

## **Arab Spring Lesson Plan: Writing Exercises**

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### **Introduction**

During the winter of 2010 and the spring of 2011, the world watched as pro-democracy protesters across North Africa and the Middle East rose up against the dictatorial regimes that had ruled their home countries for years. The long-term political, social, and economic ramifications of these revolutions remain to be seen, but there is much to study in the factors that led to these large-scale people's movements, and the intended and unintended consequences as countries across the region seek democratic reforms.

### **Lesson Plan Description**

The resources outlined below can be used to help students complete a comprehensive research paper on the events of the 2011 Middle East uprisings, or "Arab Spring." The sources may also be grouped to help students focus on specific factors that led to, sustained, and in some respects, expedited the revolutions: the role of Arab youth; the use of social media; the role of the U.S. and other NATO countries; demographic factors such as the "youth bulge;" and economic factors such as the global recession and high unemployment rates.

The lesson also includes videos produced by Al Jazeera English to provide students with background information on the evolution of the revolutions and how protest has (and has not) led to change across the Arab World. [Note: These videos are appropriate for a range of students and should be pre-viewed by the class teacher before use in the classroom.]

### **Student Instructions/Sample Assignments:**

#### ***Internet Search Terms for Research***

As your students complete this writing assignment they may need to identify additional online and print resources. In addition to "Arab Spring" the following search terms listed may be of assistance: Arab Awakening; Middle East unrest; Middle East uprising; Tunisian revolution; Egyptian revolution; pro-democracy protests.

#### **1. Informative Essay (Grades 6-12)**

Have your students select one country involved in the Arab spring movement and write an informative essay about it. The essay should include historical and political background information on the country, the major events of the uprising in that country, and a summary of what changes, if any, have taken place since the uprising. Students should use the timelines for country specific information, Pulitzer Center and other reporting pertaining to their country as resources.

#### **2. Comparative Essay (Grades 8-12)**

Have students write an essay comparing how the Arab spring revolution manifested itself in two different countries. Students can compare who participated in protests, nature and number of protests, countries' government structures, the response by countries' governments, and the relative success of movement. Students should use the background videos, timelines, Pulitzer and other reporting pertaining to the country as sources.

### **3. Argumentative Essay (Grades 8-12)**

Have students write an argumentative essay on which factor was the most influential in causing the movement. Example factors: youth bulge, authoritarian governments, economic conditions, lack of rights. Students should use the background videos, timelines, Pulitzer and other reporting pertaining to the factor as sources.

### **4. Research Essay (Grades 8-12)**

Have students identify a theme or topic from the Arab spring that they would like to explore further. Encourage students to choose a theme or topic that is applicable to more than one country. Example themes/topics are: role of women, role of religious groups, role of media, role of youth, challenges for the future, etc. Students should use the background videos, timelines, and country/topic specific Pulitzer reporting as well as additional sources to complete this assignment.

### **5. Political Cartoons (Grades 10-12)**

Have students write an essay analyzing the Arab Spring political cartoons included in this lesson. Students can choose to focus on one cartoon, group cartoons by theme and analyze them together, or compare two or more cartoons. Their analysis should go beyond description of the cartoon and talk about the cartoons meaning and/or significance.

### **6. Document Based Question (Grades 10-12)**

This essay is similar to the AP test's document based questions. Students are given a set of documents they must use in their essay. Typically, students only have a fixed amount of time to prepare and write this essay; however, teachers can adjust this prompt to best fit their classroom. For each prompt, provide students with 5-6 documents that are relevant to the question. We recommend including at least one visual (photo, graph, timeline, cartoon).

Students must answer the provided question by using all of the documents to support their thesis. Possible questions are included below:

- Many factors led to the 2010-2011 uprisings in the Arab world. Which factor was the most influential in causing and sustaining the revolutions?
- How successful were the spring 2011 uprisings in Egypt? Analyze the factors that contributed to the level of success achieved. Use the documents provided to support your response.
- Discuss the uncertainty the events of the "Arab Spring" have created both within affected countries and across the world. Explain how nations are responding to this uncertainty.
- Evaluate both the positive and negative effects of the "Arab Spring."

## Background Information Resources:

1. Al Jazeera: "The Evolution of Arab Revolutions" Short video segments documenting the role of youth and the media in the Arab Spring, April 22, 2011 on Al Jazeera English
  - VIDEO:  
<http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/empire/2011/04/2011421104111964650.html>
  - TRANSCRIPT:  
<http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/empire/2011/04/201142893739382332.html>
    - Start of video-2:40, introduction (stats and short background)
    - 3:10-7:55, role of youth in Arab Spring
    - 24:00-28:56, role of the media in Arab Spring
  
2. "The Arab Awakening " Seven one-hour examinations of the Arab Spring, May 14, 2011 on Al Jazeera English  
<http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/general/2011/04/20114483425914466.html>
  - a. The Death of Fear, 49 minutes  
How the death of Mohommad Bouazizi in Tunisia ignited a revolution across the Arab world.  
<http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/general/2011/04/20114483425914466.html>
  - b. The Fall of Mubarak, 24 minutes  
An examination of how the people's revolution in Egypt brought down the Mubarak regime.  
<http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/general/2011/04/20114483425914466.html>
  - c. The People Want, 17:30-23:15  
This video examines peoples' opinions on NATO's interference in Libya,  
<http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/general/2011/04/20114483425914466.html>

## Timelines and General Information Resources

1. "Arab Spring: an interactive timeline of Middle East protests" By Gary Blight and Sheila Pulham, *The Guardian*, June 8, 2011

Link: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2011/mar/22/middle-east-protest-interactive-timeline>

This interactive timeline provides information on protests, government responses, international responses, regime changes and more, for 17 different Middle East countries. Bonus: each point on the timeline is linked to a relevant news stories.

2. "Middle East and North Africa in turmoil" By The Washington Post News Reports, *The Washington Post*, June 2011

Link: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/world/middle-east-protests/>

This interactive map provides a timeline of events for each country involved in the Arab Spring movement.

3. BBC News: Arab Uprising

Link: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12813859>

This news page features all of BBC News' Arab Uprising related reporting, including country background information, leader profiles, and current reporting.

4. "Middle East protests: Country by Country" by BBC News World, *BBC News*, June 2011

Link: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-12482678>

This feature provides country specific up-to-date information on the Arab spring movement.

5. "In Tunisia, act of one fruit vendor unleashes wave of revolution through the Arab world" By Marc Fisher, *The Washington Post*, March 26, 2011

Link: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/in-tunisia-act-of-one-fruit-vendor-sparks-wave-of-revolution-through-arab-world/2011/03/16/AFjfsueB\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/in-tunisia-act-of-one-fruit-vendor-sparks-wave-of-revolution-through-arab-world/2011/03/16/AFjfsueB_story.html)

This article gives a good account of the origins of the Arab spring in Tunisia and how the movement spread throughout the region.

6. "The Shoe-Thrower's index: An index of unrest in the Arab world" By *The Economist Online*, February 9, 2011

Link:

[http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2011/02/daily\\_chart\\_arab\\_unrest\\_index](http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2011/02/daily_chart_arab_unrest_index)

This is an interesting index of unrest based off of the factors present in the initial Arab spring uprisings.

## **Political Cartoons:**

1. MSNBC Arab Spring Cartoons (Numbers 3 and 5) By R.J. Matson and Adam Zyglis, 2011

Link: [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/43104374/ns/politics-picture\\_stories/displaymode/1247/?beginSlide=1](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/43104374/ns/politics-picture_stories/displaymode/1247/?beginSlide=1)

2. The Week, "Al-Assad's Viral Protest" By Steve Breen, 2011

Link: <http://theweek.com/section/cartoon/53/216414/middle-east>

3. The Week, "Middle East cleans up" By Osama Hajjaj, 2011

Link: <http://theweek.com/section/cartoon/53/215619/middle-east>

4. The Week, "Egypt's new best friends" By Bob Englehart, 2011

Link: <http://theweek.com/section/cartoon/53/215176/middle-east>

5. Palestinian Pundit, "Arab Spring" By Khalil Bendib, 2011

Link: <http://palestinianpundit.blogspot.com/2011/03/arab-spring-by-khalil-bendib.html>

## **Pulitzer Center Articles:**

1. "Revolutions End" by Ellen Knickmeyer

Link: <http://pulitzercenter.org/articles/egypt-revolution-youth-movement-referendum>

This article covers protesters in Egypt as they contemplate how to transition from protest to sustainable action.

2. "Wheels of Change" by Ellen Knickmeyer

Link: <http://pulitzercenter.org/articles/saudi-arabia-women-driving-ban-arab-spring>

This article covers acts of protest by women in Saudi Arabia.

3. "Struggle for Power in Egypt Continues" by Reese Erlich

Link: <http://pulitzercenter.org/articles/egypt-revolution-tahrir-square-protest-may-27>

This article covers the ongoing political struggles in Egypt post-revolution.

4. "The Arab World's Youth Army" by Ellen Knickmeyer

Link: <http://pulitzercenter.org/articles/tunisia-riots-revolution-mohamed-bouazizi-arab-worlds-youth-army>

This article covers the very early days of the revolution in Tunisia, including the spark that inspired mass youth protests.

## **Issue and Country-Specific Supplemental Reporting**

This reporting, from a variety of other news outlets, should be used to supplement background information and Pulitzer Center reporting. It is subdivided by topic:

### ***Role of Women***

1. "Women in the Arab Spring: The other side of the story" By Elizabeth Flock, *The Washington Post*, June 21, 2011  
Link: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/blogpost/post/women-in-the-arab-spring-the-other-side-of-the-story/2011/06/21/AG32qVeH\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/blogpost/post/women-in-the-arab-spring-the-other-side-of-the-story/2011/06/21/AG32qVeH_blog.html)
2. "Women and the Revolution" By Lauren E. Bohon and Sarah Lynch, *Foreign Policy*, March 2, 2011  
Link: [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/03/02/women\\_and\\_the\\_revolution](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/03/02/women_and_the_revolution)
3. "Egypt's defiant women fear being cast aside" By Jon Leyne, *BBC News*, June 19, 2011  
Link: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13796966>

### ***Role of Youth***

1. "Children of the Revolution" By Suzanne Merkelson and Aylin Zafar, *Foreign Policy*, March 31, 2011  
Link: [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/03/31/children\\_of\\_the\\_revolution](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/03/31/children_of_the_revolution)

### ***Role of Media***

1. "Read all about it," *The Economist*, March 17, 2011  
Link: <http://www.economist.com/node/18399193>

### ***Prospects for the Future***

1. "How to keep your crown," *The Economist*, June 16, 2011  
Link: <http://www.economist.com/node/18836448>
2. "Clinging to Power," *The Economist online*, June 2, 2011  
Link: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/multimedia/2011/06/upheaval-syria-and-yemen>
3. "What Egyptian Women (and Men) Want," By Dalia Mogahed, *Foreign Policy*, March 10, 2011  
Link: [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/03/10/what\\_egyptian\\_women\\_and\\_men\\_want?page=0,0](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/03/10/what_egyptian_women_and_men_want?page=0,0)
4. "Bullets Stall Youthful Push for Arab Spring" By Michael Slackman, *The New York Times*, March 17, 2011  
Link: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/18/world/middleeast/18youth.html>
5. "The Arab world's reaction: Scotching the snake," *The Economist*, March 24, 2011  
Link: <http://www.economist.com/node/18442133>

## Country-Specific Reporting

### ***Bahrain***

1. "Will Bahrain's Arab Spring bear fruit?" By James Naughtie, *BBC*, May 30, 2011  
Link: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid\\_9499000/9499462.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_9499000/9499462.stm)
2. "Bahrain's security clampdown divides kingdom" By Frank Gardner, *BBC News*, April 14, 2011  
Link: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13088600>

### ***Egypt***

1. "Egypt's Cauldron of Revolt" By Anand Gopal, *Foreign Policy*, February 16, 2011  
Link: [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/02/16/egypt\\_s\\_cauldron\\_of\\_revolt](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/02/16/egypt_s_cauldron_of_revolt)
2. "Egypt News -- Revolution and Aftermath" *The New York Times*, June 30, 2011  
Link:  
<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/egypt/index.html>
3. "Egypt protests: Key moments in unrest" *BBC News*, February 11, 2011  
Link: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12425375>

### ***Jordan***

1. "Jordan acts to pre-empt public discontent" By James Melik, *BBC News*, January 18, 2011  
Link: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-12216495>
2. "Clashes break out at Jordan anti-government protest" *BBC News*, March 25, 2011  
Link: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12857360>

### ***Libya***

1. "Libya - Protests and Revolt (2011)" *The New York Times*, June 29, 2011  
Link:  
<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/libya/index.html>

### ***Morocco***

1. "Morocco's Moderate Revolution" By Laila Lalami, *Foreign Policy*, February 21, 2011  
Link:  
[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/02/21/moroccos\\_moderate\\_revolution](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/02/21/moroccos_moderate_revolution)

## ***Saudi Arabia***

1. "Saudi Arabia's Musk Revolution" By Simon Henderson, *Foreign Policy*, March 1, 2011

Link:

[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/03/1/saudi\\_arabias\\_musk\\_revolution](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/03/1/saudi_arabias_musk_revolution)

2. "Yes, It Could Happen Here" By Madawi Al-Rasheed, *Foreign Policy*, February 28, 2011

Link: [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/02/28/yes\\_it\\_could\\_happen\\_here](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/02/28/yes_it_could_happen_here)

## ***Syria***

1. "Guide: Syria Crisis" *BBC News*, June 23, 2011

Link: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13855203>

## ***Tunisia***

1. "Don't Abandon Tunisia" By Anthony Dworkin, *Foreign Policy*, February 23, 2011

Link: [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/02/23/don\\_t\\_abandon\\_tunisia](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/02/23/don_t_abandon_tunisia)

## ***Yemen***

1. "Cairo It Ain't" By Haley Sweetland Edwards, *Foreign Policy*, February 24, 2011

Link: [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/02/24/cairo\\_it\\_aint](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/02/24/cairo_it_aint)

2. "An uncertain future" By The Economist online, April 6, 2011 (radio interview with Ginny Hill)

Link:

[http://www.economist.com/blogs/multimedia/2011/04/ginny\\_hill\\_yemens\\_uprising](http://www.economist.com/blogs/multimedia/2011/04/ginny_hill_yemens_uprising)