

Background Information for Teachers

This lesson is designed to explore a universal human experience, homesickness, through the lens of a famous Lebanese song, “Nassam Alaya-l Hawa.” This lesson can be taught in conjunction with students’ study of immigration, particularly the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 under the Johnson Administration, or as a way to introduce new insights into Arab art and culture into your music or social studies classroom. This lesson is meant to prompt students to draw connections between their own lives and the lives of Lebanese people, or more broadly, diasporic or immigrant peoples, as depicted through song. It is also meant to use music to bolster students’ understanding of key terms related to immigration: **Homesickness; Displacement; Diaspora; and Solidarity**. As a launching point for this exploration, the lesson makes use of the famous Arabic-language song “Nassam Alaya-l Hawa” or “Blowing Breeze” which has become something of an anthem for Arabic-speaking immigrants displaced from or who have left their homes.

Target Level

- 6-8th Grade

Time Allotment

- One class period (45 minutes – 1 hour)

Enduring Understandings

- Songs are legitimate ways to express ideas close to people’s hearts.
- Songs can offer reassurance and solidarity with others during difficult moments in people’s lives.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Students will be able to analyze the themes of home and homesickness in the lyrics of “Nassam Alaya-l Hawa”
- Students will understand the meaning of key terms related to immigration: “homesickness”, “displacement”, “solidarity”, and “diaspora.”

Key Vocabulary:

- **Homesickness:** A feeling of longing for one's home during a period of absence from it. A word that might be closely associated with homesickness is **nostalgia**, which means affection or longing for the past, particularly about happy moments or places in one's past life. ¹
- **Displacement:** The movement of people who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters.²
- **Diaspora:** A *diaspora* is a large group of people with a similar heritage or homeland who have since moved out to places all over the world. The term *diaspora* comes from an ancient Greek word meaning "to scatter about."³
- **Solidarity:** unity (as of a group or class) that produces or is based on community of interests, objectives, and standards.⁴

Standards Alignment for Music:

National Standards for Music Education:

- MU:Re7.1.5a Demonstrate and explain, citing evidence, how selected music connects to and is influenced by specific interests, experiences, purposes, or contexts.
- MU:Re8.1.5a Demonstrate and explain how the expressive qualities (such as dynamics, tempo, timbre, and articulation) are used in performers' and personal interpretations to reflect expressive intent.

Standards Alignment for ELA/Social Studies:

National Common Core Standards for ELA History/Social Studies, Grade 6-8

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.6](#)
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).
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2](#)
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.

¹ "Homesick." *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/homesickness>. Accessed 10 Feb. 2020.

² Adapted from Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, annexed to United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr Francis M. Deng, Submitted Pursuant to Commission Resolution 1997/39, Addendum (11 February 1998) UN Doc E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2, 5, para. 2 of the introduction.

³ "Diaspora." *Vocabulary.com Dictionary*. <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/diaspora>. Accessed 10. Feb, 2020.

⁴ "Solidarity." *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/solidarity>. Accessed 10 Feb. 2020.

Materials:

- [“Nassam Alayna-l Hawa” song online](#)
- Using Music to Teach Social Studies
- [Bent El Haris](#) –clip (43:45 to 49:45)

Lesson Plan

Opening the Lesson:

Students will be asked to:

- Identify a place they consider to be “home” (this can be more than one place).
- Describe what that “home” is like during part of a typical morning, afternoon, or evening.
- Share out what they’ve written.
- Ask students, “If you were to leave your home for good or for a long time, what would you miss about home? What might be important memories of home?” Engage students in brief discussion of this question and establish understanding of the words **“homesickness”** and **“displacement.”**

Explain to students that the class will be talking about homesickness as it is expressed through an Arabic-language song called “Nassam Alayna-l Hawa” or “Blowing Breeze.” Depending on your students’ familiarity with Arabic and the Arab world, you may choose to point out countries that are Arabic-speaking and then hone in on Lebanon, the country from which “Nassam Alayna-l Hawa” originates.

Guided Practice: Literary Inquiry/Introduction to “Nassam Alayna-l Hawa” Song

Distribute lyrics of “Nassam Alayna-l Hawa” to students. Select students to read the lyrics aloud or students may read the lyrics aloud in small groups.

Play the audio of the song for students. After listening, facilitate a discussion with students about the features of the lyrics that reveal homesickness or displacement, moving the class towards a conversation about the lyrics’ larger meaning. Ask students to analyze specific parts of the lyrics with guiding questions, including but not limited to:

- What do you think the singer means when she says “My heart is scared that you might age in this far away place. And my home would no longer recognize me”? Encourage students to explain in their own words.
- What parts of the song are explicitly about homesickness? What parts of the song are implicitly about homesickness?
- What might the singer mean when she talks about “a blowing breeze”? Is she

speaking metaphorically or literally? Or both?

At this point, you may consider weaving in the conceptual threads that were developed during the lesson opening's conversation about homesickness.

Guided Practice: Aural/Visual Inquiry

After developing with the students the idea that homesickness is the central theme within the song's lyrics, play a video clip from the movie *Bent El Haris* in which the song is performed by singer Fairuz. You may choose to provide students with background information about the featured singer, Fairuz, and her iconic status in the Arab World.

Fairuz (born in 1934)... is the most famous Lebanese singer of the second half of the twentieth century. She began her career by singing Lebanese folk songs but gained wider recognition when her lyrics began to address the loss of Palestine. Her deep, almost melancholy voice fit the subject well, as did themes of nostalgia, homesickness, and return, which she incorporated from Lebanese folklore. The lyrics were always generic enough that songs about Lebanon could be applied equally well to Palestine and vice versa. Consequently, her music has universal appeal. It resonates with refugees, expatriate workers, and rural migrants to cities who had been displaced by the political and economic upheavals in the Arab World during the late twentieth century.⁵

During their viewing of the film, ask students to make note of elements in the clip that support the idea that the song is about homesickness. Guide students with the following questions:

- What do the singer's facial expressions and tone of voice reveal about her emotions?
- How does the melody, tempo, dynamics, or pitch influence how we feel?
- What are the workers in the shipyard doing? Why might someone miss an ordinary morning or an everyday routine when she is far away from home?

Direct Instruction: Social Context of "Nassam Alayna-l Hawa"

Explain some of the social context of the song, citing American political changes described below, and the socio-political context of the Arab world that led to migration to the United States.

In 1965, the United States Congress and President Lyndon Johnson signed into law a new Immigration and Naturalization Act, which differed from the preceding immigration law in that there were no restrictions on immigration based on regions of origin. Quotas that functioned to discriminate on the basis of race and ethnicity because they were not the same for all countries marked the previous immigration law. As well, under the old law, bans

⁵ Magnusson, Andrew D. *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Arab Culture*. (University Press, Cambridge, U.K., 2015.) p. 42

on immigration were placed on select areas of the world. Such quotas and bans were absent from the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965.

The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, thus, ushered in a new wave of immigration to the United States. Of particular importance, the number immigrating to the United States from Lebanon after the passing of the new law surpassed that of any other group of immigrants from the Arab world. Diasporic Lebanese communities in the United States and in other parts of the world in the late 1960s (the song was released in 1967), no doubt found resonance in the verses of “Nassam Alayna-l Hawa,” in light of the nostalgic references to a home country.⁶

You may again point to Lebanon on a map and explain to students that now more Lebanese people live outside of Lebanon than do inside of the country. Explain to students the meaning of **diaspora**, and draw connections to examples of diaspora that might be familiar to students already (the Great Migration of African-Americans from the American South, for example). Background information that may be helpful during this part of the lesson is below. You may provide this excerpt for students to read themselves, or highlight key points while explaining Lebanese and Arab diaspora to the North America.

There have been two major waves of Arab immigration to North America. The first lasted from the 1870s to World War II and the second from World War II to the present. Members of the two waves of immigrants had somewhat different characteristics and faced different challenges in the social and political arena.

Numerous reasons have been given for the first wave of Arab immigration to America, which began in large numbers in the 1880s...Most scholars argue that the most important reasons for emigration were economic necessity and personal advancement. The economy of Lebanon suffered two major crippling blows in the mid-1880s. The first was the opening of the Suez Canal, which sidetracked traffic from Syria to Egypt and made the trip to the Far East so easy and fast that Japanese silk became a major competitor for the Lebanese Silk Industry. The second blow came in the 1890s, when Lebanese vineyards were invaded by phylloxera and practically ruined.

Many Lebanese Christians, who constituted most of the early Arab arrivals in North America, emphasize religious persecution and the lack of political and civil freedom as the main causes of their emigration from lands ruled by an oppressive Ottoman regime... Until World War II, most Arabs in America were Christians who came from the Mount Lebanon region of geographic Syria.

⁶ Ameri, Anan and Dawn Ramey. *Arab American Encyclopedia*. (Detroit: U.X.L., 2000), page 44; Ludden, Jennifer. “1965 Immigration Law Changed Face of America,” *National Public Radio* (Washington, DC), May 9, 2006.

The second wave of Arab immigration brought to North America a much more diverse population, one that differed greatly from the early pioneering group. Whereas the first-wave immigrants came almost exclusively from the area of Greater Syria and were overwhelmingly Lebanese, the new immigrants came from all parts of the Arab world, including North Africa. Unlike early arrivals, who were predominately Christian, the new immigrants were Christians and Muslims. The two groups' reasons for immigration were also somewhat different. In addition to economic need and the attraction of a major industrial society, new immigrants often were driven out of their homes as a result of regional conflicts (e.g. Palestine-Israel, Arab-Israeli, Iraq-Iran, Iraq-Kuwait) or civil wars (e.g. Lebanon, Yemen) or as a consequence of major social and political changes in the homeland that made life difficult, especially for the wealthy or middle class in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and other countries.⁷

Direct Instruction: Why is this song important to Arabs? Why is this song so widely known and beloved?

Explain to students to the significance of “Nassam Alaya-l Hawa”, which is widely known throughout the Arab world. It has particular resonance with immigrant communities, for whom the song is a symbol of homesickness and displacement. One writer on an Arabic language blog described the song and its significance in the following way:

This song is titled ‘Nassam Alayna el Hawa,’ and is written, composed and produced by the Rahbani Brothers. It is a song that many immigrants around the world enjoy and identify with. I am no exception and I feel that most of you wherever you are from also, are most likely able to share and understand my feelings. It is no secret then when Fairouz used to sing this particular tune in her world tours, Lebanese immigrants eager to see their homeland that was being torn apart by a violent civil war between 1975 and 1990, shed tears of sorrow and longing all through its telling lyrics. “Take me home”, cries the longing soul, dreaming of a faraway homeland and a lost love.⁸

Explain that while this song has come to symbolize loss of homeland for a community of Arab immigrants, it is also a source of **solidarity**. Many Arab immigrants know and identify with this song, and while it represents sadness and loss, sharing in this loss with others can be a source of comfort. Establish the meaning of solidarity with students.

While many diasporic communities experience loss and trauma, they also find and create new homes and communities, and find cultural and linguistic solidarity in these new places. Songs have an especially important function for immigrant and diasporic communities in helping displaced people retain language and culture and

⁷ Suleiman, Michael W. *Arabs in America: Building a New Future*. (Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1999.) P. 1-9.

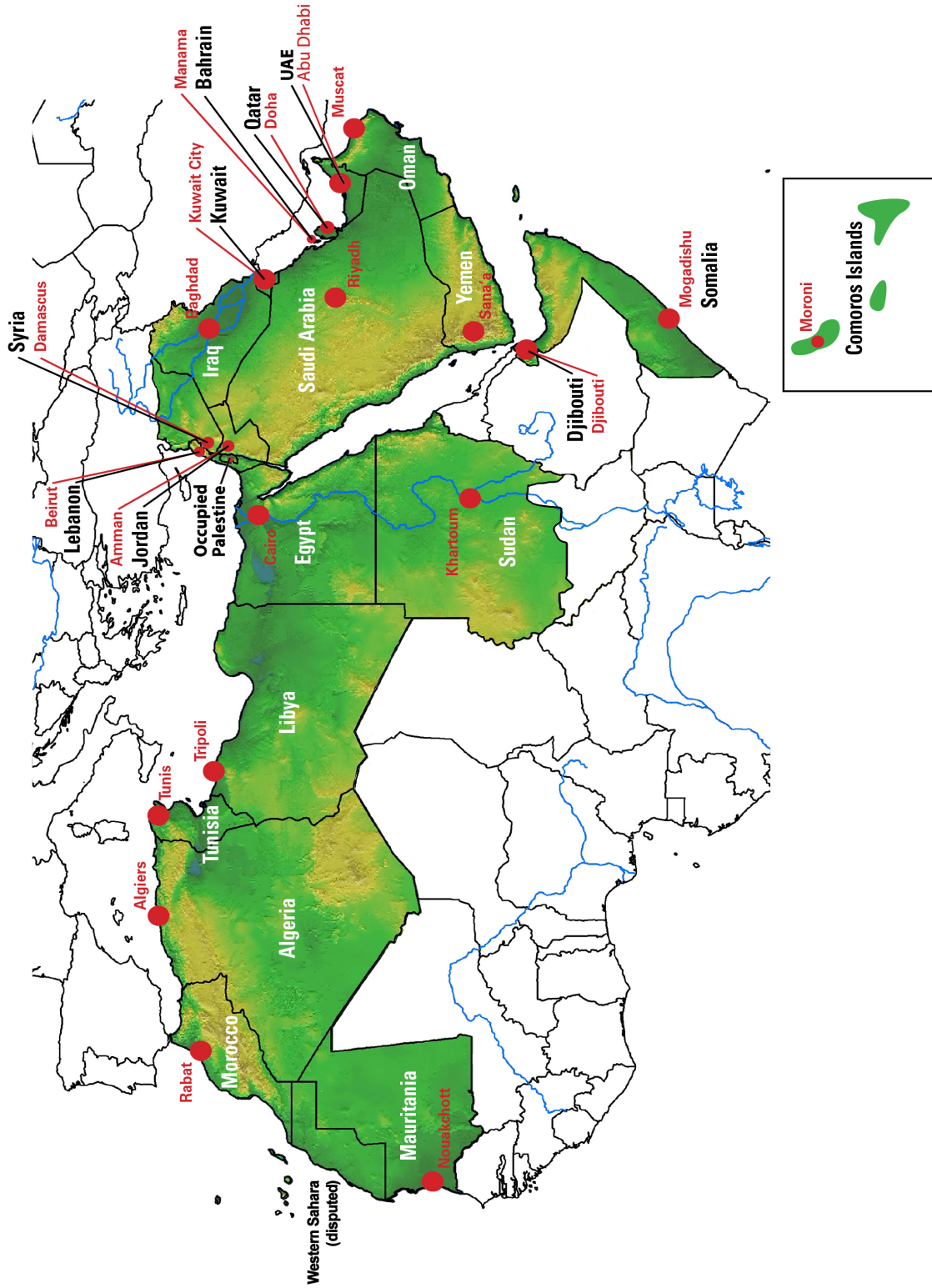
⁸ Jesa, “Nassam Alayna el Hawa.” *Arabic Language Blog*. Jan 28, 2013. <https://blogs.transparent.com/arabic/nassam-alayna-el-hawa/>

find camaraderie with others.

Independent Practice: Student Brainstorm and Writing.

Ask students to think of a song that represents “solidarity” for them. Perhaps it is a song from their cultural or linguistic group, or that has special significance to their hometowns or favorite sports teams, or one that is widely known and beloved in their region or state. Distribute worksheet for them to record their ideas. After students have independently written about a song of their choosing, close the lesson by having students share some of the songs they wrote about. Review key understandings and vocabulary words covered in the lesson and ask for final questions and reflections from students. *Possible extension activity: Have students turn their writing about home and homesickness into lyrics/songs.*

Arab World Map



Opening.

Name _____

Date _____

Directions: Answer the questions below about a place in your life that you think of as “a home.”

A. What are places you consider to be “home”?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

B. What does it mean to be “homesick” for a place?

C. Tell us about a time you felt homesick for a place.

a. When in your life did you feel this “homesickness”? (You can discuss a homesickness you feel today.)

b. Describe the place for which you feel or have felt homesick.

c. What things about the place did you miss or were you homesick for when you were away from the place?

Al-Bustan Seeds of Culture

nassam ‘alayna-l hawā *

nassam ‘alayna-l hawā

min mafra'i-l wādī

yā hawā dakhli-l hawā

khidnī ‘ala blādī

yā hawā yā hawā

yallī ṭāyir bil hawā

fī mantūra ṭā'a-w ṣūra

khidnī-l ‘indun yā hawā

fiz‘āni yā albī

ikbar bi-hal ghirbī

w-mā ta‘rifnī blādī

khidnī, khidnī

khidnī ‘ala blādī

shū binā shū binā

yā habībī shū binā

kintū-w kinnā ṭḏallū ‘innā

w-iftara'nā shū binā

w-ba‘dash-shamsi-btibkī

‘albāb-ū mā ṭihkī

w-yihkī hawā blādī

khidnī, khidnī

khidnī ‘ala blādī

Blowing Breeze

Rahbani Brothers

There is a breeze blowing

from the junction of the valley,

Oh love, oh breeze,

take me home

Oh breeze,

blowing in the expanse,

There is a wallflower, a small window, and a picture frame,

Take me to them, oh breeze

My heart is scared

That you might age in this far away place

And my home would no longer recognize me

Take me home

Take me to my country

What is happening to us, what is happening

My dear, what is happening to us

We were going to stay together

Then we separated, what is going on with us

And then the sun cried

while at the door and did not speak

And my home country's breeze is blowing

Take me home

Take me to my country

نَسَم عَلِينَا الْهُوَى

الاخوان رحباني

نَسَم عَلِينَا الْهُوَى

من مفرق الوادي

يا هوى دخل الهوى

خدني على بلادي

ياهو يياهو

ياللي طائر بالهوى

في منتوره طاقه وصوره

خدني لعندن يا هوى

فزعانه يا قلبي

اكبر بهالغريه

وماتعرفني بلادي

خدني خدني

خدني على بلادي

شو بينا شو بينا

يا حبيبي شو بينا

كنت وكنا تضلو عنا

وافترقنا شو بينا

وبعدا الشمس بتبكي

عالباب وما تحكي

ويحكي هوى بلادي

خدني خدني

خدني على بلادي

* The transliteration is based on the ALA-LOC (American Library Association - Library of Congress) Romanization method, with some exceptions in order to have the syllables follow the music.

