

Public Catalog of Al-Bustan Digital Workshops



البُستان
Al-Bustan
Seeds of Culture



www.albustanseeds.org | [@albustanseeds](https://www.instagram.com/albustanseeds) | 267-809-3688
3645 Lancaster Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19104

Introduction

Rooted in Arab arts and language, Al-Bustan Seeds of Culture offers artistic and educational programming that enriches cross-cultural understanding and celebrates diversity.

“Al-Bustan,” Arabic for “The Garden,” serves youth and adults of all ethnic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds, while supporting the pursuit and affirmation of Arab American cultural identity and playing a constructive civic role within broader American society.

In this catalog, we outline the workshops that the Al-Bustan team has presented at schools across Philadelphia, in-person and online. These workshops hope to introduce students in our city to the cultural and artistic traditions of the Arabic-speaking world while connecting these traditions to those of other cultures and to students’ own experiences.

For each workshop, we have suggested a grade range, time allotment, school subject, and noted whether materials are required. These are suggestions based on our prior experience, but each workshop can be adapted to the needs of your classroom or school. This is not an exhaustive list of possible workshops. If you are interested in a workshop on a subject not included in this catalog, please let us know.

Al-Bustan is a locus of artistic production and scholarship on the Arabic-speaking world. Our team reflects a breadth of artistic, cultural, and academic backgrounds which speak to the diversity of our region and its diasporas. You can find more information about the Al-Bustan team in the final pages of this catalog.

If you are interested in professional development workshops for educators, please visit our website albustanseeds.org to view our professional development catalog.

If you are interested in a workshop for your students, please contact our Director of Public Education David Heayn-Menendez (david@albustanseeds.org) to explore possibilities and discuss costs.

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1. Arab Music and Cultural Connections

Hafez Kotain, Al-Bustan Teaching Artist

a. **Grade Range:** 3-12

b. **Time Required:** 30-40 minutes

c. **Materials required:** none

d. **Subjects:** Music, Anthropology, History/Social Studies, Language Arts

e. In this online presentation, Hafez Kotain introduces students to Arab music and broader culture through various Arab percussion instruments and rhythms. First, in a 10-minute pre-recorded video, Hafez provides a demonstration of the use, function, and rhythms of Arab percussion. In a 10-minute live online session Hafez further explores the connections between Arab culture and Latinx, African, and even hip-hop culture through music and his own personal journey from Venezuela, to Syria, and the United States. Lastly, a 10-minute live session allows for Q&A.

2. Arab Percussion

Hafez Kotain, Al-Bustan Teaching Artist

a. **Grade Range:** 3-12

b. **Time Required:** 40-60 minutes

c. **Materials required:** none

d. **Subjects:** Music, Anthropology, History/Social Studies, Language Arts

e. In this online presentation, Hafez showcases his collection of *doumbeks*, frame drums, and *riqs* to reveal the common rhythms and uses of these instruments in Arab musical tradition. For the first 20-30 minutes, Hafez talks about his collection of instruments—their names, country of origin, how to care for them, their use in Arab music, and how to play them. For each instrument, Hafez demonstrates different rhythms to show its range. For the next 10-20 minutes, Hafez discusses the use of these instruments by popular Arab musicians and how he, as a teacher and professional musician, uses the instruments in the classroom and in performance. Lastly, a 10-minute live session allows for Q&A.

3. Arab Song

Serge El Helou, Al-Bustan Teaching Artist

a. **Grade Range:** 3-8

b. **Time Required:** 30-60 minutes

c. **Materials required:** none

d. **Subjects:** Music, Anthropology, History/Social Studies, Language Arts

e. In this online presentation, Serge El-Helou gives a 30-60-minute presentation on Arab songs that introduces students to the region of the Middle East through its instruments, singers, and musical traditions. For the first 20-30 minutes, Serge shares his screen to present on the region known as the Middle East and its instruments and singers; students listen to recorded and live clips of Arab instrumentals and songs. For the next 10-20 minutes, Serge uses the example of Ya Layl, played on his guitar and oud, to talk to students about the distinctive qualities of Arab song; students are encouraged to sing and clap along! Lastly, a 10-minute Q and A allows for Serge to answer any questions that students may have about the instruments, singers, and songs presented.

4. Arab Art & Artists

Lisa Volta, Al-Bustan Teaching Artist

a. **Grade Range:** 3-12

b. **Time Required:** 60 minutes

c. **Materials required:** household materials

d. **Subjects:** Art, Anthropology, History/Social Studies, Language Arts, Geometry, AVID, Graphic Design, Marketing

e. In this online presentation, visual artist Lisa Volta introduces students to Arab art through the work of contemporary Arab artists. The format of this presentation is workshop-based and requires only household materials and basic supplies. A 10-minute introduction is followed by a 10-minute art-making demonstration showing students how to make art at home modeled on contemporary Arab art. Lisa demonstrates the connection between classical Arab and Near Eastern art with contemporary art. She also explores the cross-cultural connections of between Arab, Latinx, African, and Western/ European art. 30 minutes are allotted for questions and assistance during the art making process. The final 10 minutes engage students in a conversation about use, meaning, and interpretation of visual art.

5. Arab Math and Sciences

Lisa Volta, Al-Bustan Teaching Artist

a. **Grade Range:** 3-12

b. **Time Required:** 60 minutes

c. **Materials required:** household materials

d. **Subjects:** History/Social Studies, Math, Science

e. In this online presentation, Lisa Volta introduces students to contributions of Arab mathematicians and scientists through the work of medieval and contemporary Arabs. The format of this presentation is workshop-based and requires only household materials and basic supplies to create an experiment at home. A 10-minute presentation introduces students to the mathematical or scientific principles which underpin the project. Lisa also describes the life of the individual who inspired this project. The lecture is followed by a 10-minute project demonstration in which Lisa explains to students how to follow the experiment at home. 30 minutes is allotted for questions and assistance during the project making process. During the final 10-minutes Lisa engages students in a conversation about the science and math behind the project and its relevance in today's world.

6. Immigration, Refugees, and Finding Home—An Immigrant Alphabet

David Heayn-Menendez, Director of Public Education & Bridget Peak, Programs Coordinator

a. Grade Range: 3-12

b. Time Required: 50-60 minutes

c. Materials required: household materials

d. **Subjects:** Art, Anthropology, History/Social Studies, Language Arts, AVID, Journalism, Psychology, Graphic Design, Marketing

e. In this online presentation, David Heayn-Menendez and Bridget Peak introduce students to Al-Bustan’s public art installation, *An Immigrant Alphabet*, and the relevant themes related to immigration and refugee status as well as the basic human need to search for home explored by the installation. The format of this presentation is an interactive art workshop requiring only household materials and basic supplies. The session starts with a 10-minute presentation on the history, numbers, vocabulary and ideas behind immigration and refugee status in the United States.

Next, for 10 to 20 minutes, the students are introduced to examples of relevant art and writing produced by immigrants and refugees, especially the *An Immigrant Alphabet* book. After having had a chance to read/observe and reflect the students are asked to create their own immigrant alphabet panel.

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The final 30 minutes allow each student to select a letter from the English alphabet, a corresponding word touching on their thoughts regarding immigration and a search for home, and then provide imagery to encapsulate their ideas. This can be done with a photograph, a drawing, writing, or any visual expression. The ideas for their individual panels can be scaled for developmental level. The students should then attempt to explain their imagery in a short paragraph, preferably contextualized in a demonstrative narrative or free form poem. Lastly, time allowing, the students should display and discuss their letters, choices, and stories.

7. Ramadan and the Arab World

David Heayn-Menendez, Director of Public Education

a. **Grade Range:** 1-12

b. **Time Required:** 40 minutes

c. **Materials required:** household materials

d. **Subjects:** Art, Anthropology, History/Social Studies, Language Arts, AVID, Journalism

e. In this online presentation, David Heayn-Menendez introduces students to the history, meaning, and practice of Ramadan throughout the Arab World. The month of Ramadan is a time to explore the culture (art, religion, customs, and world view) of Arabs and Muslims. The month of Ramadan, and its final celebration, Eid al-Fitr, often receive more attention in the media than other parts of the year. As one of the better-known elements of Arab culture, Ramadan is an opportunity to understand the culture more and combat misinformation in the hopes for greater interfaith and intercultural understanding. The format of this presentation is an interactive workshop and requires only household materials and basic supplies. The session starts with a 10-minute presentation on the history, vocabulary and ideas behind Ramadan.

Next, for 10 minutes, the students have the opportunity to ask questions about Ramadan and they are asked to reflect on how fasting, feasting, charity, and community are a part of their own traditions. During the next 20-minute portion of the presentation students cut construction paper into the shapes of the moon phases which govern the beginning and end of the month of Ramadan.

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They paste them to a piece of paper in a circle to see and understand the passage of time. For the final 10 minutes we discuss how the sun, moon, weekly, and yearly calendars influence our understanding of time, identity, and community regardless of your tradition.

8. Muslims, Christians, Jews, and other Religion in the Arab World

David Heayn-Menendez, Director of Public Education

a. Grde Range: 9-12

b. Time Required: 60 minutes

c. Materials required: none

d. **Subjects:** Art, Anthropology, History/Social Studies, Language Arts, AVID, Journalism

e. In this online presentation, David Heayn-Menendez introduces students to the history, interaction, and culture of the major religious traditions of the Arab World. This comparative approach provides background on the diversity of the Arab World but also allows students to understand the commonalities and differences that exist between the traditions. The format of this presentation is a Jeopardy-style game show in which students compete against one another. As more information is revealed the students are asked to track the information on a graphic form, such as a Venn diagram. The session starts with a 15-minute overview of the three best known monotheistic traditions and an introduction to those lesser-known traditions. After this presentation on the history, vocabulary, and beliefs students compete for 25-minutes. Afterwards, for 10 minutes, students are asked to collect and organize the information. Lastly, 10 minutes are reserved for questions and conversations about what interfaith and intercultural harmony can mean in today's world.

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9. Race, Gender, and Politics in the Arab World

David Heayn-Menendez, Director of Public Education & Bridget Peak, Programs Coordinator

a. **Grade Range:** 9-12

b. **Time Required:** 60 minutes

c. **Materials required:** ruler, pencil, something to color with, and paper

d. **Subjects:** Anthropology, History/Social Studies, Language Arts, AVID, Journalism, Government and Politics

e. In this online presentation, David Heayn-Menendez and Bridget Peak introduce students to one of three major topics in the Arab world: Race, Gender, and Politics. To cover all three topics the workshop is designed to take place over three sessions but a single session can focus on just one topic.

i. **Race:** The format of this presentation focuses on a conversation about race as a socio-cultural construct and how it changes over time. A 20-minute presentation introducing the students to the geography and demographic history of the Arab world takes place while students create a simple Arabic geometric design. Next, for 10 minutes following the creation of the design, participants are asked to write out the ways they identify race, ethnicity, nationality, etc. They then select the same number of colors as they wrote identifiers and are then asked to fill in the empty space of the design. During the next 10 minutes a brief discussion explores how identities change over time, due to interaction and varied histories. Next, a 10-minute PowerPoint presentation demonstrates the variety of Arabs and the ways they are depicted and understood in “Western” media and popular culture.

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This focuses on the US Census, where the students look at and try to understand where they are “supposed” to fit in the available categories. Facilitators in each group ask about how students felt about the categories and discuss how some identities or colors in their design would be left out if they had to choose just one. They should also compare their design with that of the other students to discover the unique designs created by each student, even for those of similar identities.

ii. **Gender:** This presentation facilitates a conversation about gender in the Arab world both as it relates to the Muslim majority and other religious or secular populations in the Arab world. A 10-minute image matching game depicting women from various religious and ethnic backgrounds wearing “traditional” and religiously conservative clothing is followed by a 20-minute PowerPoint presentation regarding the construction of gender and its role in Arab society today and in the past. Next, a 20-minute breakout session with small groups allows students to discuss how they see gender and identity expressed through clothing, behaviors, and other signifiers. During the remaining 10 minutes, students are led in a discussion of how religion, politics, and culture influence the historical contextualized construction of gender in a society.

ii. **Politics:** This presentation relates a conversation about politics in the Arab world. A 10-minute video of news clips and depictions of political leaders in the “Western” press and popular media, such as the 2012 film *The Dictator* is followed by a 10-minute conversation in small breakout groups. A 10-minute PowerPoint Presentation of cartoons, political leaders, and political organizations/NGOs leads to a second 10-minute session of small breakout groups during which students discusses the legacy of colonialism and the role of international politics today.

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ii. A final 10-minute multimedia presentation focuses on “Western” headline grabbing issues such as terrorism, the Arab Spring, war, and political oppression. A final 10-minute session allows for an open discussion of the various depictions and descriptions of the Arab political landscape and time to discuss how the politics of the Arab world compares to that of the United States.

10. Influence of the Arab World

David Heayn-Menendez, Director of Public Education

a. Grade Range: 9-12

b. Time Required: 60 minutes

c. Materials required: none

d. Anthropology, History/Social Studies, Language Arts, Journalism, Government and Politics

e. In this online presentation, David Heayn-Menendez and Bridget Peak introduce students to the influence of the Arab world on “Western Civilization,” highlighting the impact of Arab artists and scientists from Al-Kindi to DJ Khaled. The goal of this presentation is to dispel the belief that the Arab and Western worlds exist in isolation or opposition to one another. A 10–20-minute multi-media presentation explores the history of Arab influence, colonial legacy, and shared contemporary culture through music, visual art, and language. Following the presentation, students compete against one another for 25 minutes, in a Jeopardy-style game. As more information is revealed the students are asked to track the information on a graphic form, such as a Venn diagram. The last 10 minutes are reserved for questions and conversations.

Meet the Presenters

Hafez Kotain is a master percussionist fluent in both Arab and Latin rhythms. Born in Venezuela of Syrian heritage, he grew up in Syria until the age of 16 years. He began playing the doumbek at the age of seven years, made his first stage performance at nine years, and went on to study with master Syrian percussionist Hady Jazan, winning the national percussion competitions in Syria for five consecutive years. In Venezuela he studied percussion at the TMV Institute for Music in Valencia, where he also taught a variety of percussion styles blending Arab and Latino music to youth. He works with Al-Bustan throughout the year, teaching music at summer camp, weekly percussion classes at several Philadelphia schools, and a weekly percussion ensemble class at University of Pennsylvania. Hafez is a recipient of the prestigious 2013 Pew Fellowship in the Arts, which is awarded each year to 12 Philadelphia artists who are of exemplary talent.

Serge El Helou was born in Beirut, Lebanon. He began playing guitar, piano, and percussion at an early age. While pursuing his degree in Musicology in Lebanon, he had the privilege to learn harmony and composition with renowned composer Toufic Succar. In 2003, he pursued his musical career in Paris at René Descartes University where he earned another degree in Music Therapy and received his Orchestration degree from Boulogne Billancourt Conservatory, France. El Helou also received a Master's degree in music therapy in the U.S. In addition to many years of experience in teaching music and working as a choir director with Al-Bustan, El Helou composes music for children plays, short films, and documentaries. Several of his compositions were recently performed by chamber orchestras in Philadelphia and New York.

Lisa Volta is a Philadelphia-based artist with a background in herbal studies. Her interests include investigating interventions in between spaces, playing with the botanical and the structural, medicinal and poisonous, and points of passage. She has worked in Philadelphia area classrooms as a lead artist with the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Center for Emerging Visual Artists, Fleisher Art Memorial, Philadelphia Arts and Education Partnership, and the Delaware Center for Contemporary Art. With a focus on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math) education, Lisa has worked with school principals and teachers to develop integrative curriculum designed to enhance core curriculum learning through the arts. Since 2014 she has been a teaching artist with Al-Bustan at summer camp and public schools. Through her teaching practice with Al-Bustan, Lisa spotlights contemporary Arab artists as a way to explore history, cultural context, and specific artistic techniques. Her travels in the Middle East region gave her first hand experience of the generosity and beauty of Arab culture. A graduate of Tyler School of Art, Temple University, Lisa is currently pursuing an MFA at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

Meet the Presenters

David Heayn-Menendez, a Philly native, is an educator and scholar of socio-religious and cultural history of the Middle East North Africa region. As a former artist, musician, and actor, David has a passion for the history and aesthetics of Middle Eastern culture which have been a driving force through his education and career. He attended Villanova University for his B.A. and M.A. in History and went on to the CUNY Graduate Center in New York City for his M.Phil. and Ph.D. in History. He studied Arabic at the University of Jordan in 2009 and has traveled broadly across the region for research, pleasure, and family. He has taught at various after-school and tutoring programs for elementary, high school, and college students and has given numerous talks at conferences about the Christian and Islamic History of the premodern and contemporary MENA region. After teaching History at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY and working at City College, CUNY, David taught History and Religious Studies at the Pennsylvania College of Technology and at Susquehanna University. David is excited to join the Al-Bustan team, having first encountered the organization in 2008 when he and his wife lived in Philadelphia and participated in multiple events and programs.

Born and raised in Montana, **Bridget Peak** grew up watercoloring wildflowers and hiking mountains. Her Iranian heritage and love for art created an intense interest in the artwork of diaspora. She graduated in 2019 from Wellesley College with a BA in Political Science and minor in Art History. She wrote her senior independent study on the role of traditional embroidery in keeping Palestinians culturally together even when physically apart. As the 2019-2020 Susan Rappaport Knafel Travel Fellow, Bridget explored the relationship between artwork and the “diasporic” identity across six countries. She has helped deliver arts programming in places such as Greece, Indonesia, and Ghana and is excited to bring her passion for arts and cultural education to Philadelphia with Al-Bustan Seeds of Culture.