

Lesson Plan: Understanding the Yezidi People and Their History

Grade Level: High School / University

Duration: 1 Class Period

Topic: Yezidi Identity, Religion, and Persecution

CCSS-Aligned Social Studies / ELA Lesson Plan

Teacher Name: _____

School / District: _____

Course / Grade Level: High School World History / Global Studies / ELA

Date: _____

Lesson Duration: 1 class period (50–60 minutes)

1. Lesson Title & Overview

Lesson Title:

Understanding the Yezidi People: Identity, Faith, and Historical Resilience

Overview:

Students will explore the origins, beliefs, and cultural identity of the Yezidi people. Through primary and secondary sources, they will analyze historical persecution—including the 2014 ISIS genocide—and examine the ongoing challenges faced by Yezidi diaspora communities today.

Importance:

Understanding the Yezidis highlights the importance of preserving minority histories, combating misinformation, and recognizing resilience in the face of cultural trauma.

2. Essential Questions

Compelling Questions:

- Who are the Yezidis, and what defines their cultural and religious identity?
- How have the Yezidis preserved their beliefs despite centuries of persecution?
- What challenges do Yezidi diaspora communities face in rebuilding after genocide?

Supporting Questions:

- What do Yezidis believe, and how is their faith distinct from Abrahamic religions?
- How did the 2014 ISIS genocide fit within a longer pattern of violence against Yezidis?
- What role does oral tradition play in preserving Yezidi history and memory?

3. Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify and describe the origins, cultural identity, and key beliefs of the Yezidi people.
- Analyze primary and secondary sources documenting Yezidi persecution and resilience.

- Evaluate how diaspora communities preserve cultural identity after displacement.
- Construct a written or verbal explanation connecting Yezidi history to broader themes of human rights and cultural survival.

4. Standards Alignment

CCSS – English Language Arts / Literacy

- RH.9–10.2 — Determine central ideas of primary/secondary sources.
- RH.11–12.6 — Evaluate authors' differing points of view.
- W.11–12.2 — Write explanatory texts using relevant evidence.
- SL.9–10.1 — Engage in collaborative discussions.

C3 Framework – Social Studies

- D1: Developing Questions & Planning Inquiries
- D2.His.1.9–12: Analyze how historical contexts shape perspectives.
- D3: Evaluating Sources & Using Evidence
- D4: Communicating Conclusions / Taking Informed Action

Connection to Literacy and Inquiry:

Students analyze primary sources (R1), evaluate evidence (D3), and construct explanations and discussions (W2, SL1).

5. Materials & Resources

Primary / Secondary Sources:

- Who Are the Yezidis? – U.S. Department of Justice
- Where Are the Yazidis Today? – PBS Frontline
- Oral History Testimonies – Yazidi Genocide Archive

Suggested Supplemental Readings:

- Towards a More Meaningful Transitional Justice Approach for the Yazidi Diaspora in Europe
- Iraq's Yazidis Rediscover Lost History Through Photos Found in a Museum Archive

Digital Tools:

- Projector / screen
- Student devices for source access
- Google Docs or Classroom for writing tasks

Handouts / Supports:

- Guided source-analysis organizer
- Vocabulary list (genocide, diaspora, oral tradition, ethno-religious, resilience)

6. Lesson Procedure

Time	Instructional Step	Teacher Actions / Prompts	Student Engagement / Activities
5–10 min	Opening / Hook	Display a map of Mesopotamia and Northern Iraq. Ask: “What do you know about minority religions in the Middle East?” Introduce the Yezidis briefly.	Students brainstorm, share prior knowledge, make predictions.
10 min	Mini-Lesson: Origins & Beliefs	Present key points: origins, Lalish, Sheikh Adi, structure of Yezidism, vocabulary, the Peacock Angel, oral tradition, caste system.	Students listen, annotate, record
15 min	Guided Practice: Historical Persecution	Read excerpts from the DOJ and PBS sources. Model how to identify patterns of persecution. Ask guiding questions: “What is the claim? What evidence supports it?”	Students analyze sources in pairs; annotate evidence; complete organizer.

10 min	Religion & Cultural Continuity	Facilitate discussion on festivals, religious practices, purity customs, resilience, and family lineage. Ask: "How do these traditions support cultural survival?"	Students discuss and connect ideas to religious practices, purity customs, resilience, and family lineage. Ask: "How do these traditions support cultural survival?"
10 min	Diaspora & Modern Challenges	Show short oral testimony from the Yazidi Genocide Archive. Prompt discussion on displacement, trauma, identity in Germany/US, cultural preservation.	Students reflect on diaspora struggles and write a short response.
5 min	Closure / Reflection	Revisit essential question: "Why is it important to preserve and recognize Yezidi history and culture today?" Preview next lesson (comparisons to other minority groups).	Students complete an exit slip summarizing one new insight.

7. Differentiation & Supports

- **Scaffolds:** Sentence frames for analysis, guided notes, structured organizers.
- **Visuals:** Maps, timelines, sacred site images (e.g., Lalish), artifact photos.
- **Language Supports:** Simplified summaries, vocabulary previews, captioned videos.
- **Flexible Grouping:** Pairs/triads; peer mentors for struggling readers.
- **Enrichment:** Deeper dive into UN genocide conventions, oral-history research, comparative studies with other MENA minorities.
- **Accommodations:** Extra time, text-to-speech tools, alternate-format readings.

8. Assessment & Evidence of Learning

Formative Checks:

- Exit slip: “What is one factor that has shaped Yezidi resilience?”
- Think-pair-share: Why have Yezidis been misunderstood?
- Annotated sources showing evidence selection
- Teacher questioning and observation

Summative Assessment (Choose One):

- Short explanatory paragraph: Explain how historical persecution has shaped modern Yezidi identity.
- Mini-presentation: Students summarize one source and connect it to the essential question.
- Digital response: 1–2 paragraph reflection posted to Google Classroom.

Success Criteria:

- Uses at least two credible sources
- Explains ideas clearly and accurately
- Demonstrates understanding of Yezidi history and culture
- Connects evidence to claims logically

9. Teacher Reflection / Notes

(To be completed after teaching)

- Which parts of the lesson generated the most engagement?
- Did students understand the complexity of Yezidi identity?
- How well did students use evidence from the DOJ and PBS texts?
- Were supports appropriate for all learners?
- What adjustments or pacing changes are needed?

10. Extensions & Cross-Curricular Links

- **Civics:** Connect to UNDRIP and discussions of Indigenous rights.
- **ELA:** Write a first-person narrative based on Yezidi oral testimony.
- **Art:** Visual analysis of Lalish architecture and religious symbolism.
- **Global Studies:** Compare Yezidi persecution to other cases of cultural violence.

11. Homework / Continued Practice

- **Option A:** Annotate one article (PBS or DOJ) and identify 3 key ideas.
- **Option B:** Short reflection: “How does diaspora reshape cultural identity?”

- **Option C (Enrichment):** Explore one oral testimony from the Yazidi Genocide Archive and write a paragraph on its significance.

Materials & Resources

- [Lesson Plan: Understanding the Yezidi People and Their History](#)
- [Excerpts from *Who are the Yezidis?* \(FARA Informational Materials, 2024\)](#).
- [Where Are the Yazidis Today, Almost a Decade After ISIS' Genocidal Campaign?](#)
- [Oral History Testimony from the Yazidi Genocide Archive Website](#)
- [Towards a More Meaningful Transitional Justice Approach for the Yazidi Diaspora in Europe](#)
- [Iraq's Yazidis rediscover lost history through photos found in a museum archive](#)