

Lesson Plan One for the Study of RUMI RETURNING

as seen on PBS

LESSON ONE

An Introduction to Jalal al-Din Rumi

“Rumi combines the philosophical greatness of Plato, with the soul force and realization of a Jesus or Buddha, with the literary gifts of a Shakespeare.”

Andrew Harvey from RUMI RETURNING

Lesson Title: Meet Jalal Al-Din Rumi

Grade Levels: 6-12

Subjects: World History, Geography, Language Arts, and Arts (Art Connections, Dance, Music, and Visual Arts)

Estimated Time of Completion: 3-4 class periods

- I. **Instructional Objectives**
- II. **Standards**
- III. **Materials Needed**
- IV. **Procedures**
- V. **Assessment Suggestions**
- VI. **Extensions/Adaptations**

I. **Instructional Objectives:**

- Students will have the opportunity to learn about the life and legacy of the most popular poet in the United States and world by viewing **RUMI RETURNING**.
- Students will have the opportunity to expand their comprehension and vocabulary as it relates to Islam and Sufism.
- Students will have the opportunity to learn about history, culture, and their relationship to art by listening to Rumi’s poetry, viewing rare footage of the dance of the whirling dervishes, and listening to traditional and contemporary Sufi music.
- Students will have an opportunity to reflect on the techniques that make an effective documentary film and share their reflections with their classmates.
- Students will have the opportunity to study Rumi’s poetry and write an expository composition or in response to literature.

II. **Standards:**

- This lesson correlates to the following national standards for world history, geography, language arts, and arts (art connections, dance, music, and visual arts) established by the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (<http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/>).

World History

- Understands the maturation of an interregional system of communication, trade, and cultural exchange during a period of Islamic expansion
- Understands significant aspects of Islamic civilization
- Understands major global trends from 1000 to 1500 CE
- Understands the significance of Sufism

Geography

- Knows the location of places, geographic features, and patterns of the environment
- Knows the approximate locations of major political and economic cultures
- Understands the physical and human characteristics of place

Language Arts

- Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process
- Writes expository composition
- Writes in response to literature
- Gathers and uses information for research purposes
- Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes
- Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media
- Uses a variety of criteria to evaluate and form viewpoints of visual media
- Understands how images and sound convey messages in visual media
- Understands the characteristics and components of the media
- Understand the ways in which image-makers construct meaning
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Art Connections

- Knows ways in which various arts media can be integrated

Dance

- Understands dance in various cultures and historical periods

Music

- Understands the relationship between music and history and culture

Visual Arts

- Understands what makes different art media, techniques, and processes effective (or ineffective) in communicating various ideas
- Knows a range of subject matter, symbols, and potential ideas in the visual arts
- Understands the characteristics and merits of one's own artwork and the artwork of others
- Understands how various interpretations can be used to understand and evaluate works of visual art

III. Materials Needed:

- A copy of **RUMI RETURNING**, as seen on PBS
- T.V. and VCR
- Hand-outs: Vocabulary Worksheet, Surveys (two), List of Film Techniques, Two Poems
- Computers with Internet access

IV. Procedures:

Overview:

- This lesson is based on the video **RUMI RETURNING**, as seen on PBS (<http://www.pbs.org>). Students will have the opportunity to learn about the most popular poet in the United States, expand their comprehension and vocabulary as it relates to Islam and Sufism, and learn about history, culture, and their relationship to art by hearing Rumi's poetry performed, viewing rare footage of the whirling dervish dancers, and listening to traditional and contemporary Sufi music. They will have the chance to reflect on what makes an effective documentary and share their reflections with classmates. They will have the opportunity to study Rumi's poetry and use various writing skills.

- 1. PRE-VIDEO:** Write the following quotation from the film by author and mystical scholar An-

drew Harvey on the board: “Rumi combines the philosophical greatness of Plato, with the soul force and realization of a Jesus or Buddha, with the literary gifts of a Shakespeare.” (1:06)

2. Tell students that this is one of the first statements made in **RUMI RETURNING**. Discuss with students what they think this statement means. Is it a surprising statement in any way? If so, why? Does it make them want to know more about Rumi?
3. Now write the following quotation from the film by the poet and popular English translator/interpreter of Rumi’s poetry, Coleman Barks: “He is our world class poet. He is the only planetary poet we have probably.” (6:14)
4. Discuss with students what this statement means. Ask them: Do we need a “planetary poet”? Tell them that the UNESCO declared 2007, Rumi’s 800th anniversary year, as the International Year of Rumi. Are there other such international figures, literary or not, who are beloved around the world? Why are they beloved?
5. Tell the students that Rumi is the most popular poet in the United States. Now tell them he was a Muslim. What is their reaction? (You might continue the discussion with these questions or give them the attached **Pre-Video Survey** to fill out.) Questions: Do they have any preconceptions about Muslims? If so, what are they and how have they been shaped? How are Muslims portrayed by the media? What other people or institutions have affected their ideas about Muslims? Their homes? Schools? Churches or religions? Friends? Government? Do they know any Muslims?
6. Hand out the **Vocabulary Worksheet** with names, places, and other words relating to Islam, Sufism, and Rumi’s world (with time codes for when they are introduced in the film). Tell them you would like them to expand their comprehension and vocabulary in these areas. As they watch the film, they can jot down notes about these concepts. (You may want to stop the film occasionally to allow them to take notes, but it can be more beneficial for them to watch the film straight through for impact.)
7. Take five minutes for them to discuss in small groups what if any of the terms with which they are familiar. For example, have they heard of Sufism? Do they recognize the place names, i.e., Baghdad, Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, Damascus, etc.? Have them look up a definition for Sufism and locate these cities on a map before you begin the film.
8. Prepare them to see the video **RUMI RETURNING** (56:46). Tell them the documentary will introduce them to Rumi by telling his life story. Suggest they take notes.
9. For film students, give them the **List of Film Techniques Used in RUMI RETURNING**, or put it on the board. Ask them to note which of these are used to good effect and/or used to establish the key message (or messages) of the film.
10. You may want to write some of the following **TIME CUES** on the board to help students as they view the video by pointing out key moments.
 - “He poured out 3,000 odes...” (his legacy to humanity) (00:38)
 - “Rumi combines the philosophical greatness of Plato...” (1:06)
 - “Here is the paradox of Sufism...” (2:34)
 - “He was born September 30, 1207, in the city of Balkh...” (5:05)
 - “He is our world class poet...” (6:14)
 - “A great soul hides like Muhammad or Jesus...” (poem) (6:24)
 - “So Sufism spread...” (7:44)
 - “One of the earliest Sufis was Rabi’a...” (8:56)
 - “People in the media and American associate Islam with terrorism and extremism...” (10:20)
 - “Ignorance is God’s prison; knowing is God’s palace...” (poem) (11:00)
 - “And in 1258 Genghis Khan’s descendants will attack, invade, and sack Baghdad...” (12:26)

- “So here we have Rumi in the center, in the eye of the storm...” (12:40)
- “A pervasive sense of cosmic homelessness would occupy his mind and poetry...” (13:26)
- “And that instability of the world drove him...” (current mystical search) (14:50)
- “The Sufi opens his hands to the universe...” (poem) (18:10)
- “He speaks to everybody, to every religion, every way...” (20:21)
- “And he could have stayed there all his life and never have made the kind of impact that he has made on the world...” (meeting Shams) (23:55)
- “I was raw, then I was cooked, then I was ash...” (poem) (28:27)
- “Because the Sufi says...they love the divine so much that they don’t see any boundaries between the divine and us on earth...” (28:53)
- “Sultan Valad wrote about their relationship: ‘When Rumi saw Shams’ face, the secrets opened up for him...’ (30:36)
- “So Sufis had to find a very clever way of living in this world while expressing their intense love of the divine...” (Sufis use of the language of poetry and Sufi literature) (31:52)
- “You have gone to the secret world...” (poem) (34:58)
- “...it is said that Rumi began to turn...” (creation of the dance of the whirling dervishes)(36:16)
- “Listen to the reed and the tale it tells...” (poem) (36:45)
- “Within a generation his dance of prayer would be formalized in the ritual of remembrance known as the *Sema*...” (the dance of the whirling dervishes and its meaning) (37:30 - 39:55)
- “Gamble everything for love...” (poem)(39:55)
- “Because of his attainment of the Sufi universal vision, Rumi triumphed as a peacemaker...” (43:45)
- “*Sheb-i Arus* (the Wedding Night)...” (46:06)
- “What is to be done, Oh, Muslims...” (poem) (50:07)
- “If there’s one motto which the post 9-11 world needs to adopt, I would say it should be a line from Rumi...” (51:49)

11. **VIDEO:** Show the video. (You might want to stop at various points to allow students to jot down notes or ask basic questions, but you might want to let them watch it straight through for impact.)
12. **POST-VIDEO:** After the video, ask each student to tell a classmate what impressed him or her most about the film and why. Then have each listen to their classmate’s reactions.
13. Now ask students to share their reactions with the entire class. Ask them what they think is the key message (or messages) of the film. Why? You may want to listen again to the final commentary in the film by Dr. Akbar S. Ahmed regarding the motto for the post 9-11 world (51:49).
14. For older grades, advanced students, or film students, refer to the **List of Film Techniques Used in RUMI RETURNING** and ask them how the images and sound conveyed the film’s message or messages. You might allow them to watch it through a second time outside of class.
15. Ask students to explain what makes **RUMI RETURNING** a documentary.
16. If not already covered in their remarks, specifically ask for students’ reactions to Rumi’s poetry, the whirling dervish dance that he inspired, and Sufi music. Here are time cues in case you want to watch and listen again:
 - a) see **Two Poems:** “Gamble everything for love...” (39:55)
 - b) the whirling dervish dance (or *Sema*, <http://www.mevlana.org/sema.htm>) (36:16 and 37:30 - 39:55)

c) traditional Sufi music (also 37:30 - 39:55) and contemporary Sufi music (the Rolling Stones with the dervishes of Morocco used with the introduction of Shams, beginning 23:45, and NIYAZ with Persian singer Azam Ali performing a Rumi poem at the end of the film and behind the credits, beginning 50:09).

17. Ask students for examples of words with which they were not familiar. Put a few on the board. Have the students look up the rest of the words on their **Vocabulary Worksheet** now or outside of class with a partner or in small groups.
18. Ask students if they have learned anything about Islam or Muslims. (You may want to have them fill out the attached **Post-Video Survey** before discussing this.) You may want to listen again to Dr. Akbar Ahmed's comments about how Muslims are portrayed in the media and in America. (10:21)
19. Ask students how they would define Sufism after watching **RUMI RETURNING**. One section you may wish to watch again begins, "In Islam it is directly associated with the Prophet of Islam himself..." (17:40). Here are other comments by Islamic scholar Dr. Akbar Ahmed about Sufism: 7:44 (spread of Sufism) and 18:26 (love of Sufism by the poor).
20. Write this poem by Rumi on the board and discuss what it says about Sufism and what it says about Rumi as a poet (18:10): "The Sufi opens his hands to the universe and gives away each instant, free. Like someone who begs on the street to survive, a dervish begs to give you his life."

V. **Assessment Suggestions:**

- You may want to have them turn in their **Vocabulary Worksheets**.
- You may want students to use their initial reactions to the film as a basis and perhaps let them watch the film again in small groups before they write an evaluation of the film as a documentary, a brief film review that they can present to the class.
- Have the students write about the poem you discussed earlier: "Gamble everything for love." (39:55). Or, they may choose this poem: "You have gone to the secret world. Which way is it?" (34:58) Ask them to interpret its meaning, focus on its theme, and analyze the use of imagery and language.
- Have students go online to do further research about Sufism and the Golden Age of Sufism (<http://www.eicws.org/content/view/12/27>) then develop their thoughts into a definition essay. Here are some links to sources: Sufism, Sufis and Sufi Orders: Sufism's Many Paths (<http://uga.edu/islam/sufismresources.html>); Sufi News and Sufism World Report (<http://sufinews.blogspot.com/> [updated daily]); Sufism: An Inquiry (<http://www.sufismjournal.org/>); the Threshold Society (<http://www.sufism.org/books/helm.html>), founded by Kabir and Camille Helminski (Kabir was one of the first Westerners to become a Shaykh of the Mevlevi order inspired by Rumi); and the Mevlevi Order of Sufism (<http://www.sufism.org/society/mevlev.html>).
- Have film students turn in their **List of Film Techniques Used in RUMI RETURNING** with their notes and comments.

VI. **Extensions/Adaptations:**

- For older grades, you might ask them to read the article entitled "Rumi's Time Has Come (Again)" that proclaims "Rumi is hot" in the Washington Post (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/08/29/AR2007082902168.html>) and write about why they think Rumi is so popular now.
- For lower level grades or special needs students, you may want to have them view the film again, keeping a "diary" of the events in Rumi's life. Then you may ask them to write a composition, giving examples of key aspects of his life (people, places, events) that affected him and who he became. Then you may ask them to write an expository composition, giving examples of how aspects of his life (people, places, events) affected his poetry.
- For music students, you may want to have them study traditional Sufi music (originating in Turkey, Iran,

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan). They might want to listen to more music played by Turkish native Kudsi Erguner (with his brother Suleyman). http://www.worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com/worldmusic/view/page.basic/artist/content.artist/kudsi_erguner.com. Erguner's music is used throughout **RUMI RETURNING**, such as behind the *Sema* dance (37:30 - 39:55). There is also contemporary Sufi music used (as performed by dervishes of Morocco with the Rolling Stones on "Continental Drift" on *Steel Wheels* and as performed by NIYAZ with Azam Ali singing a Rumi poem, "Nahan the Hidden," behind the credits at the end of the film). For NIYAZ, see www.niyazmusic.com.

- For advanced literature classes, you might want to students to research other Persian poets, such as Hafiz, and compare and contrast several of his poems to several of Rumi's. (See *The Gift: Poems by Hafiz, The Great Sufi Master*, translations by Daniel Ladinsky.)
- For advanced film classes, you might want to have students study one of the Rumi poems used in the film, such as "They're lovers again..." (30:59) or "There's a strange frenzy in my head of birds flying..." (33:48). Have them explain how the montage was put together to express the poem. How were the elements integrated? Then you might have the students find a Rumi poem not in the film and interpret it by creating a montage of images with music, as was done in **RUMI RETURNING**.

PRE-VIDEO SURVEY

Directions: Fill out this survey as truthfully as possible. There are no wrong answers.

1. Who are Muslims?

2. Do you have any preconceptions about Muslims? Name three words or characteristics that come into your mind when you hear the word "Muslim."

3. How have your ideas about Muslims been shaped? Circle as many as apply: media, home, school, church/religion, friends, government.

4. Do you know any Muslims in your daily life?

POST-VIDEO SURVEY

Directions: Fill out this survey as truthfully as possible. There are no wrong answers.

1. Who are Muslims?

2. Do you have any new ideas about Muslims or Islam after seeing **RUMI RETURNING**? If so, what are they?

3. What in the film prompted you to change your mind about Muslims or Islam?

4. Name three words or characteristics that come into your mind when you hear the word "Muslim."

5. Would you like to know more about Muslims, Islam, or Sufism? Would you like to get to know a Muslim?

LIST OF FILM TECHNIQUES USED IN RUMI RETURNING

Directions: Note which of these techniques have been used to good effect and/or used to establish the key message (or messages) of **RUMI RETURNING**.

CAMERA ANGLES

CAMERA TECHNIQUES (SUCH AS CLOSE-UPS OR PULL-OUTS)

SPECIAL EFFECTS (SUCH AS SLOW MOTION AND COLOR SATURATION)

EDITING

MONTAGE

SYMBOLS

USE OF ART MASTERPIECES (PERSIAN MINIATURES, SCULPTURE, AND ARCHITECTURE)

MUSIC

AMBIENT SOUND

NARRATION

POETRY RECITATION

INTERVIEWS

DANCE

DRAMATIC TABLEAUS

ANY OTHERS???

VOCABULARY WORKSHEET FOR RUMI RETURNING

Names of Rumi = Mevlana Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi

Mevlana = Master (or Our Master)

Jala al-Din (or Jalaluddin) = The Glory of the Faith (sometimes The Keeper of the Religion)

Muhammad = The Prophet of Islam

Rumi = From the land of the Romans or West; non-native

In Afghanistan a.k.a. Mawlana Balkhi = Master from Balkh

Bahauddin Valad = Rumi's father; one of the great Sufi Shaykhs in Balkh, Khorasan, Rumi's birthplace; called the "Sultan of Scholars"

Sultan Valad = one of Rumi's three sons; established Rumi's legacy by developing the Mevlevi order of Sufism and formalizing the dance of the whirling dervishes that Rumi inspired

Shamsuddin (or Shams-i Tabrizi or just Shams) = Rumi's Master Teacher; a wandering Sufi dervish from Tabriz; his name is Arabic for "sun"; Rumi used "Shams-i Tabrizi" as his surname for much of his poetry

Rumi's Masterworks:

The Mesnevi (also called the Masnavi or Mathnawi): one of the masterpieces of Persian literature and one of the most influential of Sufi writings, it contains 25,618 couplets in six books

Divan-i Kabir (which means the great collection of poems, also called Divan-i Shams or poems written by Shams) : Rumi's poems in several different styles of Eastern Islamic poetry (as odes, eulogies, quatrains, etc.); it contains about 3,074 odes and 21, 366 couplets

KEY PEOPLE:

(2:34) Muhammad
(5:24) Alexander the Great
(5:42) Zoroaster
(8:56) Rabi'a al-Adawiyya
(also called Rabi'a al-Basri)
(11:15) Abu Bakr
(11:15) Iman Ali
(12:12) Genghis Khan/(12:40) Mongols
(19:39) Ibn al-Arabi

KEY PLACES:

(3:12) Konya, Turkey
(5:05) Balkh, Khorasan
(5:05) Persian Empire
(12:26) Baghdad
(15:39) Mecca
(18:57) Medina
(19:10) the Dome of the Rock (Jerusalem)
(19:30) Damascus
(19:23) Anatolian Seljuk province of Rum
(19:55) Andalusia (Spain)
(26:13) Tabriz

KEY TERMS:

(2:34) Sufism/(17:21) Sufi
(2:34) *Qur'an*
(3:12) *Sheb-I Arus* (Turkish) = the Wedding Night
(3:20) Farsi
(4:19) *Allahu akbar* (Arabic)
(5:42) Buddhism
(8:00) *Sulh-i-kul* (Indian)
(10:32) *ilm* (Arabic)
(11:25) Shaykh (or Shaikh or Sheikh)
(12:12) Crusades
(15:39) *the Hajj* (Arabic)
(15:55) *ummah* (Arabic)
(17:22) *dervish* (Turkish from the Persian *darvish*)
(20:48) *Rahman* and *Rahim* (Arabic)
(29:14) *anal-haqq* (Arabic) = I am the Truth
(also translated as I am God)
(37:30) *sema* (or *sama*)

TWO POEMS

BY MEVLANA JALAL AL-DIN MUHAMMAD RUMI

(Translation by Coleman Barks with John Moyne)

1

Gamble everything for love
If you're a true human being
If you don't want that gamble,
Leave this gathering.
Half-heartedness does not reach into majesty.
You set out to find God,
But you keep stopping
At mean-spirited roadhouses.

Gamble everything for love
If you're a true human being.
If not, leave this gathering.

2

You have gone to the secret world.
Which way is it?
You broke the cage and flew.
You heard the drum that you called home.
You left this humiliating shelf,
This disorienting desert where we are given wrong directions.

What use now a crown?
You have become the sun.
No need for a belt.
You have slipped out of your waist.
I have heard that near the end
your eyes were looking at soul.
No looking now.
You live inside the soul.

You are the strange autumn rose
That led the winter wind in by withering.
You are the strange autumn rose
That led the winter wind in by withering.
You are rain soaking everywhere from cloud to ground.
No bother talking, flowing silence
and sweet sleep inside the Friend.