

Lesson Plan: The Life of Ibn Sina

Guiding Questions:

- What do we know about Ibn Sina? How do we know this about him?
- What makes a source trustworthy?

Standards

- *CA History-Social Science Content Standard 7.2.6*: Understand the intellectual exchanges among Muslim scholars of Eurasia and Africa and the contributions Muslim scholars made to later civilizations in the areas of science, geography, mathematics, philosophy, medicine, art, and literature.
- *CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2*: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- *CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6*: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).
- *CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.9*: Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.
- *CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.8*: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citations.

Procedure

I. Preview:

- A. *Quickwrite*: Write a short description of your school years. What topics have you learned about? What did you learn from teachers, parents, coaches, etc?
- B. *Table Talk*: Share out with your table. What similarities did you share? What was different?
- C. *Discussion*: Now imagine your parent/teacher/coach wrote a description of your academic career. How might their accounts confirm OR contradict your own account?

II. Source Analysis

A. Document A: Textbook Excerpts

1. Read the excerpts and answer the following questions with your table.
 - a) *Close Reading*: What were Ibn Sina's accomplishments?
 - b) *Close Reading*: Why is Ibn Sina still remembered today?
 - c) *Sourcing*: How trustworthy are these sources? What might the textbook writer(s) be leaving out? Why?
 - d) *Extension*: Based on what you read about Ibn Sina's accomplishments, what type(s) of training and education do you think Ibn Sina received?
 - e) *Extension*: What more information would you like to know about Ibn Sina?

B. Document B: Autobiography of Ibn Sina (modified)

1. Read the excerpt and answer the following questions with your table.

- a) *Close Reading*: According to Ibn Sina, what different subjects did he study?
- b) *Close Reading*: Based on what you read, how would you describe Ibn Sina? If you were describing him to a friend, what would you say about him?
- c) *Sourcing*: How trustworthy is this source? What might Ibn Sina be leaving out? Why?
- d) *Corroboration*: What other sources might you want to use to find out more about Ibn Sina's life?
- e) *Comparison*: Which source is more trustworthy? Justify your answer.

III. Illuminated Biography

- A. Students will create an illuminated biography of Ibn Sina, using Islamic manuscripts, like the ones listed below, as inspiration:
 1. Cleveland Museum of Art's collection: <http://goo.gl/6K46bg>
 2. LACMA's collection: <http://goo.gl/JFcqa4>
 3. The Met's collection: <http://goo.gl/nFa2Gz>
- B. Find another source on Ibn Sina's life by using one of the following databases:
 1. ABC-CLIO
 2. Salem Press-History
 3. Facts on File-World Geography & Culture Online
 4. Gale Databases-Biography in Context
- C. Using all **THREE** (textbook excerpts, autobiography, database) sources, write a short biography of Ibn Sina.
- D. Requirements:
 1. Biography that describes Ibn Sina's education and accomplishments.
 2. Decorative border-can be geometric or arabesque/floral design.
 - a) The students will previously have had a lesson on Islamic design using the following resources the Met's lesson on Islamic geometric design: <http://goo.gl/3LZUI5>
 - b) For students that struggle with art, they can use templates taken from *Islamic Geometric Design*.¹
 3. Picture that shows a scene from Ibn Sina's life-can be hand-drawn or taken from one of the Digital Library databases, with proper MLA citation.
 4. An MLA-formatted bibliography.

¹ Broug, Eric. *Islamic Geometric Design*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2013. Print.

Document A: Textbook Excerpts about Ibn Sina

Taken from *History Alive! The Medieval World and Beyond*²

"Ibn Sina, a Persian, became Islam's most famous philosopher. Called Avicenna in Europe, Ibn Sina wrote in the early 11th century. He believed that all knowledge came from God and that truth could be known through revelation and reason...

The Persian philosopher Ibn Sina (Avicenna)...was also a great doctor. In fact, he has been called 'the prince of physicians.' His most important medical work, *The Canon of Medicine*, explored the treatment of diseases. It is one of the classics in the history of medicine.

Europeans later translated Ibn Sina's book and many other Muslim works into Latin. Medical schools then used these texts to teach their students. In this way, Muslim doctors had a major impact on European medicine."

Taken from *McDougal Littell World History: Medieval and Early Modern Times*³

"Medical scholars also wrote books that combined ancient works with recent Muslim discoveries. For example, the Persian doctor Ibn Sina wrote the *Canon of Medicine* around 1000. This detailed work organized all known medical knowledge. It even described mental condition such as 'love sickness'! Ibn Sina's work remained an important medical reference book for more than 600 years."

² Frey, Wendy. "Chapter 10: Contributions of Muslims to World Civilization." *History Alive! The Medieval World and Beyond*. Palo Alto, CA: TCI, 2004. 104-17. Print.

³ Carnine, Douglas. "Medicine." *World History: Medieval and Early Modern Times*. Evanston, IL: McDougal Littell, 2006. 123. Print.

Document B: Autobiography of Ibn Sina (Modified)⁴

I was born [in Afshana]... and then we moved to Bukhara. A teacher of the Qur'an and a teacher of literature were provided for me, and when I reached the age of ten I had finished the Qur'an and many works of literature so that people were greatly amazed at me...

I was a skillful questioner, having become **acquainted** with the methods of **prosecution** and the procedure of **rebuttal**...

He [Abu 'Abdallah al-Natili, his teacher] was extremely amazed at me; whatever problem he posed I **conceptualized** better than he, so he advised my father against my taking up any occupation other than learning.

I continued until I had read the simple parts of logic under him; but as for its deeper **intricacies**, he had no knowledge of them...the man did not attempt to deal with the text, so I **deciphered** it myself. And many a figure he did not graph until I put it before him and made him understand it...

Next I sought to know medicine, and so I read the books written on it. Medicine is not one of the difficult sciences, and therefore I excelled in it in a very short time...

I used to visit the mosque frequently and worship, praying humbly to the All-Creating until He opened the mystery of it to me and made the difficult seem easy...

Thus I mastered the logical, natural, and mathematical sciences, and I had now reached the science of **meta physics**...

So when I had reached the age of eighteen I was finished with all of these sciences; at that time I had a better memory for learning, but today my knowledge is more mature; otherwise it is the same; nothing new has come to me since...

acquainted: became familiar with

prosecution: the process of holding a trial against a person accused of a crime

rebuttal: the act of proving something false by using arguments or evidence

conceptualized: form an idea of something in your mind

intricacies: details

deciphered: to find the meaning of

meta physics: the study of the basic causes and nature of things

⁴ Source: "5. Ibn Sina: Biographical Notes." *Islamic Central Asia: An Anthology of Historical Sources*. Ed. Scott C. Levi and Ron Sela. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2010. 35-39. Print.