

## Case Studies: Teaching About Religion in Public Schools



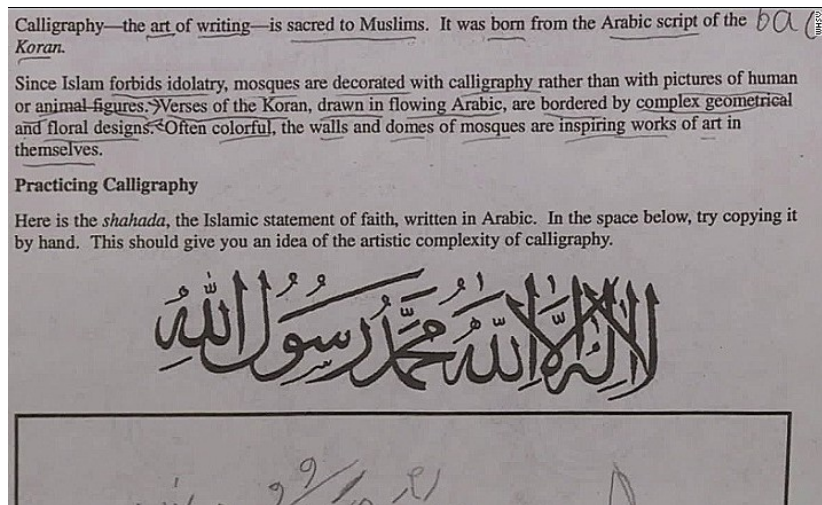
### CASE 1: The Jewish Kippah

World religion teachers accompany their students on a field trip to a synagogue. As they arrive, the rabbi provides each of the students with a small black yarmulke, also known as a *kippah*, to wear during their visit. The students return them when they leave.<sup>1</sup>

### CASE 2: Arabic Calligraphy

In a world geography class during the portion devoted to major world religions, a teacher asks the students to copy religious calligraphy to get a better sense of the importance of not only language but art as part of the religious culture of Islam.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 1 Assignment in a Virginia school



### CASE 3: Hindu Practice

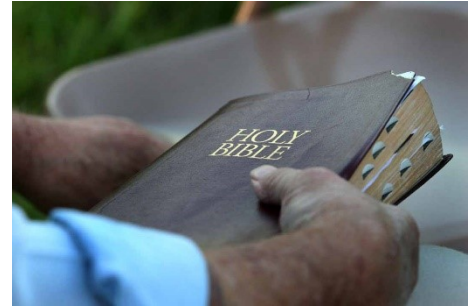
Having less familiarity with Hinduism than some of the other traditions she teaches, a world religions teacher asks a Hindu student if she and her parents would be willing to make a presentation to the class about their tradition and what it means to them.

<sup>1</sup> Wertheimer, L. K. (2015). *Faith ed.: Teaching about religion in an age of intolerance*. Beacon Press.

<sup>2</sup> Brumfield, B. (2015, December 19). Schools in Virginia shut over anger at Islam homework. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2015/12/18/us/virginia-school-shut-islam-homework/index.html>

#### **CASE 4: Christian Dogma**

As part of the unit on Christianity, a local pastor is invited to make a presentation about core Christian beliefs, teachings, and values to eighth grade students who are studying world religions. During the class session, the clergy person states that only those who believe in Jesus Christ will be saved and that everyone else will go to hell.



#### **CASE 5: Buddhist Meditation**

As they move into the unit on Buddhism, a student expresses interest in leading the whole class in an exercise of meditation. On the appointed day, the young man brings in his own brass singing bowl and a small statue of the Buddha and briefly provides instructions for his classmates before they begin the session.

#### **CASE 6: Women in Islam**

As they begin to study Islam, the sixth graders have a lot of questions about the veil and the different types of covering that some Muslim women wear. In order to make the learning more experiential, their teacher brings in a variety of different coverings from around the world and students have the opportunity to try them on.<sup>3</sup>

*Figure 2 Sharon Peters of Lumberton, TX. See note iii.*



#### **CASE 7: Jewish Holidays**

In studying Jewish holidays, a seventh grade teacher asks students in his world religions classes to volunteer to prepare different foods on a Seder plate, a tradition associated with Passover. As the teacher explains the important symbolism attached to particular items on the plate, the students have the opportunity to sample the food.

<sup>3</sup> Wertheimer, L. (2017, November 10). Teaching About Religion: Five Ways to Avoid Uproar. Retrieved from [http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/global\\_learning/2017/11/teaching\\_about\\_religion\\_five\\_ways\\_to\\_avoid\\_uproar.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/global_learning/2017/11/teaching_about_religion_five_ways_to_avoid_uproar.html)