

# Teaching the Yazidi Genocide With a Narrative-Based Approach

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# Purpose

- To equip you with background information on Yazidis, Yazidism, and the 2014 genocide.
- To demonstrate techniques of using of narrative as a method of teaching about modern genocides, particularly the 2014 Yazidi genocide, in a trauma-informed way that respects and humanizes survivors and others in the community.

# Ezidi I Am

## First Read:

- **Highlight** or underline words, phrases, or structures that stand out to you

"Strong" by Malaeen Luqman



"This drawing expresses the power of pain experienced by women in society and I drew it so that we can always be strong, no matter what happens to us."

Location Created: Duhok, Iraq

Type: Painting

# Partner Share

Share what you annotated or what stood out to you in the poem.

I noticed...

I wonder...?

This reminds me of...



# Yazidi Origins, Beliefs and Culture.

# Who are Yazidis?



- An ethno-religious minority
- Name meaning “worshippers of God”
- Originally from Mesopotamia
- The religion shows deep connections to ancient Mesopotamian faiths, incorporating elements of worship and rituals that have persisted through centuries (Kreyenbroek & Rasha, 2005).
- Most speak Kurmanji, a dialect of Kurdish

# Beliefs

- Yazidism is monotheistic: meaning they believe in one God.
- The term "Yazidi" (also spelled "Yezidi," "Izîdî," "Ezdayi," or "Êzîdî") originates from Kurmanji, translating to "the one who created me," reflecting their belief in a singular Creator and God.
- God has entrusted creation to seven angels
  - Malek Taus, the peacock angel, is the foremost of these angels
- Primarily passed on through oral traditions





# Tawûsê Melek

The hierarchical structure of Yazidism includes seven archangels, with Tawûsê Melek, the Peacock Angel, as the most significant figure entrusted by God with the guardianship of the world and the protection of the Yazidi people (Allison, 2016).



# Misrepresentations

- Christians and Muslims have previously mistaken Malek Taus to be a figure of Satan
  - This has caused Yazidis throughout history to be inaccurately labeled as “devil worshippers”

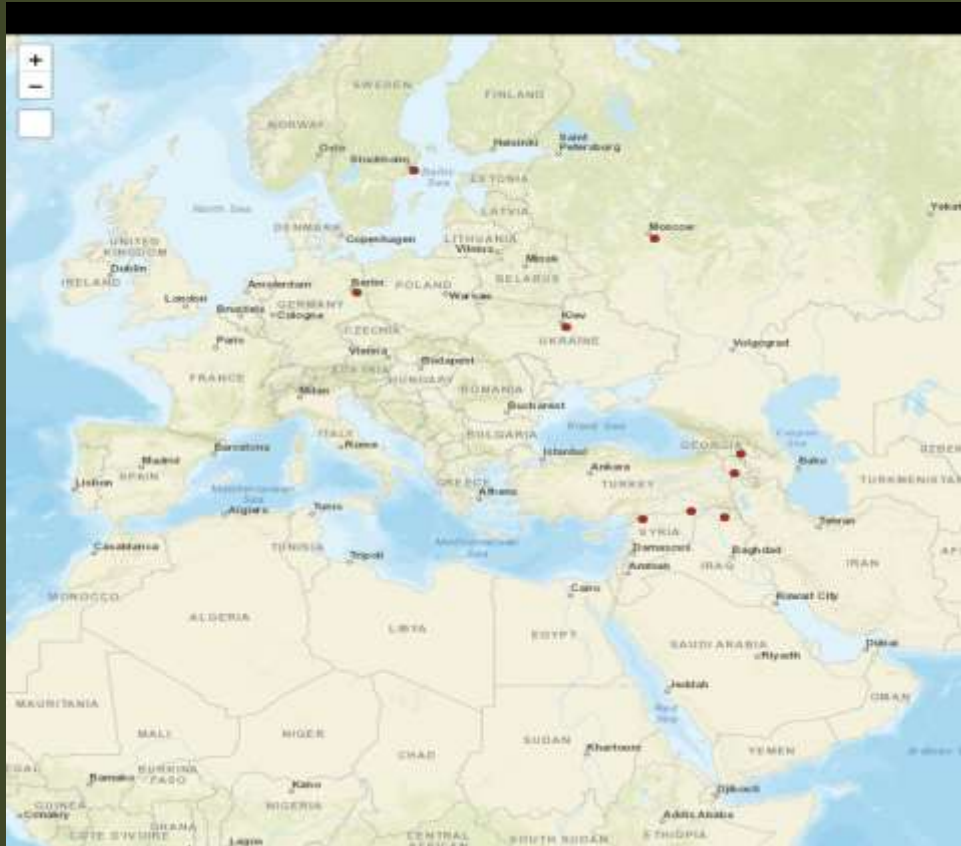


# Lalish

- Lalish is the holiest site in Yazidism
  - A pilgrimage is made to the temple Lalish



# Yazidi around the world



- Historically, Yazidis have primarily inhabited northern Iraq, particularly the Sinjar region, but they also have significant populations in the Shekhan area, the Nineveh Plains, and other parts of Iraqi Kurdistan (Asatrian & Arakelova, 2014). Yazidi communities are also found in Syria, Turkey, Armenia, Georgia, European Countries, Russia, USA, and Canada.

Joshua Project. "Yazidi." Accessed October 27, 2024.

[https://joshuaproject.net/people\\_groups/2](https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/2)

# Yazidi Holidays



- The Yazidi have three major religious celebrations,
- in April (New Year ( Ser Sal),
- In October (Pilgrimage to Sheikh Adi's Tomb in Lalesh) Jamya Shekhadi and
- In December (Fasting Feast).



# History of Yazidi Genocides

- Ottoman Governor of Mosul, Muhammad Pasha al Jalili (1805-1820)
- The Kurdish Emir Muhammad Pasha al-Rawanduzi (1832)
- The Ottoman General Hafiz Pasha (1844)
- The Ottoman General Ömer wehbi Pasha (1891)
- The Iraqi Army Forces Attack (1935)
- The Arabization Campaign by Saddam Hussein (1975)
- Sheikhan Attack (2/15/2007)
- Al-Qaeda Car Bomb Attack (8/14/2007)
- IS Attack (Aug 3rd 2014)

# IS Attack (Aug 3<sup>rd</sup> 2014)

- ❖ 5000 to 7000 Yazidi killed
- ❖ More than 5000 Yazidi kidnapped
- ❖ Destruction of more than 20 Yazidi holy sites in Sinjar.
- ❖ Destruction of more than %80 percentage of Yazidi homes in Sinjar.
- ❖ More than 400,000 Yazidi were displaced



# Death Toll

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- ❖ 5 to 7 thousands died
- ❖ More than 150 of children and elderly died due to thirst and hunger
- ❖ Kocho village: mass killing of 412 men and Over 900 women and children were enslaved
- ❖ Mass killing in Hardan, Qini, Solag, and other villages



# Mountain Siege

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- ❖ 150 to 200 thousands Yazidis trapped on Mt. Sinjar
- ❖ Hundreds of children and elderly died due to thirst and hunger
- ❖ Siege was broken by Yazidis, YPG and US Air Force





# Death Path to Freedom

- ❖ Trapped Yazidis walked ~200 Km to safety – Many died on the way
- ❖ Siege was broken by Yazidis, YPG and US Air Force
- ❖ Many elderly and disabled were left behind



# Displaced People

- ❖ About a half million Yazidi displaced (over 80% of Yazidi population in Iraq)
- ❖ They still in dire need for shelter and basic needs.
- ❖ Harsh weather and lack of sanitation are among many problems



# Yazidi Hostages

- ❖ 5 to 7 thousands Yazidi hostages
- ❖ Largest enslavement in 21<sup>st</sup> century
- ❖ 1500-35000 Yazidi women are sold
- ❖ Forced conversion to Islam



# The Enslavement of Yazidi Women by IS

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- ❑ 5000-7000 Yazidi hostages mostly women and children were enslaved
- ❑ IS used Yazidi women as sex slaves. (confirmed in IS Dabiq magazine and other social media)
- ❑ During enslavement IS forcing conversion to Islam and training Yazidi children to become future Jihad fighters

# Holy Sites Destroyed

- ❖ More than 20 Temples destroyed
- ❖ 15 Religious people were burned inside one temple in Sinjar
- ❖ Elderly and disabled at sacred sites were killed



# Ezidi I Am

## Second Read:

- Find connections from the background information and note them

"Strong" by Malaeen LUQMAN



"This drawing expresses the power of pain experienced by women in society and I drew it so that we can always be strong, no matter what happens to us."

Location Created: Duhok, Iraq

Type: Painting




Medium: Oil on Canvas

# Narrative Through Testimony



# Narrative Through Testimony

06:00

- Preview the testimonies
- Choose 2-3 to annotate
-  What events or ideas are you now familiar with?
-  What do you wonder?
-  What connections can you make?







**KOCHO  
THROUGH THE EYES  
OF A SURVIVOR**

Remembering the Kocho Massacre

# Photo Description

- ✿ Describe each photo in one word
- ✿ At the end, choose three photos that stood out to you the most
  - You will describe why that photo stood out to you
  - Then, you will meet with others to discuss the photo



1



'Burning Women,' by Hanna Hassan. (Yazidi Cultural Archives). Retrieved from Google Arts and Culture "The Art of Yazidi Survival"

2



Image: Free Yezidi Foundation

3



4



Caption: IS extremists launched a genocidal campaign against the minority involving killings, abductions, rape and enslavement. [Getty]. Image retrieved from Arab News "Iraq marks ninth anniversary of the Yazidi genocide by Islamic state group."



Preserving our religious and traditional symbols is important: I consider the religion is part of the culture of the individual.  
 - Basim Alali, Lincoln, NE 3/2017

الاقتناظ بمرورنا الدينية و تعلبية مصم : انا اعتمد الدين جزء من ثقافة الانسان  
 Basim Alali



صورة الفنان حسين شينكلي : تمثل معبد لالش

Painting by artist Hussain Shinkali: represents the temple of Lalish. – Hamo Ibrahim





الاحترام العلم واجب وطني: انا ولدت ايزيدي و ارضي اسمه العراق و وطني امريكا

The respect to the flag is a national duty:

I am born as Izidi, my land is Iraq, and my country is America.- *Khiro Aloday*, Lincoln, NE. 2017



Caption: A man touches an image of Melek Taus, or the Peacock Angel, in the new Yazidi Temple in the village of Aknalich, 35 kilometres from the Armenian capital Yerevan.

Image retrieved from Business Time article' "Long-persecuted Yazidis welcome new 'sanctuary' temple."





“Cone-shaped roofs over the tomb of Şêx Adî in Lalish.”





Caption: Yazidi women gather outside the Holy Temple in Lalish to celebrate the first Yazidi New Year since victory over ISIS was declared in Iraq.



Caption: The Yazidi tradition of celebrating the New Year originates from Mesopotamian culture and is one of the oldest rituals still practiced.



Caption: Inside the Holy temple of Lalish where colorful pieces of cloth are tied around pillars. Visitors to the temple are invited to tie knots in the material as a form of prayer.



Caption: A man from a group of Yazidi survivors and volunteers digs new graves in 2019 to properly bury family members whose remains were discovered in mass graves in the Yazidi village of Kocho, northern Iraq. Now, a year later, many family members are still waiting for the bodies to undergo DNA testing and be returned to them.



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Image: Newsha Tavakolian / Magnum Photos

# Narrative Through Testimony: Partner Share

I noticed...

I wonder...?

This reminds  
me of...





# Teaching with Testimony and Sensitive Topics

Join by Web [PollEv.com/kimberlylee910](https://PollEv.com/kimberlylee910) Join by Text Send [kimberlylee910](https://text.poll-ev.com/kimberlylee910) and your message to [37607](https://text.poll-ev.com/37607)

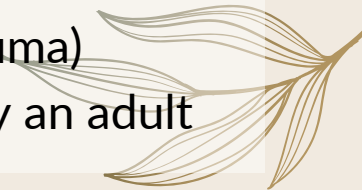
- What methods do you currently use while teaching with testimony?
- What agreements and expectations do you establish before teaching about sensitive or heavy topics?





# Trauma-Informed Teaching: Teaching About Sexual Assault in the 6-12 Classroom

- USHMM’s “Guidelines for Teaching About the Holocaust” are a great place to start
  - *Avoid simple answers to complex questions*
  - *Strive for precision of language*
  - *Avoid comparisons of pain*
  - *Translate statistics into people*
  - *Make responsible methodological decisions*
- In a typical classroom you may not have students who have survivors of modern genocides
  - Prevalence of sexual assault: **it is highly likely you will have students who have been sexually assaulted** (primary trauma)
    - 1 in 9 girls and 1 in 53 boys are sexually assaulted by an adult before age 18.





# Trauma-Informed Teaching: Teaching About Sexual Assault in the 6-12 Classroom

## Trauma-informed:

- Offering choice
- Offering control
  - *Control = “I know what’s coming next”*
- Encouraging collaboration





# Trauma-Informed Teaching: Examples

## Core Values and Community Agreements

- Give students specific language to express their values and perspectives
  - *Encourage collaboration*
- May be used at the beginning of semester and/or before a specific unit

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Class Period: \_\_\_\_\_

**Core Values**

What are the things that you value most?

Instructions: pick your top 5 values that are most important to you. Order them from 1-5. 1=MOST important, 5=LEAST important

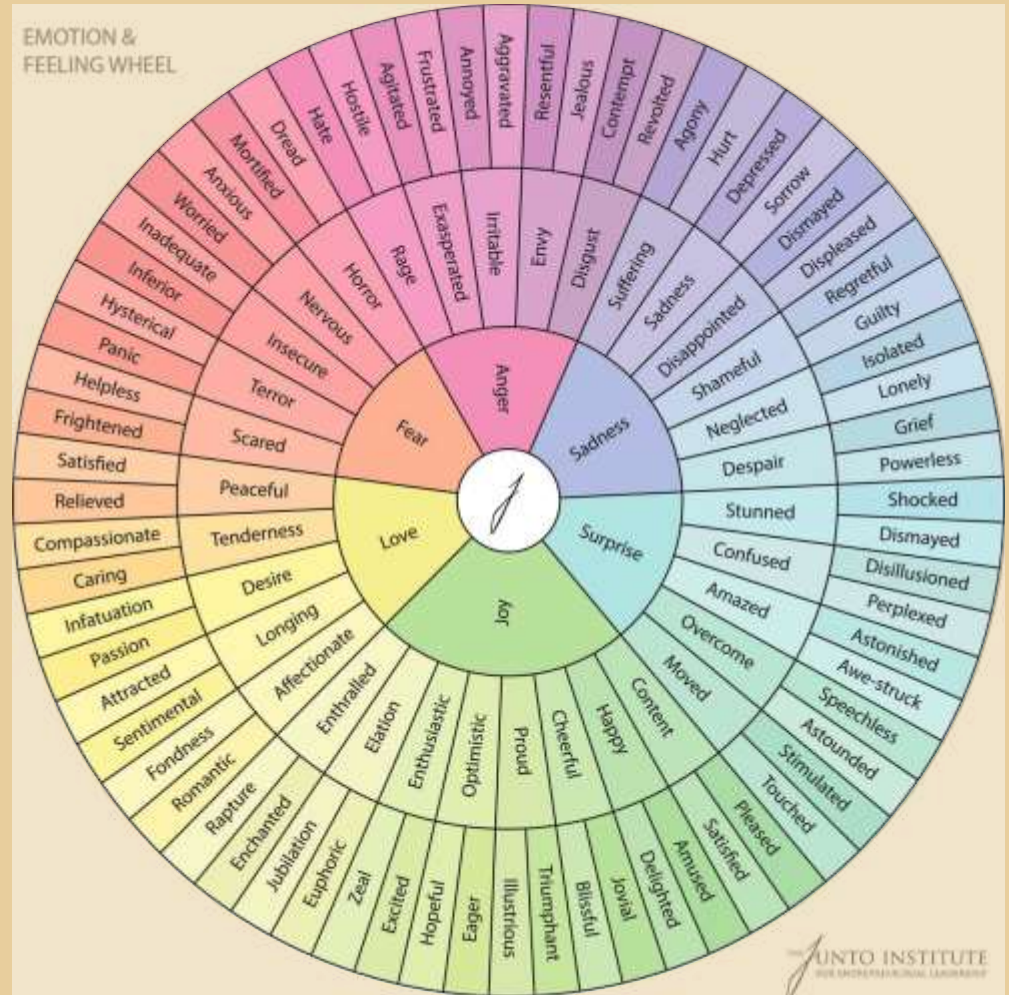
<input type="checkbox"/> Acceptance	<input type="checkbox"/> Effectiveness	<input type="checkbox"/> Loyalty
<input type="checkbox"/> Accountability	<input type="checkbox"/> Empathy	<input type="checkbox"/> Motivation
<input type="checkbox"/> Achievement	<input type="checkbox"/> Enjoyment/fun	
<input type="checkbox"/> Commitment	<input type="checkbox"/> Honesty	<input type="checkbox"/> Responsibility
<input type="checkbox"/> Communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Inclusivity	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruthfulness
<input type="checkbox"/> Community	<input type="checkbox"/> Independence	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety
<input type="checkbox"/> Cooperation	<input type="checkbox"/> Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-control
<input type="checkbox"/> Courage	<input type="checkbox"/> Integrity	<input type="checkbox"/> Stewardship
<input type="checkbox"/> Creativity	<input type="checkbox"/> Justice	<input type="checkbox"/> Teamwork
<input type="checkbox"/> Curiosity	<input type="checkbox"/> Kindness	<input type="checkbox"/> Wisdom
<input type="checkbox"/> Dignity	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/> Working alone
<input type="checkbox"/> Diversity	<input type="checkbox"/> Leadership	<input type="checkbox"/> Working with others

<https://bit.ly/corevalues0>



<https://bit.ly/4fdvBI>  
Z

EMOTION & FEELING WHEEL





# Trauma-Informed Teaching: Examples

## Draw

- Look back to what you have annotated
- **Create a visual representation to respond to the text**
  - *Ex: What the speaker is thinking/feeling*
  - *Ex: Events the speaker states that stood out to you*
  - *Ex: How you are thinking/feeling*

There is no right or wrong way to do this. Neither is the goal to create “good art.” Just create.



## Trade + Respond

- Pass your paper to someone near you
- **Write next to your partner’s drawing to respond: How does the other person’s art make you think or feel?**
  - *I noticed you included...*
  - *I wondered about...*
  - *I also felt...*
  - *This shows \_\_\_\_\_, which I hadn’t considered before.*



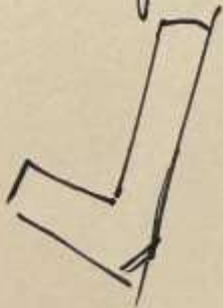
# Trauma-Informed Teaching: Examples

- **Control: exit strategies**
  - *How to leave with respect*
- **Control and Choice: content warnings**
  - Timely: give at least 24 hours before
  - Specific: describe in specific but not graphic language; post or make resources available early if possible



## 4. Flexibility.

Slipper warns  
abt more graphic  
things. Usually you  
can opt out.



# Closure: Reflection



**Connections:** Where do you see that you can incorporate these strategies or this content into what you already teach?



**Changes:** How does the incorporation of narrative (including testimony, art, poetry, photography, and other forms of storytelling) change the way students understand their moral obligations to genocide?



**Questions:** What questions do you have for possibly incorporating these strategies? What questions do you anticipate will arise from your students?

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# NEBRASKA STORIES OF HUMANITY

Holocaust Survivors & WWII Veterans,  
Network Portal & Educational Website

HOME

STORIES

MAPS

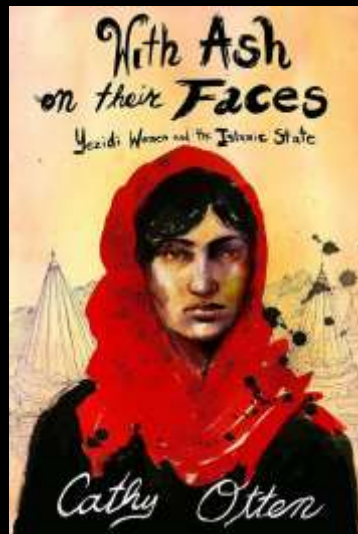
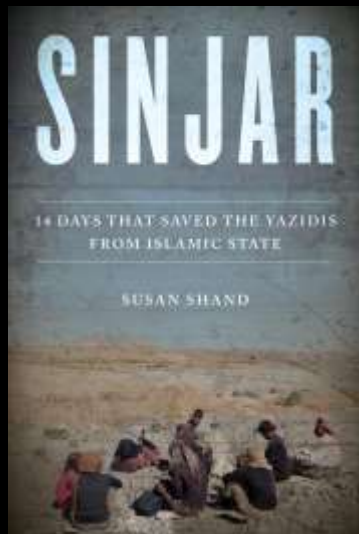
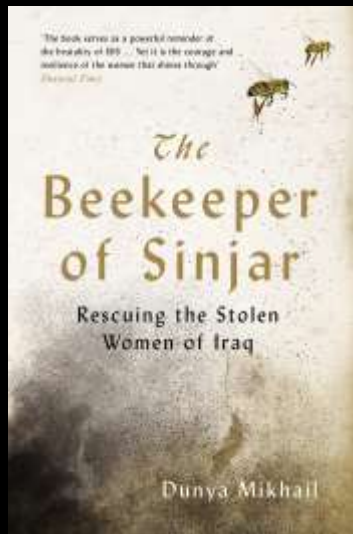
LEARN

ABOUT

BROWSE

SEARCH

## More Resources





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[haroonalhayder5@gmail.com](mailto:haroonalhayder5@gmail.com)

Link to slides: <https://bit.ly/NCCHEpresentation>  
or scan this QR code:

