

**Grade Level:** 6-8**Time Needed:** Two to five class periods**Lesson Plan:**

More Alike Than Unalike

SUMMARY

The great American poet Maya Angelou once wrote, “We are more alike, my friends, than we are unalike.” However, the concept of global citizenship and helping someone who lives halfway around the world can be difficult for students to comprehend. People have an easy time disassociating themselves from others who look different, have skin of a different color, speak a different language, eat unusual foods, or partake in a different religion. Students may have an easier time understanding and feeling compassion and empathy if they learn more about the children whom they are helping.

In this lesson, students will explore the connection between how an eighth-grade girl in Afghanistan lives—what time she wakes up in the morning, what she eats for breakfast, how she gets to school, etc.—and their own lives. Students will identify similarities and differences as they learn about another way of life and culture.

Students will work in small groups to create a presentation around their findings, sharing information, thoughts, and feelings with the class.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will research and synthesize information.
- Students will use critical thinking skills to draw conclusions.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of what life is like for a girl in Afghanistan, and compare and contrast her life with their own.
- Students will apply learning to a performance-based project by working in small groups to present their work.

SUBJECTS

- Social Studies (History, Geography/Human Geography)
- Language Arts
- Art
- Speech (Oral Presentation Skills)

**MORE ALIKE THAN UNALIKE** continued

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What are your hopes and dreams for your future?
 - What is important to you and to the people whom you care about (your friends and family)?
 - What is culture? (*Culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, and social habits to music and arts.*
Source: <http://www.livescience.com/21478-what-is-culture-definition-of-culture.html>)
 - Are there a variety of different cultures in the United States? Can you name a few?
 - Is one culture better or worse than another?
 - Should we be tolerant of all cultures? Or of all aspects of all cultures? Why or why not?
 - Can people of a different culture who live very far away share the same hopes and dreams as you?
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RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- Poster board, markers, magazines, scissors, glue, sticky notes, index cards, etc.
 - Video: *Gul Bahar: A Day in the Life of an Afghan Schoolgirl* (located in the Pennies for Peace Toolkit section)
 - Additional videos (located in the Pennies for Peace Toolkit section)
 - Research tools such as newspapers, news magazines, and the Internet
 - Central Asia Institute blog, which can be found at <http://centralasiainstitute.org/field-notes/>
 - Photos (located in the Pennies for Peace Toolkit section)
 - Fact sheets (located in the Pennies for Peace Toolkit section)
 - Printable Map (located in the Pennies for Peace Toolkit section)
 - Glossary of Terms (located in the Pennies for Peace Toolkit section)
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LESSON

1. Introduce your students to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan using the resources listed above, plus other resources at your disposal. If you have students or teachers at your school from one of these countries, invite them to speak to your class about their experiences.
2. Review the Essential Questions with students. Younger students may need help understanding the definition of “culture.” Allow plenty of time for questions and answers.
3. Explain to students that they are going to watch a video about an eighth-grade girl who lives in Afghanistan, named Gul Bahar. Have students view the video *Gul Bahar: A Day in the Life of an Afghan Schoolgirl* (located in the Pennies for Peace Toolkit section). Allow students to watch it several times, if necessary, so that they can comprehend Gul’s day.

**MORE ALIKE THAN UNALIKE** *continued*

4. Revisit the Essential Questions. Do students have additional questions or thoughts after viewing the video?
5. Divide students into small groups and explain that they will work together to brainstorm some of the similarities and differences between Gul's life and their lives. Have them take a piece of paper and fold it in half lengthwise—labeling the left side "SIMILARITIES" and the right side "DIFFERENCES." Then allow students time to complete their chart, encouraging them to think about Gul's day: her responsibilities, what she eats, how she gets to school, her chores and homework, and her dedication to education.
6. Have a small-group or whole-class discussion about the similarities and differences between Gul's life and the students' lives. Did Gul's video change their thoughts about their own education? How?
7. Have students take turns presenting their findings to the class. They may present their chart, or create a collage, illustration, poem, song, or another piece of art to explain both the similarities and the differences—and how they feel about what they've learned.
8. If time is available, have students brainstorm ways to continue to make Gul "real" in their classroom. If Gul was to visit tomorrow, what questions would they have for her? What do they want to know about her life in Afghanistan? What would they like to tell her about their lives? Have students write letters to Gul, create a video about *their* life that they might share with Gul, or create artwork for her.

Note: It is important to help students understand that although Gul's life may seem hard (or even cruel) by U.S. standards, she is a happy child. Wealth by our standards does not necessarily equal happiness. Gul lives in a culture very different from our own, but she shares the same (or perhaps a more dedicated) commitment to her education. Encourage students to look at facts, but also to be wary of their own biases based on *our* culture.

IDEAS TO ENCOURAGE ALL LEARNERS

- English Language Learners
 - Ensure that students understand the Glossary of Terms (located in the Pennies for Peace Toolkit section)
 - Encourage students to share with the class a bit about what life was like in the country where they lived prior to moving to the United States.
 - The video has title cards. Pause the video when the title cards appear—giving students time to read and understand the words.

**MORE ALIKE THAN UNALIKE** *continued*

- Special Education
 - Allow students to view the video as many times as necessary and encourage small-group work when creating their chart(s).
- Gifted and Talented
 - Have students journal or write an essay based on these questions:
 1. If students could change one thing about Gul's life, one thing that would enhance her education, what would that be?
 2. If students could choose one thing from Gul's life to incorporate into their lives, what would that be?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- If you have access to students, teachers, or parents who have lived outside the United States, invite one or more of them to speak to the class about their experiences. Was it easy for them to get to school? What was the school-day like in their native country?
- Have students journal or write an essay reflecting on how Gul's video has changed their view of their own education.
- Ask students to write an essay reflecting on the theme of *culture*. How do cultures vary within a community? How do cultures differ from place to place? How are cultures similar from place to place? How do multiple cultures contribute to the richness of a community? How can multiple cultures create conflict within a community? How might these problems be overcome?

DIGITAL ACTIVITIES

- Encourage students to create a spreadsheet or table using classroom digital tools. Younger students can practice word processing/editing skills as they type simple lists. Using the chosen digital format, students will work individually, in pairs, or in small groups to create a schedule for visiting or hosting Gul for a typical school day. For each entry/activity on the schedule, students should explain why that particular activity would be important to include.
- Students can create storyboards and produce their own "Day in the Life..." videos similar to Gul's video. Students can work in small groups to present their storyboards and discuss reasons for including each scene in their video.

Tell us about your project! We'd love to see samples of your charts, letters to Gul, or artwork. Send photos and/or descriptions to info@penniesforpeace.org.