

Activities

Activity 2

Getting to Know Israeli Culture

Preparation:

Estimated Time: one-half class period • **Materials:** Internet access

Background: Historian Howard Sachar noted that in addition to its scientific achievements, Israel has had immense intellectual and cultural vibrancy since its early founding. Hundreds of Israeli artists produced works snatched up by international art buyers. In 1965, UNESCO ranked Israel first in the world in theater attendance per capita and in annual numbers of performances. In 1975, Israel ranked second in the world in number of new book titles published annually per capita and had 1,000 libraries containing 9 million books. World-class symphonies and authors drew international acclaim. Israel ranked first in the world in the number of museums per capita, from the world-class Israel Museum to the smaller specialized museums of archeology, art, coins, folk culture, etc. Israelis also pursued popular culture with eagerness and produced rock stars, models, and world-renowned fashion houses as well as a wide variety of annual rock, folk, pop, and other kinds of concerts. Israelis also pursue leisure sports with passionate enthusiasm and turn out in droves to support their basketball, soccer, and other teams.

Activity

Explain to students the background described above. You might want to show one or two of the short videos from Israel Up Close (listed below) that would be of particular interest to your class. Then tell students to pick an area of particular interest to them (pop bands, fashion, film, theater, sports, cooking, wine making, architecture, literature, etc.) and find out what Israel is doing in this field.

(If you don't have many computers available, have students interested in the same topic work in groups for this activity.)

The best site to use for this activity: www.israel21c.org/bin/en.jsp?enPage=ArticlePage&enDisplay=view&enDispWhat=Zone&enZone=Profiles&

The best Internet sites to use for general background:

www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts%20About%20Israel/Looking%20at%20Israel/Looking%20at%20Israel-%20Culture%20and%20Leisure

www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/history/modern%20history/israel%20at%2050/the%20leisure%20culture%20of%20israel

For sports: www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/facts%20about%20israel/culture/culture-%20sports

Encourage students to look at the short descriptions of the videos available from Israel Up Close, which will give them further insight into the wide range of cultural life and activity in Israel at www.israelupclose.org/stories.html.

Activities

Activity 2

Discussion: Have students or groups report to the class on what they learned. How does this information impact their image of Israeli life and culture?

Have students discuss what aspects of Israeli history, society and government contributed to this cultural inventiveness and creativity. (How much has each of the following features of Israeli society contributed to it: Personal freedom, freedom of ideas, investment in education and the arts, immigrants bringing their unique cultural backgrounds, etc.?)

Wrap-up: Israel's rich and diverse cultural life has not only made life fun for Israelis, but has also allowed Israelis to make significant contributions to modern life and culture around the world.

