reason for this is that some Arab tribes, in order to stop the increase of the numbers of females, used to bury alive some of their “surplus girls” but once the religion of Islam spread, this inhumane custom stopped (Hadid, p. 44). Still there was a surplus of women due to many men dying in battles, and prostitution was also a problem and a great crime (p. 44). So, in order to find a purpose for the “surplus women,” polygamy was allowed and a man could marry more than one wife, depending on his health, wealth and treatment of women (p. 45).

Turkish tribes, including Ottomans, practice polygamy. Sultan Mehmed II, who took over Constantinople in 1453 and renamed it Istanbul, had the women placed in a separate place of the palace. Women had tasks to do here and lived in the remotest part of the palace. Mehmed adopted the Byzantine customs and kept the women separate, while keeping a household of slaves. The Islamic practice of polygamy, combined neatly with these Byzantine customs, resulted in the harem (Croutier, p. 24).

The Ottoman sultans took wives who were daughters of Anatolian governors and the Byzantine royal family (Croutier, p. 26). The women who were in the harems came from all over Asia, Africa and even Europe. Ten years after the conquest of Constantinople, Mehmed built the Topkapi Palace and this was known as the Grand Seraglio or the Sublime Porte (p. 27). The harem first moved to the Seraglio in 1541 and lasted until 1909. For four centuries, women lived here in almost four hundred rooms. The number of women who lived in the harem fluctuated from as many as over two thousand to a few hundred (p. 28-29).

The harem was a representation of the wealth of the Ottoman Empire; it cost a lot to keep a harem running. The women lived in rivalry and though the beauty of the women who lived behind the harem walls was known, what happened there still remains a mystery.

Foreign ambassadors and artists reported accounts of peddlers or servant women who entered the harems, but due to wishful exoticism the reality of what went on in harems remains a mystery (Croutier, p. 29).

We do know how beautiful the palaces were. The poem “The Palace of Fortune,” written in 1772 by Sir William Jones depicts the wealth of a palace (Croutier, p. 27):

*In mazy curls the flowing jasper wav'd
O'er its smooth bed with polish'd agate pav'd;
And on a rock of ice, by magick rais'd
High in the midst a gorgeous palace blaz'd.*

Young girls, who were non-Moslems, were brought to live as concubines at a young age to the harems. They were sold as slaves by their impoverished parents on the promises of a life of luxury (Croutier, p. 30). The slave girls had to be examined before they were allowed to enter the Seraglio harem. If they were found to be satisfactory they were given a Persian name, converted to Islam and began training on palace etiquette and Islamic culture. The young slaves were now called an *odalisque* which means “woman of the room,” giving them servant status. All *odalisques* learned skills in writing, religion, sewing, singing, playing the harp and more. The twelve most attractive would work directly with the sultan; they were called *gedekli*. They would dress, bath and feed the sultan and also entertain him. (See picture under image section). If the sultan was pleased with them, he kept them for himself or would give them as gifts (Croutier, p. 32-33).

An *odalisque* could earn a high ranking and become an *ikbal* (or favorite) and she would be given a private apartment, carriage and slaves. If she gave birth to the sultan's child, the *ikbal* would be elevated to the position of a *haseki sultana* (Croutier, p. 33). If the child was a boy, and eventually became the sultan, the mother would become the ruler of the harem.

But having a child, especially one who would become an heir, only meant anxiety and stress for the mother, not to mention that it would lead to jealousy and the constant fear of threats against the life of the mother and child (Croutier, p. 35). A prince would stay with the mother in the harem until he turned twelve. Also, those who had the sultan's children were moved into better housing, and this led to jealousy and resentment. The following is a letter regarding jealousy, seniority and housing issues that the women in the harems faced (Croutier, p. 36).

Dearest Kalfa,

I have heard from someone that she will be moving to the apartment which should be mine. No! As the earth is old, so do I want that apartment myself. I cannot bear a younger woman occupying such a spacious place, and if our might master heard my plea he wouldn't object. Please, convey this to the valide sultana with my deepest respects. Why should she move there and I stay where I am? I must

insist on my seniority privileges. If this cannot be changed, I will simply not move to Seraglio, I swear. But if she refuses to, that's a whole other affair. I will die rather than to let her have that beautiful apartment.

Letter from Behice Sultana to the Kalfa (mistress of the house) (1839)

Children in harems had to obey strict rules or face punishment. Boys were favored and were given more free rein than girls (Shaarawi, p. 17). There were tutors available in the harem households, especially for the wealthy class. Girls would begin to wear a veil and cloak when going out of doors around the age of nine or ten. At this point, the girls were no longer permitted to be friends with any boys (p. 18).

Halil Halid recounts memories of the two years he lived in his uncle's harem. His uncle married three Circassian women and kept all of them in one house; the children of the women all typically quarreled with one another and were envious of each other. His uncle was the strict type; the children had to have lessons or say prayers five times a day. If any one of the children missed the prayers, the uncle would whip that particular child (Halid, p. 40-42).

Halil explained that one of his uncle's strictest orders was that all of the sons had to remain on the men's side of the house in the evening to read and write. The boys were not to return to their rooms in the harem until after the evening prayer which takes place at ten o'clock. One night, Halil was pulled to the side by his uncle and told that he was not allowed to return to the harem to sleep. This was because he was entering the stage of manhood. He was told that all of his belongings were removed from his room in the harem and he had to stay in the men's quarters; he was not quite fifteen years old (Halid, p. 43). This was a difficult time for him to deal with this change.

The more wealthy the family was, the more secluded the harem was. As far as power was concerned, the larger the harem, the more influence the women had. Their influence was not confined to their own harem within their own palace. The way that items were exchanged from one section of the house to another was interesting. Items from the men's section of the house into the harem section are passed through a type of turning cupboard so that no one will see the women on the other side. Also, windows are covered so that no man on the street can see anyone inside the harem from the outside (Halid, p. 50).

Entertainment looked differently among the harems. Dancing was confined to private areas and was not regarded as a respectable activity, especially by the older generations. Only the most advanced or wealthy classes learned how to dance. Reading aloud was a favorite past time and many women read religious lessons or hymns to the other ladies for hours (Halid, p. 53).

As for marriage of young women and men, the arrangement is one of business. Older women, known as professional marriage brokers, visit the homes of the available women

and make a tactful proposal to the guardians of the young woman. It is not based on attraction, and a man is never able to court a woman, or even flirt with her. If a young girl is at the age where she can marry, she is not allowed to even meet with another young man. So, a man will not see his bride until the marriage has already been arranged and he sometimes is pleased with her looks and other times hugely disappointed (Halid, p. 62-65).

On the issue of shopping, women-peddlers visited the harems to display and sell their goods. Also, men were sent to the markets and stores, but they sometimes did not buy the correct items. European influence on goods impacted what the women-peddlers sold. With the exception of villagers and the poorest classes, only wealthy women were able to go to the markets and large stores, but for many this was not necessarily an enjoyable experience because they must be veiled and the women were not comfortable speaking with strangers (Halid, p. 72-73). The women did enjoy having the peddlers bring the goods to them in the privacy of their own space (see image in picture section), but Shaarawi shares in her memoirs that she did not like the peddlers. She found many of them charged exorbitant prices and they also would tell gossip about the other families they visited. The lies told by the women peddlers damaged many families (Shaarawi, p. 48).

Women in the harems did not live a long life. The average age of a woman in a harem was seventeen (Croutier, p. 46). There are many stories of brutal murders and poisonings or the women were drowned. Others were strangled. The sultan or even the harem's eunuchs (male slaves) carried out the murders (p. 38). The women may have had affairs or rendezvous with secret lovers and if it was rumored that they were unfaithful, or if spies or the lies of rivals or gossipers betrayed them, they were killed (p. 44).

Misconceptions of Harems

If you ask a westerner what a harem is you most likely will get the explanation that a harem consists of young women lying around pools with oiled bodies—their sole purpose to please the powerful ruler so they can have his child. Most of these views are recorded in art where women are seen lying nude by spas and pools. But, according to Halid's *Diary of a Turk* (1903), women in Turkish harems do not “pass their time lying on sofas or couches, eating sweetmeats and smoking water-pipes all day long” (p. 54). “To lie down on a couch in the presence of others is considered by Turkish women a vulgarity of the most disgraceful kind” (p. 54). Clearly, there are many misconceptions of what a harem is and this section will discuss these misconceptions.

Many western Europeans believe that a harem is a place where numerous wives live in a certain secluded part of the house (Halid, p. 47). Many westerners also believe that every man may marry as many women as he pleases, but this is incorrect. There are many men who would be lucky to marry even one woman and many men would want to get rid of the wife they have (p. 47). Furthermore, there are many requirements for men who take more than one wife and the husbands must honestly fulfill their obligations and duties to each of their wives.

The seclusion of women in Mohammedan countries is a “deeply rooted and religiously observed custom” (Halid, p. 49). Every house must have separate sections—where the ladies reside is called the *harem* and where the men live is called the *selamlık*. Females who live in the harem are not all wives—some may be mothers, sisters, or daughters. It is in this space they can remain unveiled in the presence of certain men who are family—including the master of the house, his sons, his father, his father-in-law and his wife’s brothers (p. 49). A male with no relation to the master cannot enter the harem after he turns thirteen or fourteen years old, if it is possible that the male may marry one of the women who live in the harem (p. 50).

Some believe that wives are slaves of their husbands, but this is inaccurate (Halid, p. 52). Wives do obey their husbands and respect them, which in turn strengthens the affection and respect of the husband for her. Also, women in harems do not stay entirely shut up in doors and are able to visit other harems and receive visitors as well.

Halid does agree with critics of harems who condemn the custom of secluding women because when this is done it means that the women living within will not fully be able to participate with the rest of the country in regards to the level of education they achieve. This in turn leads to the children of women living in the harems not having the same access to education as well (Halid, p. 55).

It is stated by Lelia Ahmed that it was the “women who were doing the forbidding, excluding men from their society, and it was therefore women who developed the model of strict segregation in the first place” (Ahmed, p. 529). Those without direct access to harem life will never agree with what England’s Lady Cravey said after she visited the harem: “I think I never saw a country where women may enjoy so much liberty and free from all reproach, as in Turkey” (Garnett, p. 440).

Chamberlin makes a comparison of the clothing that women wear in harems to the clothing that women in America wear. In America, women wear high heels, or other fashions that they maybe don’t necessarily like to wear, but they do it because it’s accepted in society as what women wear. Women in America view the veil as oppressive, but the women who wear veils do not see it this way (Chamberlin, p. 22).

Voices of Women in Harems

Huda Shaarawi wrote memoirs about her life growing up in a harem. She was a member of Egypt’s wealthy class. She was married, against her will, at the age of thirteen to a much older cousin. Her cousin was already in his forties with a family of his own in Upper Egypt (Shaarawi, p. 18). A year later, she separated from her husband for a period of seven years. For the sake of her brother, who had refused to marry until Huda returned to her husband, Huda resumed married life at the age of twenty-one. Within five years she had a daughter and a son.

Everyone has different experiences regarding marriage; some may be similar to Huda’s and others to Halide. Halide Edib wrote in *House with Misteria* of her domestic trouble within her marriage. Her husband, when they first married was a believer in monogamy,

but decided in 1910, after developing feelings for another woman, that polygamy could be accepted on certain conditions and so he took another wife. Edib wrote that because she was upset about this, she moved out of the home, with her little boys, to be closer to her father for a few months. Nevertheless, when she returned, she learned that her husband took another wife and so Edib wanted a divorce; this was not an easy process. She left the home that was hers for nine years (Edib, p. 253). She writes that perhaps women in Turkey now are better equipped to deal with divorce but at the time this was very difficult for her (p. 254).

Veiling of women and seclusion are two marks of prestige and social status. Contrary to what many believe, it has nothing to do with Islam but rather with economic standing (Shaarawi, p. 8). Furthermore, the honor of a family rested on the purity of the women within that family (p. 8). The negative side was that secluding women from men also affected the relationships of women among different social classes (p. 21). It made it difficult for women to form relationships with women from other social classes because they were secluded from them as well.

Children who lived in harems have interesting stories to tell as well. Shaarawi experienced a lot of turbulence as a child. Not only did she feel a lot of anxiety and suffer from the loss of her father at age five, but also everyone paid more attention to her brother. The reason for this was that he was the only boy in the family and one day when he was older, he would support the family (Shaarawi, p. 36). Her brother, whenever he fell ill, worried everyone in the whole house. The two siblings were very close—they shared the same room, the same lessons and they played together and this connection continued throughout their adulthood. In fact, they were so close throughout life that later on, after his death, she writes in her memoirs: “With his passing, I felt I had lost a link between myself and the world” (p. 110).

Being a female affected Shaarawi—she felt she was not able to achieve the education that she wanted. Being a female “became a barrier” to her and the freedom she wanted to have (Shaarawi, p. 40). This caused her to lose interest in her studies at times, but this was temporary. She had a love for poetry and wrote in her memoirs that it was through observing Sayyid Khadija, a poet who would visit often, that she believed that “women could be the equals of men if not surpass them” (p. 42). Because of her love of learning and her own knowledge as well as the nationalist movement in Egypt, Shaarawi came to a place where she wanted to fight for women’s rights and independence. She decided to devote herself to political activism and the feminist movement in Egypt until her death in 1947.



Huda Shaarawi at age forty-four. This is one of the first photographs of an unveiled Egyptian woman to appear in local newspapers.

Western Europeans have a hard time grasping the concept of the harem and had many misconceptions of them. Grace Ellison writes about her experiences as an

Englishwoman visiting in a Turkish harem. To a western ear, “staying in a Turkish harem sounds alarming, and not a little-yes, let us confess it-improper” (Ellison, p. 2). But what she learned and wrote about is enlightening. It is important to note that when Western women traveled abroad they were treated as honorary men and were given liberties that they necessarily did not have in their home countries. Western women have these liberties because of their privileged class positions and their dominant position in relation to other cultures (Ellison, p. xxiv), but Ellison never treated the women she met or represented them in literature as silent or passive.

Ellison comments that a pen in a harem is seen as an intrusion, and letter writing as a burden—both common courtesies in Western culture (p. 3, 9). Despite the fact that Ellison did not keep into contact, she was able to pick up her friendships five years later right where she left off. This may be because the “veiled Turkish woman is always a source of unending interest” (p. 15). But what Ellison wanted to share was the truth: she believes the poor Turks have been humiliated by the imaginations of those in the West—what she found in the harem where she stayed was a husband who loves his wife and a kind father (p. 15). Ellison asked Halide-Hanoum, one of the best-known Turkish writers, how the English women can help the advancement of Turkish women and she replied, “Ask them to delete for ever that misunderstood word ‘harem’...ask them to try and dispel the nasty atmosphere which a wrong meaning of that word has cast over our lives. Tell them what our existence really is” (p. 17).

So, Ellison set out to do that in her memoirs. She shared that the harem she lived in had her confused several mornings—was she in Europe or was she in Turkey? The furniture and layout was modeled after a European home. Also, Ellison wrote about the kind, generous and hospitable women in Turkey. The hostess serves the guest herself, rather than the slaves and the master pays all the bills of those who are visiting (p. 22). Ellison also writes about her experiences in the baths in Turkey. The way of washing in Turkey was much different than in Europe. The Turkish women only washed in running water and Ellison had a difficult time understanding this—but she knew that cleanliness was next to godliness in the Moslem religion (p. 27).

Ellison even wrote a lot about the Ottoman slave trade because most in the West assume that the slave trade in Turkey was the same one as plantation slavery in America. It is nothing like it though—male slaves worked in the military and women slaves worked in the elite harems. Also, the Islamic system of slavery was not set up to keep slaves enslaved their entire life. The slaves she originally thought had to be unhappy, but she found out the slaves were given the option of leaving the harem four times a year. Rarely did the slaves leave, which had to mean they were happy there, Ellison concluded (p. 37). Still Ellison thought to be a slave was to waste youth, beauty, and womanhood (p. 38). Despite her personal feelings on slavery, she shared that the slaves were treated well though it was something that people in the West had a hard time understanding.

Images of Harems



John Frederick Lewis—*Hhareem Life*, Constantinople, 1857, oil on canvas



John Frederick Lewis—*The Reception*, 1873, oil on panel



Rudolphy Ernst—*Idle Hours in the Harem*, c. 1900, oil on panel



Leon Bakst—*Odalisque*, Costume design for the Diaghilev ballet, 1910, watercolor and gold on paper



Leon Bakst—*The Red Sultana*, 1910, watercolor, gouache, and gold on paper



Frederick Goodall—*A New Light in the Harem*, 1884, oil on canvas



Rudolf Swoboda—*Shopping in the Harem*, c. 1914



Frederick Arthur Bridgeman—*The Harem Fountain*, 1847-1928



The Hall of the Sultan, where the harem women entertained the sultans

Objectives

This unit is intended for students in the 7th grade. As a middle school English and Social Studies teacher, I plan on using this curriculum unit to help students better understand women in the Middle East, specifically those who lived in harems and their view points. We will compare and contrast our information learned about Middle Eastern women with the information learned about women in the other ancient civilizations we study including Greece and Rome.

This unit will allow my students the opportunity to study art, photographs and images of Middle Eastern women who lived in harems. The assignments in this unit can be a part of their English, Writing, Social Studies and Art grades.

The objectives of the unit will include the following:

- To better understand how women in the Middle East lived a life of seclusion in the harems
- To explore and compare and contrast poetry and stories associated with harems and to interpret these pieces of literature using critical thinking skills
- To critically evaluate pieces of literature using a complex vocabulary
- To find themes, genres, and points of view associated with the women who lived within the harems

Strategies

In order to accomplish this unit in the classroom, the teacher must use various strategies. The majority of lessons are designed for cooperative groups within a classroom. The lessons require that students use listening skills, graphic organizers, group discussion skills, critical thinking skills, and creative and analytical writing skills. Each lesson is designed for a 7th grade classroom and a forty-five minute class period. The unit plan can be adapted accordingly and used for grades 5th through 12th.

Classroom Activities

Lesson 1: Introducing the idea of harems

(1 day—45 minutes)

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to explain what harems were, where they were located and what they were used for
2. Students will be able to understand the historical background regarding harems

Materials:

PowerPoint of several different types of images of harems

Historical background information on harems

Maps/Website of where harems were located: <http://maps.thefullwiki.org/Harem>

Introduction:

1. The teacher will begin the lesson by showing images of harems (school appropriate!)
2. The teacher will begin to lead a discussion on what the harems were historically
3. The teacher will also show maps detailing where the harems were located

Activity:

1. Students will brainstorm what they believe the purpose of harems were
2. Students will review the misconceptions of harems and make sure they do not make the same ones
3. Students will write down their reactions/thoughts associated with the images shown by the teacher
4. Students will then choose their own photo from the Internet on harems—what do you think the woman in the photo is thinking? What is she doing? Do you think this represents her or all the women who lived in harems? Why or why not? Write at least 2 paragraphs with the intention to share 1-2 sentences with classmates.

Conclusion:

1. Teacher should summarize the images of harems and students will show their own images they have chosen.
2. Students will also share out their thoughts on whether they agree/disagree with what their classmates saw in the images of the women in the harems

Lesson 2: Reading memoirs/diaries/primary source documents on experiences in the harems (1-2 days—45 minutes each section)

Objectives:

1. Students will expand on introductory information learned yesterday about women in the harems
2. Students will analyze excerpts from diaries/memoirs/primary source documents

Materials:

- Adivar, Halide Edib. *Memoirs of Halidé Edib*, New York: Century, 1926.
- Brookes, Douglas Scott. *The Concubine, the Princess, and the Teacher: Voices from the Ottoman Harem*. Austin: University of Texas, 2008.
- Grace Ellison, Edward Granville Browne, Teresa Heffernan, and Reina Lewis. *An Englishwoman in a Turkish Harem*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2007.
- Garnett, Lucy Mary Jane. *The Women of Turkey and their Folklore*. London: D. Nutt, Two volumes, 1890-1891.
- Halil, Halid. *The Diary of a Turk*. London: A. and C. Black, 1903.
- Melek-Hanum. *Thirty Years in the Harem; or, The Autobiography of Melek-Hanum, Wife of H.H. Kibrizli-Mehemet-Pasha*. New York: Harper, 1872.

- Saz, Leylâ. *The Imperial Harem of the Sultans: Daily Life at the Çırağan Palace during the 19th Century: Memoirs of Leyla (Saz) Hanımefendi*. Beyoğlu, İstanbul: Hil Yayın, 2001.
- Sharāwī, Hudá, and Margot Badran. *Harem Years: the Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist (1879-1924)*. NY: Feminist at the City Univ. of New York, 1987.
- See bibliography for additional resources

Introduction:

1. Teacher should distribute a KWL chart or have students make one in their notebooks—Students should fill out a KWL chart (What do they know, what do they want to know, and at the end of the lesson, what did they learn)
2. Teacher will guide students while filling out what they know and prompt students on ideas of what they want to know.

Activities:

1. Students will work in groups with a piece of text (see above for list of options) - the group will work collectively to find out information about the women’s daily life in the harems, their situations, their roles, their children, etc.
2. Students will rotate groups: each group will work with primary source document to learn more about women in the harems. (See materials list when choosing which sources to use)
3. Teacher should design several questions to go along with each section of material to guide students as they work on the readings
4. Teacher should create a chart for students to fill in listing specific page numbers where students should find information

Chart example:

	Halide Edib	Melek Hanum	Grace Ellison	Huda Shaarawi	Add additional names here
When did this author live in a harem?					
For how long did they live in a harem?					
What was the location/country/city?					
What was the economic situation of this author?					
Add additional questions here					

Conclusion:

1. Students can fill in the last section of the KWL chart—what did they learn about life in the harems and of the women from the diaries?
2. Students will turn in their KWL chart for a grade, but they will need it for a final project.
3. Students should also complete a chart similar to the one above and they will also need that for their final project.

Lesson 3: Images of Harems: Digital Project

(2-3 days—45-60 minutes each)

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to explore and compare and contrast photographs and images associated with harems and to interpret these images using critical thinking skills
2. Students will have to critically evaluate pieces of art and images using a complex vocabulary
3. Students will be able to find themes, genres, and points of view associated with the images of harems

Materials:

Use images throughout the unit.

(See links on references page)

<http://www.orientalist-art.org.uk/harem.html>

Many useful images are on the link above.

Other potential images:

Terrace of the Seraglio, Gérôme, Jean-Léon, 1824–1904

<http://www.christies.com/LotFinder/LotDetailsPrintable.aspx?intObjectID=1399114>

Shopping in the Harem, Swoboda, Rudolf, 1859-1914

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Swoboda-shopping_in_harem_mid19th.jpg

Harem Scene, Blas Olleras y Quintana, 1851-1919

http://maps.thefullwiki.org/Quintana_Olleras

The Harem Fountain, Bridgeman, Frederick Arthur, 1847-1928

<http://frederickbridgman.blogspot.com/>

Introduction:

1. Students will need Internet access or use printed out images of harems.
2. Students will select 2-3 images and write a digital story using iMovie or Photo Booth detailing what they have learned about a woman's life in a

harem.

3. Students will need to include information about the children who lived in the harems and how their life was impacted by living in the harem.

Activity:

1. Students will work in pairs and use iMovie or Photo Booth to create a project on women in the harems.
2. They will add their thoughts on the images of harems as well as put the images to background music.
3. They can use photo booth with a green screen and set a particular image as a background and stand in front of the image and discuss the image

Conclusion:

1. Students will present their digital story to their classmates on harems.
2. Students will give peer feedback to the presenters.
3. Teachers should provide a rubric for project and for students to grade their classmates (see below)

Peer Evaluation Form (Sample form)

My name _____
Date of Presentation _____
Presenter's name _____

Did they speak clearly and loudly enough for you to hear? Y or N

Was their presentation large enough to read? Y or N

Was their presentation neatly designed? Y or N

Colorful? Y or N

Creative? Y or N

Did they include photos? Y or N

Were there many spelling errors/grammar issues? Y or N

Areas for improvement: (if any)

Positive comments: (write at least two)

Overall Grade: _____

A = Advanced work, B = Proficient work, C = Basic work, D = Below Basic work

Standards

The Core Curriculum of the School District of Philadelphia is aligned to Pennsylvania Academic Standards. The standards in this unit will align with many standards including reading, writing and critical thinking as well as social studies and art.

Reading Standards for Literature 6-12 (grade 7 students)

- Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text
- Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.
- Analyze how a drama or poem's form or structure (e.g., soliloquy, sonnet) contributes to its meaning.
- Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.

Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6-12 (grade 7 students)

- Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
- Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).
- Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).
- Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.
- Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

Bibliography

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- Ahmed, Lelia. "Western Ethnocentrism and Perceptions of the Harem." *Feminist Studies* 8(3). (1982): p. 521-34.
- Brookes, Douglas Scott. *The Concubine, the Princess, and the Teacher: Voices from the Ottoman Harem*. Austin: University of Texas, 2008.
- Chamberlin, Ann. *A History of Women's Seclusion in the Middle East: the Veil in the Looking Glass*. New York: Haworth, 2006.
- Croutier, Alev Lytle. *Harem: the World behind the Veil*. New York: Abbeville, 1989.
- Ellison, Grace, Edward Granville Browne, Teresa Heffernan, and Reina Lewis. *An Englishwoman in a Turkish Harem*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2007.
- Garnett, Lucy Mary Jane. *The Women of Turkey and their Folklore*. London: D. Nutt, Two volumes, 1890-1891.
- Halid, Halil. *The Diary of a Turk*. London: A. and C. Black, 1903.
- Sharāwī, Hudá, and Margot Badran. *Harem Years: the Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist (1879-1924)*. New York: Feminist at the City University of New York, 1987.

Additional Resources for Teachers

- Adivar, Halide Edib. *Memoirs of Halidé Edib*, New York: Century, 1926.
- Engineer, Asghar Ali. *Rights of Women in Islam*. New Delhi: Sterling, 2008.
- Melek-Hanum. *Thirty Years in the Harem; Or, The Autobiography of Melek-Hanum, Wife of H.H. Kibrizli-Mehemet-Pasha*. New York: Harper, 1872.
- Montesquieu, Charles De Secondat, Margaret Mauldon, and Andrew Kahn. *Persian Letters*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.
- Peirce, Leslie Penn. *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*. New York: Oxford UP, 2010.
- Saz, Leylâ. *The Imperial Harem of the Sultans: Daily Life at the Çırağan Palace during the 19th Century : Memoirs of Leyla (Saz) Hanımefendi*. Beyoğlu, İstanbul: Hil Yayın, 2001.

Walthall, Anne. *Servants of the Dynasty: Palace Women in World History*. Berkeley: University of California, 2008.

Links for Images of Harems

<http://www.planetware.com/map/istanbul-harem-in-topkapi-sarayi-map-tr-harem.htm>

Map of Topkapi Sarayi

http://www.topofart.com/images/artists/John_Frederick_Lewis/paintings/lewis001.jpg

John Frederick Lewis—*Hhareem Life*, Constantinople, 1857, Oil on canvas

<http://john-frederick-lewis.blogspot.com/>

John Frederick Lewis—*The Reception*, 1873, Oil on panel

http://www.paintinghere.com/painting/Idle_Hours_in_the_Harem_24488.html

Rudolphy Ernst—*Idle Hours in the Harem*, c. 1900, Oil on panel

<http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/leon-bakst/scheherezade-odalisque-1910-1>

Leon Bakst—*Odalisque*, Costume design for the Diaghilev ballet, 1910, Watercolor and gold on paper

http://www.oocities.org/sulawesiprince/russia/art_images/bakst.html

Leon Bakst—*The Red Sultana*, 1910, Watercolor, gouache, and gold on paper

<http://artmight.com/Artists/Frederick-Goodall-1822-1904/Frederick-Goodall-A-New-Light-In-The-Harem-52288p.html>

Frederick Goodall—*A New Light in the Harem*, 1884, Oil on canvas

<http://www.orientalist-art.org.uk/harem.html>

Harem Paintings

<http://www.allaboutturkey.com/harem.htm>

All about the Ottoman Harem

<http://proteus.brown.edu/materialworlds/3620>

Huda Shaarawi image at age 44