

6a: Factors Contributing to Tolerance and Intolerance in the History of al-Andalus

Author: Ernest O’Roark

Overview and Purpose of the Lesson:

The purpose of this lesson is to provide students with an understanding of the nature, causes, and consequences of tolerance in a society. The activities achieve the objectives through the use of Medieval Spain as a case study. Students first explore and define the concepts of tolerance and diversity. The concepts are then applied to societies and events in Spain during the Middle Period. Finally, students are asked to identify cause and effect relationships for both tolerant and intolerant societies.

Performance Objectives:

The student will be able to:

- Define and identify examples of tolerance and diversity.
- Explain the causes and results of tolerant vs. intolerant societies in Medieval Spain.

Materials Needed:

- Graphic Organizers: Tolerant and Intolerant Societies
- Video: *Cities of Light*

Time: 2 to 4 class periods, depending on how much of the video is used.

Procedure:

1. Introduction: Explain to students that in this lesson they will be exploring how people have historically dealt with the fact that, for various reasons, their society may be made up of more than one cultural, religious, or ethnic group. When such a society exists, how are minorities treated? What are the consequences for the society as a result of how it decides to treat its minority groups?
2. Discussion: Place the terms “diverse” and “tolerance” on the board or overhead. Ask students to think about the terms and how they may have heard them used in the past. Have students volunteer definitions for each. The result of this discussion will likely be something similar to the following:
 - Diverse: Varied; made up of many things (or people) that are different from one another.
 - Tolerance: A willingness to put up with people whose opinions or ways differ from one’s own, and to allow them to express their differences in social situations, to allow participation of different groups on an equitable basis.
3. Explain that due to circumstances of geography and history some societies find themselves to be more diverse than others. A society that is not diverse is *homogeneous* – made up of a single cultural, religious, or ethnic group. Diverse societies can decide for various reasons to either be tolerant or intolerant.

4. Brainstorming: Divide the class into groups. Assign each group to brainstorm and record possible answers to one of these sets of questions:

- What would be the characteristics of a tolerant diverse society? What would it be like? Why might it decide to be tolerant?
- What would be the characteristics of an intolerant diverse society? What would it be like? Why might it decide to be intolerant?

Have students share their answers in a full-class discussion. (As with any brainstorming activity, the teachers should not make any comments regarding the accuracy of student's ideas. All ideas are accepted.)

5. Graphic Organizers: Give half the class the "Tolerant, Diverse Society" graphic organizer and the other half the "Intolerant Society" graphic organizer. Review and explain the format of the graphic organizers.
6. Video Introduction: Explain to students that they will be viewing a video about Spain during the Middle Ages. Medieval Spain makes an exceptionally good case study, since it was a very diverse society in a time when the question of tolerance vs. intolerance was becoming a major issue. As a result of various political, religious, and social forces, the people of Spain were often faced with the question of whether their diverse society should be tolerant or intolerant. Sometimes they chose to be tolerant and at other times they chose intolerance. Half the class is to look for and note the circumstances that resulted in a tolerant society and the characteristics that society had as a result of being tolerant and diverse. The other half of the class is to look for and note circumstances that resulted in a society becoming intolerant and the characteristics such a society possessed.
7. Video: The video consists of eight chapters, each of which illustrates a phase of Spain's medieval history. They vary in length from about 10 to 20 minutes. The entire video or select segments may be shown. It is recommended that discussion take place between each segment to clarify the story for students, answer questions, and discuss the progress of the graphic organizers. Students may also be asked to make predictions about the next segment based on its title and what they've seen so far.
8. Small Group Discussion: Assign students who have the same graphic organizer to work in small groups to share and refine the notes they've collected.
9. Full Class Discussion: Give students a blank copy of the graphic organizer they do not already have. Moderate a discussion in which students are asked to share and discuss what they believe are the key ideas they collected. Students should note these key points on their blank graphic organizers.

Assessment:

- Give students a hypothetical society and have them categorize the society as tolerant or intolerant and then select from a list of other characteristics that would likely be true of that society.
- Give students a hypothetical society that is faced with an influx of immigrants for some reason. Some in the society argue for tolerance, others for intolerance. Have students respond, write an opinion or letter or debate the issues.
- Create a cause-and-effect matching using specifics from the graphic organizers and video.

- Play or write “what if” in which students speculate about how the history of Spain might have been different if it had remained tolerant and diverse, or how European history might have been different if Spain had never been diverse, or other scenario.

Lesson Set-up Aids for the Teacher

Conditions and events that help foster tolerance: Questions to consider

- What happens in the film that helps or allows the society to be tolerant?
- What do the experts say about how and why the society was tolerant?
- What political, economic, or social conditions helped people, especially leaders, decide to make tolerance a characteristic of their society?

Conditions and events resulting from tolerance: Questions to consider

- What happens in the film that is at least somewhat a result or consequence of tolerance? What took place that was possible because the society was tolerant?
- What do the experts say about the results of tolerance? What achievements are described? What problems?
- What forms does tolerance take? What are the characteristics of a tolerant, diverse society? How can you tell that the society was tolerant?
- Were there any advantages for the society to be tolerant? Were there disadvantages?
- Overall, were the effects of tolerance more positive or negative? Were conditions better or worse when the society was tolerant?

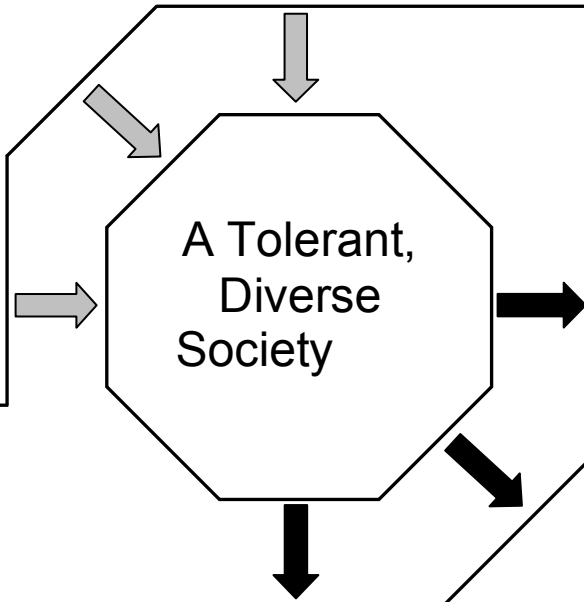
Conditions and events that contribute to intolerance: Questions to consider

- What happens in the film that makes the society become intolerant?
- What do the experts say about how and why the society became intolerant?
- What political, economic, or social conditions made people, especially leaders, decide to make intolerance a characteristic of their society?

Conditions and events resulting from intolerance: Questions to consider

- What happens in the film that is at least somewhat a result or consequence of intolerance? What took place largely *because* the society was intolerant?
- What do the experts say about the results of intolerance? What achievements are described? What problems?
- What forms does intolerance take? What are the characteristics of an intolerant society? How can you tell that the society was intolerant?
- Were there any advantages for the society to be intolerant? Were there disadvantages?
- Overall, were the effects of intolerance more positive or negative? Were conditions better or worse when the society was intolerant?

Conditions and events that help foster tolerance

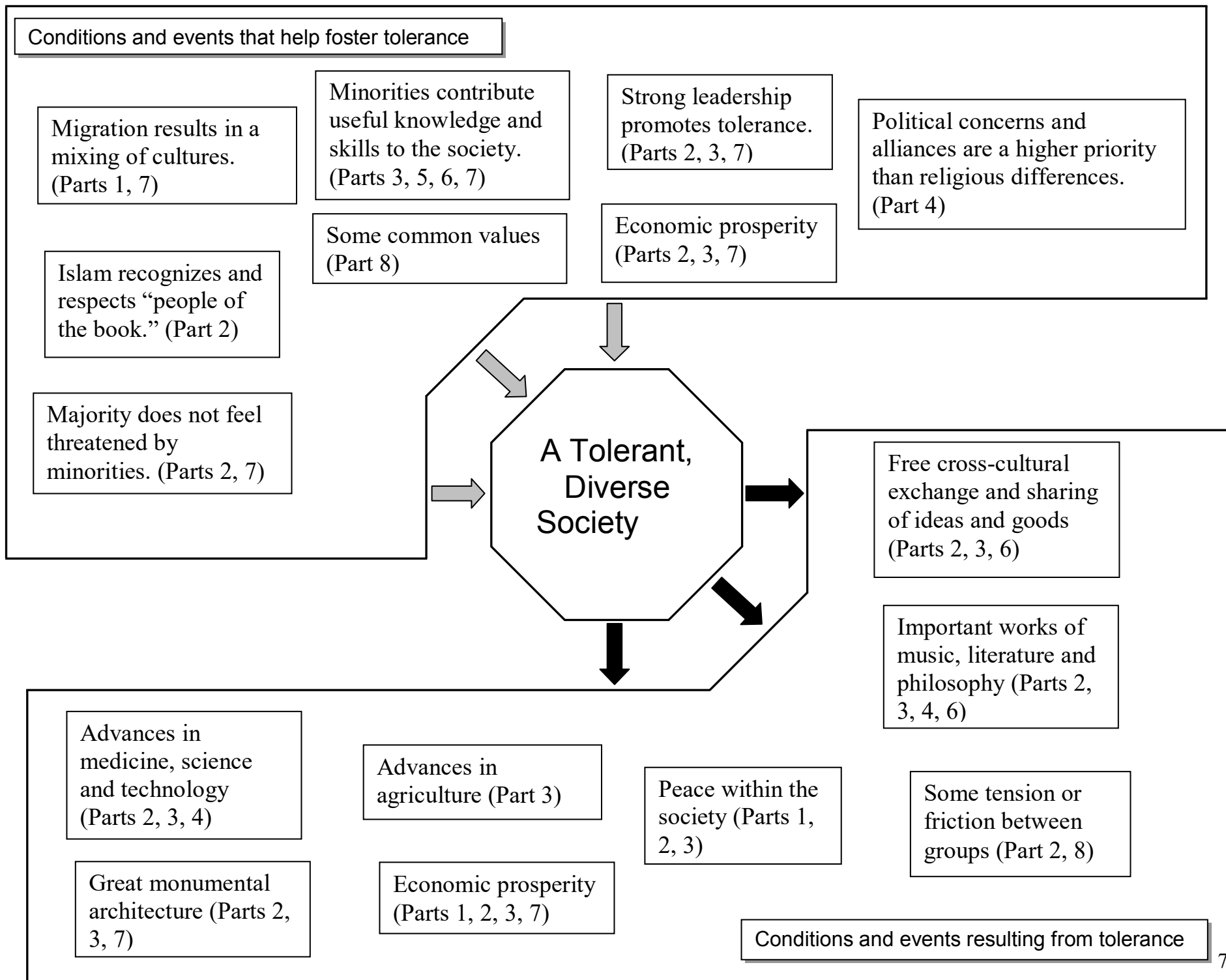


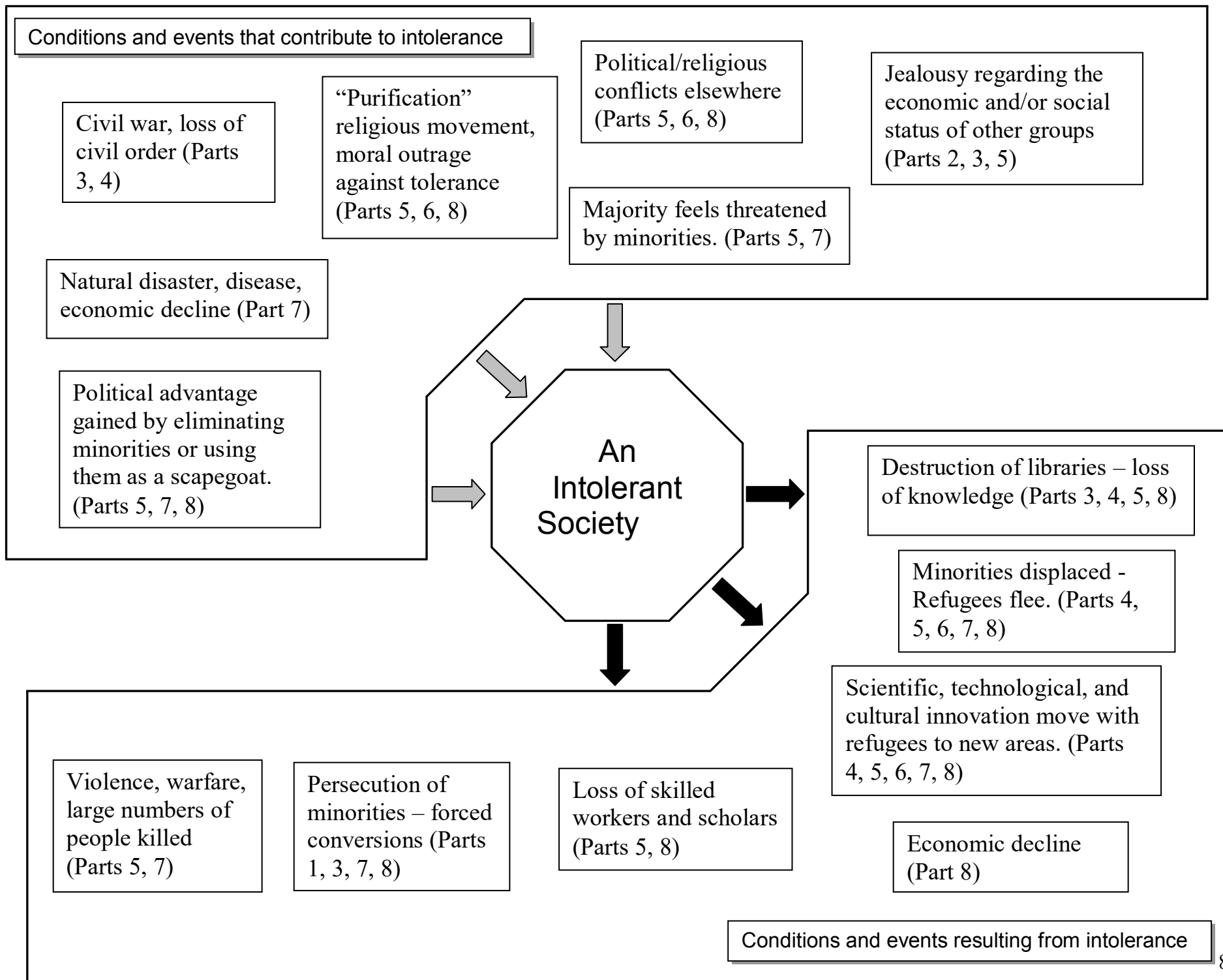
Conditions and events resulting from tolerance

Conditions and events that contribute to intolerance

An
Intolerant
Society

Conditions and events resulting from intolerance





6c: Roundtable on Applying the Film's Message to Our Times

Author: Susan Douglass

Overview and Purpose of the Lesson:

Lesson 6a utilized the content of the film to explore the social and political conditions under which cultural pluralism and religious tolerance can thrive, and the forces that undermine it. This lesson builds on understandings developed through viewing the film, and guides students toward the critical and historical thinking skill of drawing contemporary parallels while respecting the distance between our own time and social conditions and those in the past. The lesson concludes with an activity related to applying civically responsible and creative behaviors on the part of the students toward fostering tolerance and responding to intolerance. It can be used as a current events civics lesson as well, and as an assessment activity for the documentary film.

Performance Objectives:

- Build upon the ideas presented in *Cities of Light: The Rise and Fall of Islamic Spain*
- Articulate positive and creative forms of civic behavior that foster tolerance, and discuss what individuals and groups can do to encourage it.
- Identify behavior that should be avoided because it is intolerant and discuss what appropriate measures individuals and groups can take to counter it.
- Identify current events, policies and actions by individuals and groups in the nation and the world that form examples of fostering tolerance or creating conditions for intolerance.

Materials Needed:

Roundtable:

- Completed graphic organizers from Activity 6a, *conditions that help foster tolerance*, and *conditions that contribute to intolerance*
- Lesson Set-up aids for the Teacher from Lesson 6a.
- Student Handout 6c: What would you do if...?

Extension:

- Classroom or hallway bulletin board, butcher paper mural, or poster boards
- Markers, writing paper, construction paper, display materials

Time:

Roundtable: About 15-20 minutes for roundtable discussion in groups as a concluding post-viewing activity.

Extension: Approx. 1-2 class periods for class round table discussion, plus homework, library, or computer lab assignment to clip news items and articles related to tolerant or intolerant public or civic behavior observed by

Procedure for Roundtable:

1. This roundtable discussion can be a whole-class activity, or students can be divided into groups of 4 or 5 students each, with a table leader selected. The teacher should go over the *Lesson Set-up aids for the Teacher* from Lesson 6a as a foundation for leading the class discussion, or it can be given to table leaders ahead of time if class is to be divided into groups.
2. All students should take a few minutes to go over their completed graphic organizers from Lesson 6a, “*conditions that help foster tolerance,*” and “*conditions that contribute to intolerance.*”
3. Brainstorm scenarios of intolerance in our own times that seem parallel or equivalent to the actions shown in the film. Against whom are they directed, and what do you think the motives are behind such acts?
4. Write the events or acts in brief form in the rows on the left column of the chart (Handout 6c).
5. In the rows on the right column opposite the event or act, write a brief description of what you might do to challenge the intolerant behavior in a civically responsible manner.
6. Brainstorm scenarios of tolerance in our own times that can foster good relations, civility, and a sense of security among various groups in society.
7. In each row on the left column of the chart (Handout 6c), write an action that you could carry out in conjunction with school, work environments and society at large in order to foster tolerance.
8. Write a brief summary of how you think a person might respond after witnessing or being affected by your expression of tolerance.

Procedure for Extension:

1. After completing the roundtable activity, have students—as homework or in the library or computer lab—search news reports in a variety of sources and media to identify acts that foster intolerance, whether they are related to individual actions or speech, local, state, or national policies by a government, or laws. Such actions have the effect of limiting, denigrating certain groups, and making them feel insecure, and fostering poor civic relations. For each one of these news clips the student finds, they must locate another one that illustrates tolerant or inclusive behavior, or behavior toward certain groups that fosters a sense of security and positive social relations.
2. After students have presented a few of their clippings, have a roundtable discussion about the actions and outcomes that result or could result from the actions, speech, policies or laws described in the articles or media clips.
3. Make a bulletin board or butcher paper mural that displays the media clippings in a manner that expresses for viewers what are the “inputs” and “outcomes” of tolerant and intolerant behavior in modern society. Develop a graphic layout using colors, lettering and symbols or designs that conveys the message to the viewer effectively.

Student Handout 6c:

What would you do if someone acts intolerant...?

Action witnessed	Your response

What could you do to foster tolerance...?

Action you could take	Likely response