



**National
Peace Corps
Association**

WorldView Magazine

Learning from Another Afghanistan

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Introduction

My sister met her husband when they were both Peace Corps volunteers in Afghanistan in the mid-1960s working as journalists on the English newspaper The Kabul Times, so I first learned about that country from her many and detailed letters. In the mid-1980s, Social Education published an article in which I wrote about an Afghan immigrant sixth grader whose name was changed by a school principal from Ahmed to Johnny but who, through a sensitive teacher, had the opportunity to “make my country remembered” to his fellow classmates. So I knew something about Afghanistan before it became a war zone to most Americans. It seems to me it’s time to broaden current students’ understanding, so that Afghanistan is remembered for more than a very long war.

Goal

Students will learn from and about Afghanistan.

Materials

WorldView magazine articles:

- “Lessons from Afghanistan” (Fall 2011 – Vol. 24, Number 3)
- “Boy in a Mulberry Tree” (special WorldView on Afghanistan in Fall 2001)
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Websites:

- www.afghansociety.org
- www.sola-afghanistan.org
- www.helptheafghanchildren.org
- www.gpfa.org

Reading and Sharing

Introduce the lesson by saying something like: “We Americans tend to think we are doing all the helping in Afghanistan, whether helping militarily to defeat the Taliban or helping with economic development. But we need to learn as well, to recognize what Afghans know.”

Ask half the students to read Robert Hull’s article entitled “Lessons from Afghanistan” and then be able to answer: “What did Robert learn about sustainability and architecture when he lived in Afghanistan from 1968 to 1972? What principles is he using to build a clinic in the desert between two villages?”

Ask the other half of the students to read “Boy in a Mulberry Tree” by Bill Witt (in the Fall 2001 *WorldView*), who taught in Afghanistan from 1973 to 1975, and be able to answer: “What knowledge does the shepherd boy have? How does he show it? What does Bill learn?”

Then pair up students and ask them to share with each other.

More Research

Continue by saying something like: “We can learn a lot from websites about what Afghans and partners from the U.S. and elsewhere are doing to work toward change in Afghanistan.” Show YouTube video “Kandahar through Afghan Eyes”

(<http://www.youtube.com/user/afghanistancamera#p/u/6/-NdncylURCM>), a project supported by Canada in which high school students took pictures. Ask: “What do you see in the pictures that surprises you, that you have questions about?” Then assign online research to pairs of students dividing up the following sites: www.afghansociety.org; www.sola-afghanistan.org; www.helptheafghanchildren.org; and www.gpfa.org. Ask students to choose something from the website to share with the class that answers the question: What have I learned from and about Afghanistan?

Respond to Afghans

Show students Sahar Adish’s very brief speech entitled “The Power of an Afghan Girl’s Education” (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_Slx5ikCEU) and then read Fatima’s “Poem about Peace,” accessed on the www.sola-afghanistan.org website at <http://sola-afghanistan.blogspot.com/2011/09/poem-about-peace-fatima.html>. Ask students to write a short letter to Sahar or post a comment on the website in response to Fatima.