

A Journey Through Palestinian History: Stories, Art, and Food

Materials Needed

- Large sheet of paper or whiteboard for map-making
- Colored markers or pencils
- Paper for timeline (can be a long strip of paper or several sheets taped together)
- Art supplies: Air-dry clay OR graph paper and colored pencils
- Access to the internet for viewing images and short videos
- Ingredients for Simple Hummus: 1 can of chickpeas, 2 tbsp tahini, 1 lemon, 1 clove garlic, 2 tbsp olive oil, salt
- Blender or food processor
- Pita bread or fresh vegetables for dipping

Subject: Social Studies, History, Art, Culinary Arts

Grade Level: 4th-5th Grade (Age 10)

Time Allotment: 90 minutes (can be split into two sessions)

1. Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Create a simple, illustrated timeline highlighting three key aspects of Palestinian cultural history (e.g., ancient roots, significance of the olive tree, artistic traditions).
- Design a piece of art inspired by a traditional Palestinian symbol (tatreez embroidery or the olive branch).
- Explain the cultural significance of at least two key elements of Palestinian identity, such as the land, food, or art.

2. Instructional Strategies & Activities

Part 1: The Hook - A Story in Stitches (10 minutes)

Goal: To spark curiosity and introduce the idea of culture as a story.

1. Begin by showing the student vibrant, high-quality images of Palestinian tatreez (embroidery). Use a search engine for "Palestinian tatreez" to find examples.
2. Ask engaging questions: *"What do you notice about these patterns? What do you think they might mean?"*
3. Explain that for centuries, Palestinian women have used these stitches to tell stories and represent their villages, families, and the natural world around them. Each dress was like a unique identity card. This shows us that history isn't just about dates and events; it's also about people's art and daily lives.

Part 2: Mapping Our Journey (15 minutes)

Goal: To understand the geography and its importance to the Palestinian people's identity.

1. On a large sheet of paper, sketch a simple outline of the historical region of Palestine, located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.
2. Work together to label key ancient cities like Jerusalem, Jericho (one of the oldest cities in the world!), Nablus, and Hebron.
3. Discuss its location as a "crossroads" between Africa, Asia, and Europe. Ask: "*How might living at a crossroads affect the culture, food, and history of the people there?*" This encourages critical thinking about how geography shapes culture.

Part 3: The Living Timeline (25 minutes)

Goal: To build a non-linear, story-based understanding of Palestinian history.

1. Take out the long strip of paper for the timeline. Instead of focusing only on dates, we will focus on enduring cultural themes.
2. **Marker 1: Ancient Roots.** At the beginning of the timeline, draw a simple clay pot. Discuss how the land has been inhabited for thousands of years by people like the Canaanites, who were ancestors of today's Palestinians. Their culture was tied to the land, farming, and trade.
3. **Marker 2: The Olive Tree.** In the middle of the timeline, draw a large olive tree. Explain that some olive trees in Palestine are thousands of years old—they have "witnessed" history! Discuss what the olive tree symbolizes: peace, resilience, nourishment (olive oil), and a deep connection to the ancestral land.
4. **Marker 3: A Rich Heritage.** Towards the end of the timeline, draw symbols of knowledge and art, like a book or a geometric pattern. Briefly mention the long history of Palestinian poets, scholars, and artists who contributed to the world during different historical periods, including the Ottoman era and into the modern day.
5. Have the student add their own drawings and notes to each point on the timeline.

Part 4: Creating Our Own History (20 minutes)

Goal: To creatively apply understanding of cultural symbols.

Offer the student a choice to connect with the culture through art:

- **Option A: Design a Tatreez Pattern.** Using graph paper and colored pencils, the student can design their own tatreez pattern. Encourage them to create symbols for things that are important to them—their family, nature, or a favorite story—just as Palestinian women have done for centuries.
- **Option B: Sculpt an Olive Branch.** Using air-dry clay, the student can sculpt a small olive branch with leaves and olives. While sculpting, talk about the texture of the leaves and the importance of the olive harvest (the "*jidad*") as a community event.

3. Assessment & Closure

Show and Tell & Taste (20 minutes)

This part serves as both a fun conclusion and a way to assess learning creatively.

1. **Prepare Simple Hummus:** Together, combine the chickpeas, tahini, lemon juice, garlic, and salt in a blender. While it's blending, slowly pour in the olive oil. Explain that these ingredients have grown in the region for thousands of years and are a staple of Palestinian cuisine.
2. **Culture Showcase:** While enjoying the hummus with pita or vegetables, have the student present their work. Ask them to:
 - Explain their timeline and one thing they found most interesting.
 - Show their artwork (tatreez design or clay sculpture) and explain the meaning behind their creation.
 - Answer the question: "*If you were to add a food to your timeline to represent Palestinian*"

culture, why would you choose hummus?"

4. Differentiation and Inclusivity

- **For Extension (Deeper Dive):** Research and listen to a poem by the famous Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish (many are available with English subtitles online). How does he write about the land and identity?
- **For Support (Simplifying):** Provide a pre-printed map outline or timeline template. Focus on just one creative activity instead of offering a choice. Watch a short, animated Palestinian folktale to begin the lesson in a more narrative-driven way.