

“From 8 Mile Road to Min Ana” with rapper Niro Degen

🎧 Upon completing this worksheet, I will be able to:

- ✓ Connect with Niro's story as a political refugee and rapper
- ✓ Critically reflect on stereotypes of the Middle East
- ✓ Express my own thoughts creatively



🔄 Vocabulary preview: Fill in the blanks with the terms from the vocabulary box!

📖 Word box

Stigma Identity Oud Home Revolution Taboo Syria Improvisation Chorus

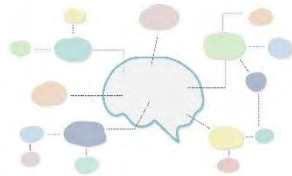


1. The _____ is a stringed instrument that is often played in Arabic classical music.
2. A _____ is something that is not talked about openly, even though it is important – many rappers break such rules with their music.
3. An _____ is a spontaneous piece of music or performance that is created in the moment of performance. (In Arabic music, this is often called *taksim*.)
4. Your own _____ describes who you are and where you come from.
5. Feeling safe and secure is an important part of feeling at _____.
6. The _____ is a recurring part of a song that often sticks in your mind.
7. A _____ happens when many people want to change something together – for example, in politics or against injustice.
8. A _____ is a negative label or prejudice against a person or group.
9. _____ is a country in the Middle East where Arabic is spoken. In recent decades, many people have had to leave this country because of war.

💬 Discuss in class: Which of these words are new to you? Which ones did you already know?

🌀 Use the back of the page to create a mind map on the topic of rap music. Write down everything that comes to mind!

What do you think of when you hear the word rap? Start in the middle with the word "RAP" and work outwards in different directions. You can use colors, small drawings, or symbols.



Possible branches of your mind map:

Area	Key questions/suggestions
🎵 Music & Sound	Which instruments? Beats? Rhythm? <u>Freestyle</u> ?
🗣️ Language & style	Rhymes? Slang? Native language? Multilingualism?
👤 Artists	Which rappers do you know? Who is your favorite?
🔄 <u>Topics</u>	What are rap songs often about? (e.g., justice, anger)
🌍 Origin & culture	Where did rap originally come from? Which languages?
💬 Your opinion	What do you like about rap? What might bother you?

🎵 Info box: Arabic music & improvisation

In Arabic classical music, instruments such as the *oud* (a type of lute) play an important role. The music is often emotional, expressive, and ornate. Arabic melodies may sound unfamiliar to European ears at first, as Arabic melodies use a variety of notes that are not known in European music. A special element is improvisation, especially in the form of *taksim*: an instrumentalist plays freely, without a fixed musical score, expressing their feelings spontaneously and getting the audience in the mood for the upcoming performance. Arabic musicians use melodic building blocks from different modes called *maqamat* to creatively improvise new melodies. In contrast, Western classical musicians today often follow a fixed canon—playing notation precisely with few embellishments and hardly any improvisation. The improvisation helps make the music lively and personal.

Listen to the video tutorials about Arabic music and culture on the website

<https://www.musikwissenschaft.uni-wuerzburg.de/moon>).

🗣️ Partner exchange: Rap & Arabic music – do they go together?

1. **Compare your rap mind maps!**

Talk to the person sitting next to you:

- What do you have in common in your rap mind map?
- Are there any differences in your ideas about rap?



2. **Read the info box** about Arabic music **together**.

Pay particular attention to the terms *oud*, *taksim*, and *improvisation*, which you will recognize from the vocabulary preview.

3. **Discuss together:**

→ **Are rap and Arabic music compatible?** →

What similarities or differences do you see?

4. 💬 **Write down a sentence together that could start like this:**

"We think rap and Arabic music go together (or don't go together) because..."

Video tasks: The rapper Niro is originally from Syria and has been living with his family in Würzburg for many years. In the video, he talks about his life, his escape, and his two cultures.

Watch the first part of the film portrait of Niro (available here: <https://www.musikwissenschaft.uni-wuerzburg.de/moon.>)

Task 1: Profile

Write down 5 things about Niro's life and influences (0:00-4:50 min)

Name	Niro Degen
Origin	Syria
Reason for leaving Syria	
Importance of music	
Where did rap originate?	
What was Niro protesting in his rap?	
What was interesting to you?	

What do you think about Niro not giving up rap despite the dangers? Write down your thoughts.

Task: 2 My mood panel

As you continue watching the video (from 4:50 min), you can write down or draw up to five feelings that you experience while watching.

- 😞 Sad
- 😊 happy
- 😡 angry
- 😌 Calm

Under each symbol, write down what exactly moved you in the video. For example: "I feel sad because Niro talks/sings about ..."

e.g., fleeing, culture, home, music, shore, ...

Emoji	This is how I feel (first a short note, then a whole sentence)

Task 3: Cultural mix – How cultures can fit together

In the video, Niro says that he carries two cultures within him: Syrian and German. And he says, "The two cultures complement each other wonderfully." What does he mean by that?

What German things does Niro appreciate?	What Syrian things does he love?

Do you also have two or more cultural influences?

If so:

- Which cultures are they? _____
- Do they complement each other? What fits well together? _____

If not:

- What cultural aspects make your family special? _____
- What cultures are you curious to learn about? _____

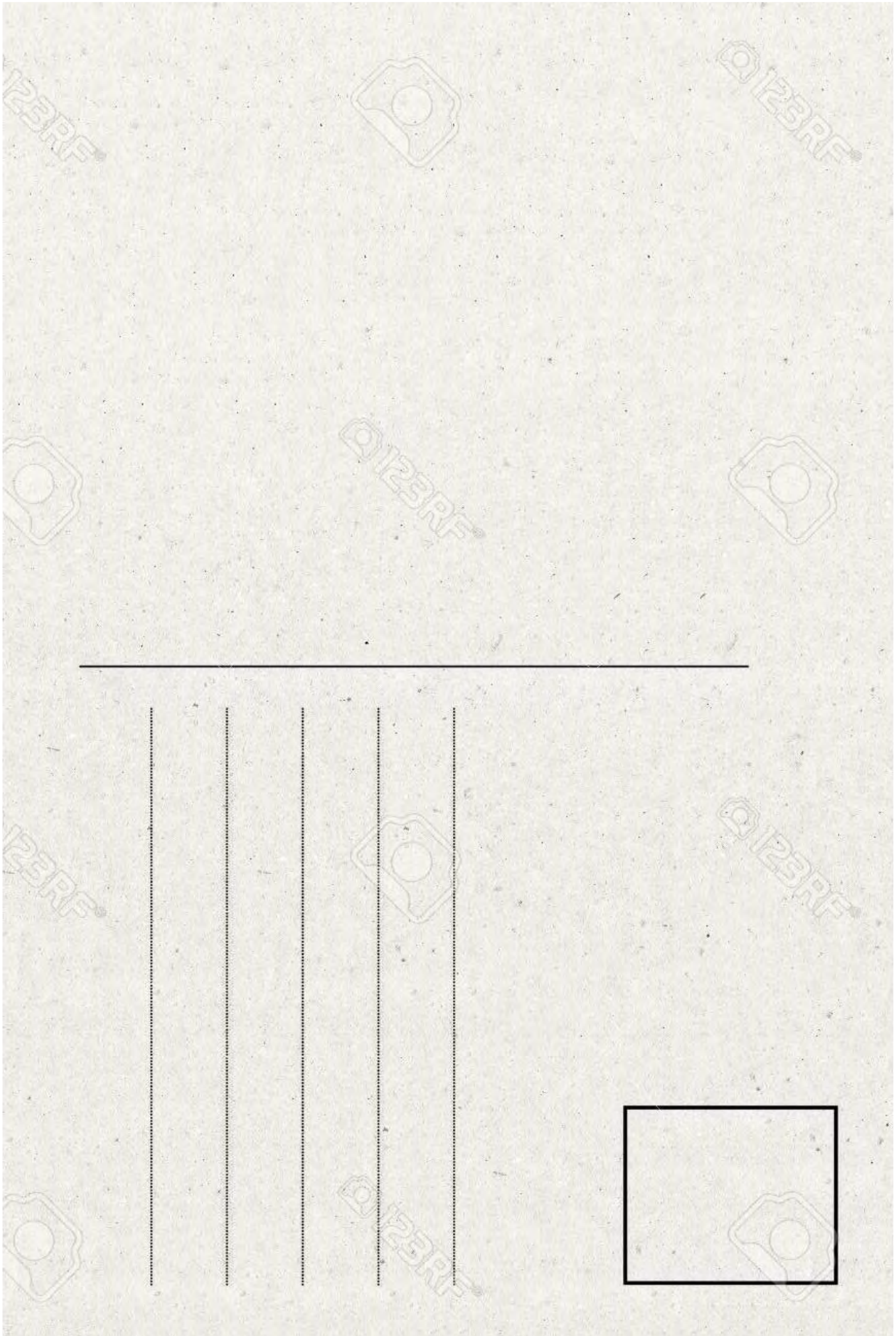
Your top 3 – What I like most about my culture(s)


1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What makes a culture?	
❖	Food
❖	Celebrations
❖	Music
❖	Rituals
❖	Clothing
❖	Language
❖	Stories and Songs
❖	Customs and Norms
❖	... what do you think?

"I think cultures can complement each other wonderfully because

_____."



 **Creative writing task – Variations & additions**

Title: "Greetings from afar – my postcard home"

Imagine: You had to leave your home country, like Niro. You write a postcard to your friends who stayed behind and design the front yourself (for example, with a picture that reminds you of home, like a place like the Main River, an animal, a dish, a festival...).

 **Writing instructions with prompts**

1. Salutation & introduction

"Dear ..., I hope you are well ..."

– How are you feeling right now as you write?

2. Why did you have to leave your country?

Was there war, persecution, hunger, fear, no jobs?

3. What do you miss most? –

People? Smells? Food?
Language? Sounds?

4. What gives you strength?

– People? Music? Writing?
Memories?


5. What did you experience in the new country?

– What was difficult?
– What was surprisingly beautiful?

6. My own prompt

– Add your own question or message.

E.g.: "Do you think we'll see each other again soon?" or "I have a dream..."

 **Additional idea for experts:** Use new vocabulary that you have learned (identity, homeland, stigma, etc.) and incorporate it meaningfully into your text.

Niro comes from a region of the world that some people call the Middle East, the Near East, or the "Orient." But what does "**Orient**" actually mean? And why is the word problematic?

Task: Check the correct definition: What does "Orient" mean?

- A) The Orient is a region in Asia with beautiful spices, carpets, and princesses.
- B) The Orient is a fixed cultural area with a uniform religion and language.
- C) The Orient is an image that originated in Europe and contains many stereotypes.
- D) The Orient is another word for everything that sounds Arabic and exotic.

Note: Only one of the definitions is correct—read the info box below!

Info box: Where does the word "Orient" come from?

The term "**Orient**" comes from Latin and means "east."

In the past, Europeans used it to refer to everything **east of Europe** – e.g. China, Japan, Turkey, Arabia, or Persia.

But this image was **not neutral**—it was shaped by **stereotypes, clichés, and exaggerations**. **Literary scholar Edward Said** criticized this in his famous book *Orientalism* (1978).

He said: "The Orient was not described in Europe as it really is, but as it is imagined: mysterious, backward, dangerous – or romantic."

This view is now called **Orientalism**. Many of these old ideas are still encountered today – even in films, comics, and song lyrics.

Can you think of any examples of Orientalist stereotypes (e.g., in advertising, the media, children's films)?

What do you associate with the words "home" and "homeland"? A place, a feeling, certain people? Do you think people who grow up in other regions of the world have similar feelings? Draw or write your associations with the word in the box.

Task: Draw Niro's migration route





His route:

1. **Syria** – starting point, reason for fleeing (war)
2. **Turkey** – short stopover on the route
3. **Mediterranean Sea** – crossing by rubber dinghy
4. **Greece** – landing in Europe
5. **European footpath** – walking through the Balkan route
6. **Germany** – arrival



Task:

1. Use the map of Europe and the Middle East on the next page and draw the route with arrows.
2. Label the stops.
3. Place the symbols in the appropriate locations.

-  → Syria (start)
-  → boat crossing from Turkey to Greece
-  → Overland route through Europe (e.g. Balkan route)
-  → Germany (new home)

4. Then write down the following in bullet points:

- What was probably difficult?

- What might he have experienced?

- What gave him strength and courage?

