

THE PLACES WE MEET

MUSLIM WOMEN AS COMMUNITY HELPERS



Social movements around the globe have inspired women and girls to dream of spaces where liberatory practices for gender equality and anti-racism are possible. In Canada, the lived experiences of women and girls are diverse and social issues that entangle these realities require an approach that recognizes historical harm, encourages social action, and values the contributions of women in ways that empower. The Places We Meet is designed to support educators with strategies and tools that will centre the voices of women who have been historically marginalized, shift power dynamics, and eradicate systems of oppression that serve to disenfranchise. The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario is committed to creating resources that restore empower, and shift the discourse around women's equality.

The resource honours the work of intersectional feminism, a framework that highlights the interconnectivity of social identities such as race, ability, gender, religion, language, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and age. It will be available for free download on etfo.ca in August 2023.

DIVISION: Primary

DURATION OF THE LESSON:

40-60 minutes

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

(For the educator)

Muslim women are important members of our communities. They fulfil various roles and responsibilities that support the productivity, sustainability, and growth of the community. However, they are often portrayed in media texts (e.g., books, television, movies, etc.) through a stereotypical lens. In Western culture, Muslim women are often portrayed as being oppressed, uneducated, passive victims in need of saving. This misrepresentation of Muslim women is pervasive and influences the perception and ideologies that are held by society. As educators, we can support students to learn about different Muslim women that serve various roles in their communities. It is important to represent and celebrate the diversity of Muslim women in our classrooms.

In this lesson, the goal is to counter the singular narrative by sharing diverse representations of Muslim women. It is important to remember that Muslim women are not a homogenous group and have various social identities that intersect. Muslim women may choose to express their religious beliefs in various ways, such as by wearing scarves or veils, or choosing not to wear religious markers of their faith. Those who choose to wear a hijab are more recognizable and may experience acts of injustice, bias, or hate based on Islamophobic ideology.

This lesson will introduce learners to different Muslim women who impact and create change in their communities. By highlighting Muslim women as community helpers, we are working to disrupt the stereotypes

about Muslim women sometimes created by the media and single-story representations.

KEY TERMS (For use with the students)

Community: A group of people who may live and work together. People in a community help each other.

Community helper: A person who helps others in their community. Everyone who lives in a community can be a community helper. Some examples of community helpers are: educators, bakers, doctors, grocery store clerks.

Hijab: A head covering worn by some Muslim women as part of their Islamic faith.

Muslim: Term for people who follow the Islamic faith.

Muslim woman: Someone who identifies as a woman and is a follower of the Islamic faith.

BIG IDEAS: Muslim women, Diversity

LEARNING GOALS

- We will learn about different Muslim women who are community helpers and learn how they express themselves.
- We will learn that community members are diverse and can hold many roles and responsibilities within the community.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

The following are suggestions for what could be included in the success criteria. Effective practice includes co-constructing success criteria with learners:

- I can describe community helpers.
- I can share information about community helpers I know.
- I can provide examples of Muslim women working and helping in the community.



ASSESSMENT FOR/AS LEARNING

- Learners can be prompted to pause and self-reflect throughout with the prompting questions embedded throughout the lesson.
- Educators can use observational notes to capture the different ways learners are interacting, sharing, listening, and understanding the content.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

- Who are the community helpers that you know?
- What else do you know about the community helpers you see and know?
- How are Muslim women helping in their communities?
- Who do we see and who might be missing in our communities?

CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

This learning experience may be suitable for learners in the Kindergarten program and in Grade 1 to Grade 3.

Kindergarten: OE 5 & OE 28

Grade 1: Social Studies

Grades 1-3: Language - Media Literacy; Health and Physical Education - Social-Emotional Learning Skills

PROGRAM ADAPTATIONS

There are different entry points for all students embedded throughout the lesson. There are books and images to learn and springboard into the topic. There are also whole-group and small-group discussions and activities throughout.

MATERIALS

- Text: *Under My Hijab* by Hena Khan, illustrated by Aaliya Jaleel
- Chart paper
- Writing and drawing tools (pencils, markers, crayons, paint, construction paper, sticky notes, glue)
- Loose parts (strings, pompoms, buttons, Popsicle sticks, etc.)



“WOMEN PUT ON THE SCARF WHEN THEY GO TO WORK OR SCHOOL, PLAY SPORTS OR DO ANY ACTIVITY IN A PUBLIC SETTING. BUT THEY UNCOVER WHEN THEY ARE AT HOME, WITH THE MEN IN THEIR IMMEDIATE FAMILIES, OR IN THE COMPANY OF OTHER WOMEN AND GIRLS. YOUNG GIRLS MAY PRACTISE WEARING A HIJAB AS PART OF A SCHOOL UNIFORM OR TO MIRROR THE WOMEN IN THEIR LIVES.”

MINDS ON

Ask students the following questions:

- What is a community helper?
- Who are the community helpers that you know?
- What do they do to help the community?

Record students’ thinking and ideas on chart paper.

The educator can make a T-chart with the type of community helper on one side and words/images about how they help the community on the other.

EXAMPLE:

Community Helper	How they Help
<i>Educator</i>	<i>Teach people new things</i>

ACTION

PART 1

The educator will introduce the text, *Under My Hijab* by Hena Khan and share that the story is about a young girl who sees how the women in her family take on many roles and responsibilities to help their communities

The educators will invite learners to observe the story carefully and consider what they notice about the characters.

After reading, the educator will share that there are many ways that Muslim women express who they are. At home they may unveil themselves.

The educator will highlight and draw attention to the many different representations of Muslim women in the text by asking, “How has grandma chosen to represent herself at home?”

Have the learners see that Muslim women may choose to represent themselves in many ways; some may wear head scarves (hijab), while others do not.

Highlights from the book:

- Grandma wears a hijab when baking; when she cooks at home she wears her hair in a bun
- Mom who is a doctor and is wearing a hijab
- Mom is gardening and her hair is worn down
- Auntie is an artist who wears her hijab fashionably, but when home her uncovered hair is streaked pink and purple
- A troop leader wears a hijab and helps others navigate on a hike, but in the privacy of her tent her hair is worn down
- The sister wears a fashionable hijab at school, and a different hijab at karate, but when she is home she lets her hair down

The educator may share that the Muslim women in the book all had roles to play in the community. They were doctors, bakers, artists, rangers, students, and more. They also expressed themselves in different ways at home and in the community.

The book shares, “Women put on the scarf when they go to work or school, play sports or do any activity in a public setting. But they uncover when they are at home, with the men in their immediate families, or in the company of other women and girls. Young girls may practise wearing a hijab as part of a school uniform or to mirror the women in their lives.” It is important to note that many Muslim women, including the author of the book, choose not to wear a hijab, based on their personal interpretations of Islamic religious requirements. Yet they may cover their hair in certain situations when visiting a mosque or while praying.

The educator will share that Muslim women in the community wear their hijab in different styles depending on their culture, personal interests or expression, and they are all considered beautiful expressions of the Islamic faith.

PART 2

How might you represent a community member that you appreciate? The educator will invite learners to represent their thinking using writing tools. (e.g., markers, pencils, and crayons). The educator will collect all the pictures and highlight a few examples. Students may choose to share observations about the community helper’s way of dressing or identity to add further information they know about this community member.

OR

Create a classroom book about the different community helpers in the school’s local community. Brainstorm all of the community helpers in your local community and, if possible, take photographs of people in these roles (e.g., teacher, principal, crossing guard, lunchroom supervisors, etc.). Each learner can research or be responsible for one community helper. They can write about how this person is a community helper. Display the completed book in the classroom and share it with the school community.

CONSOLIDATION

Display and discuss what images and ideas have emerged from the class-created illustrations/book.

- What do we notice?
- Who is included?
- Who may be missing?
- How is our collection the same or different than the book we read together?

EXTENSIONS

Read more books about Muslim women community helpers, past and present:

Yasmin Series by Saadia Faruqi

One Wish: Fatima al-Fihri and the World’s Oldest University by M.O. Yuksel, illustrated by Mariam Quraishi

The World is Not a Rectangle: A Portrait of Architect Zaha Hadid by Jeanette Winter

Muslim Women Rise: Inspirational Champions of Our Time by Saira Mir, illustrated by Aaliya Jaleel

Learners can further explore the various expressions of Muslim women through an Invitation for Learning in the space with the book *Under My Hijab* by Hena Khan using loose parts (e.g., rubber elastics, cloth elas-

tics, rings, ribbon, tissue paper, velour sticks, peg people) paired with the question: How might people in our community express themselves?



Created by: Kenisha Bynoe

Over time have scaffolded and guided conversations with learners around the importance of representation of all identities in all roles in our communities.

RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

VIDEOS:

Adichie, C.N. (2009, October) The danger of a single story [Video]. TED Conferences.
Ahmed, R. (2021, June 10). Muslim Misrepresentation in Film [Video]. YouTube.
CBC Docs (n.d.) 8 Muslim youth making an impact in Canada.

BOOKS:

Mir, S. (2019). *Muslim girls rise: Inspirational champions of our time* (A. Jaleel, illus.). Salaam Reads.

Pulver, A. (2021, June 11). Riz Ahmed calls for urgent change in ‘toxic portrayals’ of Muslims on screen. *The Guardian*.

WEBSITES:

Milo Productions. (2015). A New Life in a New Land: The Muslim Experience in Canada. <https://www.anewlife.ca/>