

Name: _____ pd. _____

Persepolis Introduction Activity

Objective: Students will analyze background knowledge for Persepolis based on central themes for identity and cultural norms.

Directions:

1. Read your article. Summarize the main points below:

Who?

What?

When?

Where?

Why?

Other (optional)

2. For one other article presented from a partner, write one sentence on what their article was about:

Article Title: _____

3. Based on your article and the discussion, answer these two questions:

1. How does the information discussed connect with one's identity?

2. Predict one way in which the information might tie in with the main character of Persepolis. (Marjane, a 10 year old girl who lives in Iran around 1979)

Why Iranian women are wearing white on Wednesdays

By Nassim Hatam BBC News

• 14 June 2017



Women are wearing white and discarding headscarves in protest against Iran's dress code

A new social media campaign against a law which forces women to wear a headscarf is gaining momentum in Iran.

Using the hashtag #whitewednesdays, citizens have been posting pictures and videos of themselves wearing white headscarves or pieces of white clothing as symbols of protest.

The idea is the brainchild of Masih Alinejad, founder of **My Stealthy Freedom, an online movement opposed to the mandatory dress code.**

Before the 1979 Islamic revolution many Iranian women wore Western-style outfits, including miniskirts and short-sleeved tops, but this all changed when the late Ayatollah Khomeini came to power.

Women were not only forced to cover their hair in line with a strict interpretation of Islamic law on modesty, but also to stop using make-up and to start wearing knee-length manteaus. More than 100,000 women and men took to the streets to protest against the law in 1979, and opposition to it has never gone away.



Conservatives want the Iranian authorities to enforce the dress code.

In the three years that it has been running, My Stealthy Freedom has received more than 3,000 photos and videos showing women without their heads covered.

While pictures posted on My Stealthy Freedom sites are usually taken in secret to avoid being caught by the authorities, #whitewednesdays gives women a platform to demonstrate in public.

Taking risks

Now in its fifth week, #whitewednesdays has already attracted a considerable following - more than 200 videos were sent to Ms Alinejad in the first two weeks, some of which have already had 500,000 views.

"I'm so pumped up to be in this campaign," one contributor **says in a video as she walks down a main road. "I want to talk to you of my imprisonment... they imposed hijab on me since I was seven," she says, shaking her headscarf loose, "while I never felt committed to it and won't be."**

Ms Alinejad says she is amazed by the demonstrations of courage - some women have sent in videos of themselves walking the streets without headscarves altogether.

"When I expressed my concern about [one contributor's] safety, she replied that she would rather jeopardize her job than continue living under this oppression that the Iranian women have endured for the last 38 years."



The campaign has cut across generational boundaries

For Ms Alinejad, the project is a labor of love. She runs the campaign herself, with occasional help from a small number of volunteers, and sometimes stays up all night getting the videos up online.

Most of the pictures and videos come from inside Iran, but Ms Alinejad has also had contributions from Saudi Arabia (where the headscarf is also compulsory) and further afield, including Europe and the US.

Media backlash

Ms Alinejad says she is emancipating Iranian women, as well as the men who support them.

One participant said it was important because "even if this leads me to jail and sleeping with cockroaches, it would be worth it to help the next generation".

Ms Alinejad sees herself as helping, rather than heading, the campaign.

Iranian women, she says, "are taking the lead themselves, they don't need me, they just needed a platform... and I provided them with that".

Her actions have come at a cost though. Ms Alinejad, who lives in self-imposed exile in the US, has not been to Iran since 2009 and at the moment cannot go back to her home country for fear of arrest.

Following this latest campaign, the chief editor of Iran's Tasnim news agency published a photo of Ms Alinejad with her husband, calling her a prostitute.

Mashregh News, a website said to be affiliated with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), carried an old family photo of her with her mother, who wears a head-to-toe black chador, and her father. The caption says in bold: "Death to you Masih."

Ms Alinejad is defiant, saying none of the backlash will stop her from fighting to win women back their freedom.

Her sights are now set on turning the campaign into a concerted global movement, where more women around the world identify with #whitewednesdays and make a simple fashion statement as a powerful show of support.

Tired of Their Veils, Some Iranian Women Stage Rare Protests

By **THOMAS ERDBRINKJAN**. 29, 2018



Inspired perhaps by a “White Wednesday” campaign, several Iranian women have publicly taken off their head scarves and waved them on the end of a stick. Six did so on Monday. Credit Ebrahim Noroozi/Associated Press

TEHRAN — Climbing atop a five-foot-tall utility box in one of Tehran’s busiest squares on Monday, an Iranian woman removed her head scarf, tied it to a stick and waved it for all to see.

It was no small feat in Iran, where women can be arrested for publicly flouting the Islamic requirement that they cover their hair.

But there she stood, her curly hair blowing in the breeze. No one protested. In fact, she was applauded by many people. Taxi drivers and older women took her picture. The police, who maintain a booth in the square, either did not see her or decided not to intervene.

“My hands were trembling,” the 28-year-old said, asking not to be named out of fear of arrest. “I was anxious and feeling powerful at the same time. And proud, I felt proud.”

She was not alone. On Monday several other women, [a total of six](#), according to social media accounts, made the same symbolic gesture: taking off their head scarves in public and waving them on a stick, emulating a young woman who climbed on the same sort of utility box on Dec. 27 and was subsequently arrested. Activists say she has since been released, but she [still has not resurfaced in public](#).

At least one of the women protesting on Monday was arrested by the police, a shopkeeper who witnessed the arrest said.

The protests, still small in number, are nevertheless significant as a rare public sign that dissatisfaction with certain Islamic laws governing personal conduct may have reached a boiling point. As the 28-year-old woman said, “I took my scarf off because I’m tired of our government telling me what to do with my body.”

And some said this might just be the beginning. “My guess is that more of these protests will follow,” said Nasrin Sotoudeh, a lawyer and human rights activist. “It’s obvious that some women want to decide for themselves what to wear.”

The first protest in December took place on a Wednesday and seemed connected to the White Wednesday campaign, an initiative by Masih Alinejad, an exiled Iranian journalist and activist living in the United States. Ms. Alinejad has reached out to Iranian women on

Persian-language satellite television and through social media, and via a website she runs called [My Stealthy Freedom](#). On the website, women post images of themselves without head scarves, demanding an end to the compulsory head scarf law.

During Monday's protests some women waved white scarves, the symbol of Mrs. Alinejad's campaign.

Hard-liners say that foreign intelligence agencies, including the Central Intelligence Agency, have been nurturing protests in Iran, like those that broke out in 80 cities at the end of last year. Nearly 4,000 people were arrested and 25 died, according to official statistics. The hard-liners have not provided proof to back up their claims.

The Islamic head scarf, or hijab, is seen by Iranian ideologues as a pillar of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The law regarding the scarf has been enforced since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, and a head scarf is obligatory for every woman in the country, even tourists and visiting foreign dignitaries.

While discriminatory Islamic divorce and inheritance laws pose problems for individual women, the head scarf is a highly public symbol of a set of personal rules imposed by Iran's clerical leaders, who decide what people can wear, what music they can listen to and what television programs and movies they get to see. Men are also the subject of clothing laws: They are forbidden to wear shorts in public.

During the past decade, influenced by the rise of the internet, satellite television and cheap foreign travel, many Iranians have grown deeply resentful of rules that they can see for themselves are out of step with most of the rest of the world. Many have become relatively secular and feel increasingly unwelcome in the fixed-in-stone state version of Shiite Islam, and many have taken to flouting the rules whenever and wherever they feel free enough to do so.

"I was working when I saw the image of another woman protesting on social media," the 28-year-old said in a telephone interview. She said she informed some friends and co-workers about her intentions.

"If a lot of people do this, it will have more influence, I thought, so I went," she said. At Ferdowsi Square, one of the busiest places in Tehran, she used a tree branch to clamber on top of the utility box next to a traffic light.

"'Good going,' " she said many people shouted. "After five or six minutes people urged me to step down." They did not have a problem with her protest, she said, but they had what they wanted. "They had taken enough pictures to put on social media," she said.

For Muslim women, a headscarf — or hijab — is a visible sign of their faith and identity, and whether to wear one is a big decision. [The recent decision](#) by a Christian college professor to don a headscarf out of solidarity with her Muslim sisters highlighted the hijab question, at least for non-Muslims. For Muslim women themselves, especially in the United States, it was an old story.

"Before I wore hijab, making friends with people who weren't Muslim was a lot easier," says Maryam Adamu, who was born in North Carolina to immigrants from Nigeria. Before she began wearing a headscarf three years ago, people didn't know she was Muslim — until she told them.

"I, like, Trojan-horsed my Islam," she says, laughing. "Like, 'You're already my friend. I know you like me. Now you know I'm Muslim, and you're going to learn about this faith.' " Once she started wearing a headscarf, she encountered a social obstacle she hadn't seen before. "Now, I have to work a lot harder to get into people's lives who aren't Muslim," she says.

For some women, that can be a burden. Asma Uddin, born in Miami to Pakistani parents, is devout in her religious beliefs, but she stopped wearing a headscarf when she found it interfering with her work as a lawyer.

"I was tired of being a political spokesperson for my faith," she says. "I felt that I should be able to put that away, and wearing a headscarf in public doesn't give you that luxury. I was tired of trying to prove that Muslim women in headscarves are also empowered, [by saying] 'Look at me. I'm working in a white-shoe law firm with a headscarf on.' Uddin is now a staff attorney for the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty.

The hijab question took on new significance in the aftermath of the decision by Wheaton College professor Larycia Hawkins to wear a hijab out of sympathy for Muslim women who feel marginalized by their headscarves. Soon after that, Asra Nomani, who describes herself as a Muslim reformer, co-wrote [a provocative op-ed in the Washington Post](#) asking non-Muslim women not to wear headscarves, even in solidarity, because in her judgment it stands for "an interpretation of Islam we reject."

"The headscarf has become a political symbol for an ideology of Islam that is exported to the world by the theocracies of the governments of Iran and Saudi Arabia," [she told NPR](#).

The commentary provoked an outcry among "hijabi" Muslim women in the United States, many of whom bristled at the suggestion that wearing a headscarf signals their submission to a conservative Islamic ideology.

"I support women who choose to wear it [and] who choose not to wear it," says Yasmin Elhady, a civil rights attorney who was born in Egypt and raised in Alabama. "I don't believe that anyone should comment on why women should wear it or shouldn't wear it. I think that if women want to wear it ... we should be supportive of them."

The controversy over Nomani's commentary was reinforced when the *New York Times* last month hosted [an online debate](#) on the question, "Do Non-Muslims Help or Hurt Women by Wearing Hijabs?" with Nomani's viewpoint included.

Dalia Mogahed, born in Wisconsin to parents from Egypt, didn't even like the question. As research director of the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, she focuses on the American Muslim community.

"Some Muslim women wear hijab, some don't, and it's just not an issue," she says. "It's a non-issue. But then you have one person write an engaging article, and suddenly it's a debate that we're supposed to be having, [a debate] that we are not having."

[Correction Feb. 2, 2016](#)

In the original version of this post, which was based in part on Tom Gjelten's reporting but mistakenly published without his prior input, some incorrect conclusions were reached. For instance, the post asked whether non-Muslim women who choose to wear the hijab get the same support for their decisions as Muslim women. The post stated that "some women" believe non-Muslim women should not wear headscarves to show solidarity with Muslims women. Gjelten's reporting did not explore those questions. He has now updated the post to mirror his reporting.

The post also incorrectly stated that Asma Uddin was born in Pakistan.