Flags of the Middle East

Overview:
In this lesson plan, students will become acquainted with some of the country flags from the Middle East. By examining the symbolism in the flags, students will begin to think about the country’s geography, traditions, and histories. This is a good introduction to the Middle East, which can be paired with units and activities on geography lessons. (See Currency Unit, Capitals Unit, Mobility Unit, etc.)

Objectives:
Students will:
1. Examine a selection of flags from the Middle East and match them with the flag descriptions.
2. Consider how flags tell a narrative about the values of the peoples they represent by discussing the symbols on the flags.
3. Create a personal flag.

Activity:
1. Provide students with the handout including the pictures of the flags and the descriptions of the flags. Ask them to match the country flag to its description.

2. Assign groups one particular flag to work with and ask them to discuss their particular flag. Why are the symbols important? What story does it tell about the country? (For a longer exercise, have the groups become “experts” on that country through research projects and then teach their classmates about the country. See lesson plan on capitals for more ideas.)

3. Allow students to relate to the activity by making connections between Middle Eastern flags and that of the United States. Discuss what the flag of the United States represents and then allow students to create their own personal flag.

Teachers: Please contact Angela Williams, CSAMES Outreach Coordinator, at aswillms@illinois.edu, for the answer key to the Questions on Flags of the Middle East.
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[Images of flags from various Middle Eastern countries]
Questions for Flags of the Middle East

Match each numbered description with its corresponding flag on the previous page.

1. The flag of Iraq has had four different designs since the establishment of Iraq in 1921. The current flag of Iraq has stars and the Arabic script reads, “Allahu Akbar” (God is great). Which flag do you think this could be?

2. The national emblem of Afghanistan, a mosque encircled by a wreath, is found on the flag of Afghanistan. Which flag do you think this could be?

3. The colors of the flag of Kuwait come from a poem by Safie Al-Deen Al-Hali. The poem reads, “White are our deeds/ Black are our battles/ Green are our lands/ Red are our swords.” Which flag do you think this could be?

4. Qatar’s flag has two colors, one symbolizing peace and the other symbolizing the bloodshed during several wars. Which flag do you think this could be?

5. The flag of Saudi Arabia celebrates the country’s first monarch with an image of might and power in his many victories. Which flag do you think this could be?

6. The Georgian flag is called the “five-cross flag” and was also used by the medieval Georgian kingdom. Which flag do you think this could be?

7. Iran’s flag has three horizontal bands of color representing Islam, peace, and courage. Which flag do you think this could be?

8. The flag of Syria has three horizontal stripes representing three Middle Eastern dynasties. Which flag do you think this could be?

9. The flag of Pakistan has the color green to represent Muslim peoples and the color white to represent non-Muslim minorities in the country. The images on the flag represent progress, light, and knowledge. Which flag do you think this could be?