

Rationale for Lesson: Within the past 12 to 24 months I have been curious as to the numbers of Christians that have been in Iraq (and Syria) and have been there hundreds indeed thousands of years. It has prompted me to ponder a number of questions as to their origins as well as why they seem to have historically experienced a noteworthy degree of religious freedom and relative lack of persecution under the oftentimes brutal regime of Saddam Hussein. Admittedly, for years I assumed the opposite of that but had a hunch that I might be wrong. I seek to peak some of the same curiosity in my geography students through the following objectives:

- Further familiarize students with the geography of the area
- Give students a geographical and historical context for the lesson, both ancient and more recent in order to introduce them to the players, past and present, in this current tragic drama
- Have students, after some guided fact-finding, compare and contrast life for Christians under Saddam Hussein vs ISIS

Provide a blank line map of Iraq and surrounding countries. The map should be more or less to a scale that Iraq is large enough to identify some fairly broad areas of its interior.

Preview all videos before showing to students. The Fox News video may be less appropriate for grades younger than high school.

Lesson can be done individually or in groups, in or outside of class, and can be modified to have students do more their own research on the topic. In class, the lesson should take approximately one class period.

Part 1 is intended to check student's prior knowledge of the topic in the process of introducing them to Saddam Hussein.

Along with the *60 Minutes* video is a link to its full transcript which might also be useful.

Bear in mind, that the information in this lesson may seem rather elementary to us but not necessarily so to our students. I have found that much of what my students know about news and current (and not as current) events is what I introduce them to. The lesson is structured so as to also be used in future years when such info may be more historical than current.

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards:

(1) History. The student understands how geography and processes of spatial exchange (diffusion) influenced events in the past and helped to shape the present. The student is expected to:

(A) analyze the effects of physical and human geographic patterns and processes on the past and describe their impact on the present, including significant physical features and

environmental conditions that influenced migration patterns and shaped the distribution of culture groups today

(2) History. The student understands how people, places, and environments have changed over time and the effects of these changes. The student is expected to:
(A) describe the human and physical characteristics of the same regions at different periods of time to evaluate relationships between past events and current conditions

(5) Geography. The student understands how political, economic, and social processes shape cultural patterns and characteristics in various places and regions. The student is expected to:

(A) analyze how the character of a place is related to its political, economic, social, and cultural elements

(21) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to:

(A) analyze and evaluate the validity and utility of multiple sources of geographic information such as primary and secondary sources, aerial photographs, and maps;

(B) locate places of contemporary geopolitical significance on a map

(14) History. The student understands the development of radical Islamic fundamentalism and the subsequent use of terrorism by some of its adherents. The student is expected to:

(A) summarize the development and impact of radical Islamic fundamentalism on events in the second half of the 20th century, including Palestinian terrorism and the growth of al Qaeda; and

(B) explain the U.S. response to terrorism from September 11, 2001, to the present.

Christians in Iraq: Saddam Hussein vs ISIS

Label the country of Iraq and surrounding countries on map.

Part 1

Watch the short biography.com video on Saddam Hussein and answer the following questions:

1. Do you think Christians are allowed to practice their faith in Muslim countries?
2. How long do you think Christians have lived in Iraq?
3. How do you think Christians fared under a dictatorship such as Saddam Hussein's?
4. What do you already know about what has happened to Christians in ISIS controlled areas?
5. How do/would you think their treatment under Hussein would compare to that of ISIS?

Part 2

Read the "Iraq" portion of the PBS article, the first segment of the NBC News article and the first two paragraphs of the Catholic World Report: and answer the following questions:

1. How far back does the Christian community in Iraq date back?

2. What “understanding” did minorities seem to have with Hussein?

Part 2 continued:

3. What were some of the ways Christians prospered economically?

4. What did Hussein’s intolerance of sectarian violence insure and how would that benefit Iraqi Christians?

5. What general impression do you get about life under Hussein for Christian minorities?

Part 3

Watch the *60 Minutes* video and answer the following questions:

1. How many Christians (men, women and children) have been forced from their homes?

2. Mark and label Mosul on your map.

3. Name and mark on your map a vast area near Mosul that's been home to Christians since the first century after Christ.

4. What language spoken by Jesus are the church services done in?

5. In what year AD was the Monastery of St. Matthew founded?

6. What four groups has it survived since?

Part 3 continued:

7. Mark and label the region of Kurdish northern Iraq.

8. Name and mark the location on your map where the Archbishop of the Syriac Orthodox Church in Mosul found refuge.

9. Because the Old Testament prophet Jonah (of in-the-belly-of-the-fish fame) was said to be buried in the monastery of Mar Gorgis, just north of Mosul, what two groups consider (or should consider) it a holy site?

10. How old does Archbishop Bashar Warda say the Chaldean Catholic community is in Erbil?

11. What does the Archbishop Warda say is the irony regarding Christians in Iraq as compared to “democracy”?

12. What are ISIS members doing to churches as they seek to eradicate Christianity from the landscape?

13. What are some of the things that could happen to people who didn't convert to Islam?

Revisit the opening questions and discuss your previous position(s). Re-evaluate your previous impressions and presuppositions and in a brief paragraph, revise and/or reconfirm them and provide supporting examples.

List of links:

<http://www.biography.com/people/saddam-hussein-9347918>

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/mid-east-christians-intro/>

http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/03/19/17357746-people-turned-on-christians-persecuted-iraqi-minority-reflects-on-life-after-saddam?lite

http://www.catholicworldreport.com/Item/3258/the_west_was_wrong_in_iraqand_christians_are_paying_the_price.aspx

Video: *60 Minutes* - Iraq's Christians persecuted by ISIS:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dpWJjPOpip4>

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/iraq-christians-60-minutes-lara-logan/>

For further reference/interest:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-11669994>

Fox News Reporting Unholy War The March of ISIS Part 1:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iP0cj8qumpk>

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/video/iraq-vet-joins-fight-against-isis-29189456>