

"The House of Saud" Teacher's Guide

ABOUT THE FILM

The House of Saud has controlled every aspect of Saudi life and politics since the kingdom was established in 1932. But outside the Desert Kingdom, little is known about Saudi Arabia's secretive royal family. In "House of Saud," FRONTLINE explores how the Al Saud family maintains its hold on power in the face of growing tensions between Islam and modernity. Through interviews with members of the royal family, government officials, and other experts from Saudi Arabia and the U.S., the two-hour documentary also traces America's relations with the Saudi royal family from their first alliance in the 1930s through September 11 and beyond to the present.

WATCHING THE DOCUMENTARY:

Ideally, teachers will assign the film for viewing as homework or show it in class. Suggested discussion questions are provided within the featured lesson plan. The lessons and activities in this guide can be used in the classroom regardless of whether or not the film is viewed.

A NOTE TO TEACHERS:

"The House of Saud" chronicles the unification of Saudi Arabia under Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud and the relationship that developed between the United States and the Saud family. The documentary highlights the importance of oil in U.S. foreign policy and the impact this has had on political, religious and social developments in the Middle East and the world. FRONTLINE provides a fascinating picture of life in Saudi Arabia as it documents:

- The impact of the Quran and Islamic law on the government of Saudi Arabia
- The Arabian American Oil Company's (Aramco) influence on the Saudi people
- The politics of creating a Jewish state in Israel
- American control of the Dhahran airbase and its consequences
- How Osama bin Laden rose to power
- The escalation of violence by Al Qaeda

For classes in Social Studies, American Government, Current Events and Economics;
Grade level 9th – 12th

FEATURED LESSON PLAN:

Fatwa and Human Rights

Students will look at the power of the fatwa in Saudi Arabia by:

- Responding to questions about the documentary
- Learning about the impact of Wahhabism on Saudi Arabia
- Analyzing the fatwa that was issued by Osama bin Laden

ADDITIONAL LESSON IDEAS:

Political Messages

In the light of what they have learned about fatwas, students will read President Bush's Inaugural address and compare world coverage and reactions. Students will also analyze other important political speeches.

Media Messages

Students can compare the attitudes of the media in the Middle East and the United States as they examine editorial cartoons featuring:

- Terrorism
- Uncle Sam
- September 11th

Women's Rights in Saudi Arabia

These online lesson plans will help students:

- Analyze the different experiences of Saudi Arabian women
- Look at the life of a foreign woman living in Saudi Arabia

Violence and Saudi Arabia

This lesson plan from *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* allows students to explore:

- The importance of Saudi Arabia to Islamic people
- The rise in violence that is occurring in Saudi Arabia

Purchasing The Film

"**The House of Saud**" can be purchased from **Shop PBS for Teachers**

[<http://teacher.shop.pbs.org/home/index.jsp>]. Also, teachers and students can read the entire "House of Saud" transcript on FRONTLINE's Web site

[<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saud/etc/tapes.html>]

Credits

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LESSON PLAN

Lesson Objectives:

In this lesson, students will evaluate:

- The importance of the fatwa in Islamic countries
- The impact of Wahhabism on Saudi Arabia
- How Osama bin Laden has used the fatwa to justify terrorism

Materials Needed:

Internet Access

Student Handout: Discussion Questions Following Viewing

Student Handout: The Power of the Fatwa

Student Handout: Osama bin Laden and Holy War

Time Needed:

10 – 15 minutes for students to read key definitions and a brief overview of the Islamic faith

120 minutes to watch the documentary

10 – 15 minutes to discuss the documentary

5 – 20 minutes to read and discuss the questions on each student handout

10 – 15 minutes for a large group discussion on the causes of terrorism

Procedure

1. Instruct students to read the definitions and facts on the Islamic faith and then answer the questions as they view the documentary.
2. Conduct a large group discussion using the questions on the student handout *Discussion Questions Following Viewing*.
3. Divide the class into small groups and have them read and discuss the materials on the student handouts: *The Power of the Fatwa* and *Osama bin Laden and Holy War*. Each student should take notes on the questions.
4. Reconvene the class as a large group. Put on the board or overhead "Is terrorism driving the United States foreign policy or is the United States foreign policy driving terrorism?" Have students assess this question in light of the documentary and their readings.
5. Homework: Tell the students to write a one- to two-page paper analyzing the question: "Is terrorism driving the United States foreign policy or is the United States foreign policy driving terrorism?"

Method of Assessment:

Class discussion

Completion of handouts

Homework

STUDENT HANDOUT:
Discussion Questions Following Viewing

Directions:

Students that are not familiar with the Islamic faith should read the definition of key terms and a brief overview of the Islamic religion. This can be found at:

FRONTLINE Teacher Center: "Muslims" Teacher's Guide [URL:
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/teach/muslims/glossary.html>]

The last decades have marked a clash of cultures and understandings between the United States and Saudi Arabia. Try to understand what caused this clash as you watch the documentary and answer these questions.

1. How and why did Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud change the organization of the Arabian Peninsula?
2. What methods did Abd al-Aziz use to gain power in Saudi Arabia? What impact does the fatwa have on the consolidation of power?
3. How did the creation of Aramco change the lives of the people of Saudi Arabia?
4. Explain how President Roosevelt and President Truman influenced the American relationship with the Saudi leaders.
5. Why did people believe that King Saud was not as good a leader as his father?
6. How and why did problems develop between Gamal Abdel Nasser and King Saud?
7. What methods did the new King Faisal use to modernize Saudi Arabia? How did this eventually lead to his death?
8. Compare the causes and results of the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars.
9. How did these wars cause problems for the United States?
10. What impact did the 1978 economic boom have on Saudi Arabia? How and why did this lead to violence?
11. What motivated Saudi Arabia and the United States to assist Afghanistan? How did this war influence Osama bin Laden?
12. What long lasting problems did Desert Storm cause Saudi Arabia and the United States?
13. How does the book *Defending Virtue* illustrate the position of women in Saudi Arabia?

STUDENT HANDOUT: The Power of the Fatwa

A NOTE TO STUDENTS: Be sure to take complete notes on all of the questions. These are to be turned in at the end of the assignment.

Understanding Terms:

Fatwa

Read the information on the process of creating a fatwa at the following site:

Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia [URL: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fatwa>]

Discuss the kinds of problems that could develop from the creation of fatwas.

List the major problems here. Which do you think is the most important? Why?

Scroll down to *The Fatwa on Salman Rushdie*:

Why was this fatwa issued? What happened as a result?

Wahhabism

Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab founded this Muslim sect in the 18th century. During the 20th century the Saudi Royal family and the Wahhabi clerics worked closely together to centralize control of the Saudi people. One of the most well-known Wahhabi Muslims is Osama bin Laden. Read this brief overview of the Wahhabi movement at:

Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia [URL:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wahhabism#Modern_spread_of_Wahhabism]

Scroll down to **Origin**:

What are some of the practices that the Wahhabi believe are contrary to Islam?

Scroll down to **Criticisms**:

What are some of the criticisms of this group? Which of these criticisms do you believe to be dangerous? Why?

Scroll down to **Differences between Wahhabis and traditional Sunni Muslims**:

How do each of these groups view the Quran? How could this influence their behavior?

**STUDENT HANDOUT:
Osama bin Laden and Holy War**

A NOTE TO STUDENTS: Be sure to take complete notes on all of the questions. These are to be turned in at the end of the assignment.

Osama bin Laden issued a call for jihad (holy war) on February 23, 1998. Read the text at:

Text of Fatwah Urging Jihad Against Americans
[URL: <http://www.ict.org.il/articles/fatwah.htm>]

1. List the accusations that Osama bin Laden has made about the United States.

2. What does the fatwa ask Muslims to do?

3. What does he say will happen to Muslims that do not heed the call to jihad?

4. What factors might influence the effectiveness of the fatwa?

ADDITIONAL LESSON IDEAS:

Political Messages

Using what they have learned about the messages and language of fatwas, students will read and critique President Bush's Inaugural address and his challenge to terrorism and compare world coverage and reactions.

Inaugural Speech: *President Sworn-In to Second Term*

[URL: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/01/20050120-1.html>]

World reactions: *World Press Electrified by Bush Vision (BBC News)*

[URL: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/4194221.stm>]

Students will also analyze other important political speeches, evaluating the impact on other nations:

The Declaration of Independence [URL:

http://www.archives.gov/national_archives_experience/charters/declaration_transcript.html]

President Kennedy's inaugural speech [URL: <http://www.jfklibrary.org/j012061.htm>]

President Bush's 2002 State of the Union address [URL:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html>]

Media Messages

FRONTLINE: Teacher Center, "In Search of Al Qaeda"

[<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/teach/alqaeda/postviewing2.html>]

This lesson helps students examine how fear, hate and mistrust develop, what influence the media has on their perceptions, and the role of editorial cartoonists.

Women's Rights in Saudi Arabia

Eye on Saudi Arabia from Global Eye

[http://www.globaleye.org.uk/secondary_spring03/eyeon/women.html]

This online lesson plan provides an interesting and concise picture of women's rights through five different individuals. Students will see how different women view the laws that govern their lives and their place in society.

Violence and Saudi Arabia

[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/lessonplans/world/saudi_5-14.html]

This lesson plan from *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* allows students to explore:

- The importance of Saudi Arabia to the Islamic people
- The increasing violence that is occurring in Saudi Arabia

INTERNET RESOURCES

Media literacy note: As with all issues, especially ones that are politically charged, students must learn to be savvy and discriminating readers. No Web site can provide all the information a student needs to know, and teachers should encourage students to "interrogate" Web sites even as they are reading. Guiding questions as they work through these activities should be: What did you learn from this source? What didn't you learn from this source? Who sponsors this source? What bias might the sponsor have?

FRONTLINE "The House of Saud"

[<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saud/>]

The companion Web site to the documentary includes: a chronology of the Kingdom's recent history, including significant events in the U.S. - Saudi relationship; a family tree that includes profiles of recent al-Saud kings, and interviews with key members of the al-Saud monarchy and Saudi historians, activists and religious leaders, as well as U.S. and British diplomats.

FRONTLINE Teacher Center: "The Roots of Terror" Teacher's Guide Middle East Map with Labels

[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/teach/terror/art/b4_middleeast.gif]

Blank Middle East Map

[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/teach/terror/art/b4_middleeast_blank.gif]

Daryl Cagles' Pro Cartoonist Index Home Page

[<http://www.cagle.com>]

This site has an excellent collection of editorial cartoons. It includes a guide for teachers and an index to search for cartoons by topic, artist and publisher.

Secrets of the Royal Family

[<http://abcnews.go.com/2020/News/story?id=169246&page=1>]

This ABC News article describes the lavish lifestyles of the Saudi royal family and documents the inability of U.S. and French law enforcement authorities to prosecute their criminal activity.

Global Connections

[<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/globalconnections/mideast/index.html>]

Created by The Outreach Center at Harvard University's Center for Middle Eastern Studies and WGBH, this Web site helps "put world events in context". Type "Saudi Arabia" into the search box to find a broad range of information and resources for teachers.

Al Jazeera

[<http://english.aljazeera.net/HomePage>]

The companion Web site to the Al Jazeera television network offers its audiences in the Arab world "much needed freedom of thought, independence and room for debate". News, commentary and analysis on the site are from an Arab perspective.

Islam Today Web site

[http://www.islamtoday.net/english/fatwa_archive_main.cfm]

This is one of many fatwa Archives and contains information on fatwas about many aspects of Islamic life.

Arab News

[<http://www.arabnews.com/?page=7§ion=0&article=55611&d=6&m=12&y=2004>]

This article illustrates how Muslims interpret fatwas. It was written by Prince Amr al-Faisal, one of the Saudi princes that FRONTLINE interviewed for this program.

Time Magazine: *Wahhabism: Toxic Faith?*

[<http://www.time.com/time/covers/1101030915/wwahhabism.html>]

This article looks at the role of Wahhabism in the cultural and political life of Saudi Arabia.

Time Magazine: *Can We Trust Saudi Arabia?*

[<http://www.time.com/time/archive/preview/0,10987,1101030915-483269,00.html>]

This article looks at the ability of Saudi Arabia to stop terrorism and the importance of Wahhabism in their government.