



Muslim-American Heritage Month: An Analysis of K-12 Resources Promoting One-Sided Narratives

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Many school districts share resources and materials to recognize and celebrate the contributions, culture, and history of various ethnic/religious groups for identity-based heritage months throughout the school year. CAMERA has reviewed a collection of materials and resources recommended in K-12 school districts for Muslim-American Heritage Month in January.

CAMERA's analysis found that, collectively, these resources tend to portray the United States as inherently racist and violent, present Islam and its historical spread in an overwhelmingly positive and sanitized manner, encourage student activism aligned with contemporary political movements, and advance exaggerated claims about Muslim influence in early American history. At the same time, many materials privilege Palestinian narratives while minimizing or erasing Jewish historical connections to the land of Israel. Taken together, these patterns raise concerns about balance, historical accuracy, and the appropriateness of presenting contested political

and historical claims to students without sufficient context or nuance.

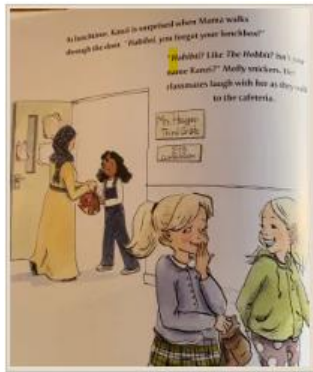
America Portrayed as Inherently Racist and Violent

Across multiple resources, the U.S. is depicted as structurally racist, hostile to Muslims, and indiscriminately violent. These portrayals often present allegations of systemic injustice or state violence without context, corroboration, or acknowledgment of alternative explanations, reinforcing a uniformly negative view of American society and institutions.

- The book *Punching the Air* describes a Muslim boy imprisoned “only because of his skin color,” portraying the U.S. justice system as designed to perpetuate racism.
- In the book *ARAB: How You See Me*, a Palestinian-American girl claims federal agents arrested her uncle – “the first moment when I knew being Palestinian...meant something different” –

implying ethnic targeting without evidence. *We're in This Together* also highlights “oppression, police brutality, and systemic racism,” without sufficient context or nuance.

- Several books portray white students bullying Muslim classmates, including *The Arabic Quilt*, which portrays white girls as the aggressors.



- Children’s book *Flying Over Water* depicts Muslim immigrants encountering anti-Muslim protestors tied to the Trump-era travel ban, asking rhetorically, “How did America get this way?” without exploring why the ban was imposed. The Trump administration justified the ban as necessary to prevent terrorism by restricting entry from countries that either posed heightened terrorism risks or failed to provide sufficient identity-management and information-sharing data to enable reliable vetting of travelers.
- A video about a mosque in Japan portrays the U.S. as an “invader” during WWII, crediting Allah with saving the mosque from

American bombing and positively portraying Japanese soldiers.



I visited the Islamic MIRACLE MOSQUE in JAPAN

- Some resources depict wearing a hijab as an act of resistance rather than an expression of religious observance and view reactions to them as discrimination. The video *Muslim Women Talk Hijab* claims that wearing a hijab is “an act of challenging western standards of beauty.” None of the resources provided explain how women have organized public opposition to the hijab, as documented in a 2019 [report](#) by Human Rights Watch.

Islamic History Sanitized While Violence is Minimized or Omitted

Several resources depict Islam as inherently peaceful while downplaying or omitting well-documented historical episodes involving conquest, coercion, or violence. When such episodes are briefly acknowledged, they are left unexplored, creating a one-sided portrayal inconsistent with historical scholarship

- The book *I Am Muhammad Ali* portrays Islam as pacifist. Explaining why he resisted conscription into the U.S. military, Ali is

quoted as having said, “As a Muslim, I didn’t believe in war.”

- The video *How Did Indonesia Gain the Largest Muslim Population in the World* credits Islam’s spread solely to trade and moral appeal, asserting it did not spread through conquest, while ignoring contrary historical evidence.
- The video *The Islamic Golden Age: How it Shaped Modern Science and Culture* claims that a “factor that contributed to the Islamic Golden age was the Islamic tradition of tolerance and openness,” whitewashing Islam’s history of conquest and suppression of other religions.



The Islamic Golden Age: How It Shaped Modern Science And Culture

- The book *Amazing Muslims Who Changed the World: Extraordinary Stories of Incredible People* includes the story of Sayyida al-Hurra, a female Muslim pirate from North Africa portrayed as an inspiring example of a strong Muslim woman. Absent is any discussion of how North African Muslim pirates like Al-Hurra enslaved those captured in their raids.

Youth Activism Encouraged by Elevating Ideologically Selective Role Models

Some materials explicitly encourage students to engage in political activism aligned with progressive or left-wing causes, often presenting controversial figures uncritically and omitting relevant context that would allow students to evaluate these figures independently.

- The book *Malcolm Little* inspires children to “carry on with social activism” in America.
- Other resources champion Muslim-American U.S. Representatives Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar, while ignoring their inflammatory statements about Jews and Israel, such as Tlaib’s defense of the slogan “From the river to the sea” and Omar’s suggestion that American support for Israel is attributable to Jewish political donations rather than shared values and interests.
- The video *On Being Black, Muslim American, and Proud* urges girls to resist the “crazy right” and “neo-Nazism” in America by wearing a hijab and supporting Black- and Muslim-owned businesses.



On Being Black, Muslim American, and Proud: Yasmine Yasmine

Role of Muslims in Early American History Exaggerated

Some resources overstate Muslim influence in early American history, presenting speculative or disputed claims as established fact and drawing sweeping conclusions from limited or ambiguous evidence.

- The video *African Muslims in Early America* claims Islam has been part of America's religious fabric since the colonial era. The discovery of a single Arabic-inscribed pendant is presented as evidence of Muslim soldiers on American soil, slave dance traditions are attributed to Islamic rituals, and the Muslim call to prayer is said to have echoed across America for 500 years – claims not supported by mainstream scholarship.



African Muslims in Early America



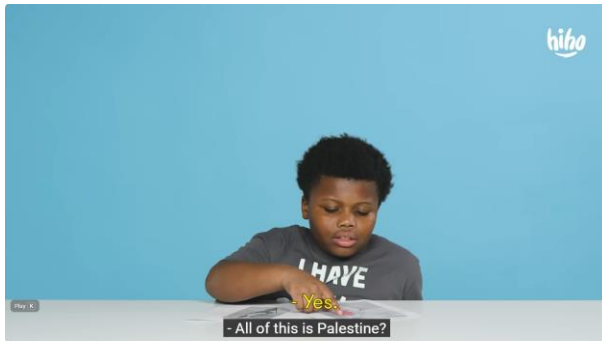
African Muslims in Early America

- PBS video *How Muslims Influenced Thomas Jefferson and America's Founders* claims that because Jefferson owned a copy of the *Qur'an*, he was greatly influenced by Islam. The video highlights African Muslims enslaved by George Washington and other founders, while omitting that an enslaved Muslim scholar from Senegal was sold into slavery by other Africans. It also glosses over the conflict with the Barbary pirates who enslaved thousands themselves.

Palestinian Narratives Privileged While Jewish History Minimized or Erased

Numerous materials advance a Palestinian-centered narrative that excludes or marginalizes Jewish historical ties to the land, often employing symbolism, maps, and storytelling that promote irredentist claims and present contested political issues as settled facts.

- The book *Sitti's Olive Trees* presents Palestine as an ancestral homeland using symbolic imagery associated with displacement.
- The book *I Am From Palestine* replaces Israel with Palestine on a map shown to a child, erasing Jewish history and reinforcing territorial claims. A children's food video asserts "all of this is Palestine" as a child points to a map of Israel:



Kids Try Palestinian Food | Kids Try | HiHo Kids



We're Not White | Amer Zahr | TEDxDetroit

- The video *National Arab American Heritage Month for Kids* labels the West Bank “Palestine,” treating it as a sovereign state, while the book *We’re in This Together* promotes Palestinian “occupation” narratives alongside intersectional activism.



National Arab American Heritage Month for Kids | NAAMH for Kids | Twinkl USA

- Comedian Amer Zahr falsely claims Palestine is mentioned in the Bible, despite the term “[Palestine](#)” having originated under Roman rule.