World Islamic Front Statement

Fatwa issued by Osama Bin Laden

February 23, 1998

Praise be to Allah, who revealed the Book, controls the clouds, defeats factionalism, and says in His Book: “But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them, seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war)”\(^1\); and peace be upon our Prophet, Muhammad Bin-'Abdallah, who said: I have been sent with the sword between my hands to ensure that no one but Allah is worshipped, Allah who put my livelihood under the shadow of my spear and who inflicts humiliation and scorn on those who disobey my orders.

The Arabian Peninsula has never—since Allah made it flat, created its desert, and encircled it with seas—been stormed by any forces like the crusader armies spreading in it like locusts, eating its riches and wiping out its plantations. All this is happening at a time in which nations are attacking Muslims like people fighting over a plate of food. In the light of the grave situation and the lack of support, we and you are obliged to discuss current events, and we should all agree on how to settle the matter. No one argues today about three facts that are known to everyone; we will list them, in order to remind everyone:

First, for over seven years the United States has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places, the Arabian Peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbors, and turning its bases in the Peninsula into a spearhead through which to fight the neighboring Muslim peoples. If some people have in the past argued about the fact of the occupation, all the people of the Peninsula have now acknowledged it. The best proof of this is the Americans’ continuing aggression against the Iraqi people using the Peninsula as a staging post, even though all its rulers are against their territories being used to that end, but they are helpless.

Second, despite the great devastation inflicted on the Iraqi people by the crusader-Zionist alliance, and despite the huge number of those killed, which has exceeded 1 million... despite all this, the Americans are once again trying to repeat the horrific massacres, as though they are not content with the protracted blockade imposed after the ferocious war or the fragmentation and devastation. So here they come to

\(^{1}\) All italicized words are direct quotations from the holy book of Islam, the Koran.

\(^{2}\) Military expeditions undertaken by European Christians in the 11\(^{th}\), 12\(^{th}\) and 13\(^{th}\) centuries to recover the Holy Land from the Muslims.
annihilate what is left of this people and to humiliate their Muslim neighbors.

Third, if the Americans' aims behind these wars are religious and economic, the aim is also to serve the Jews' petty state and divert attention from its occupation of Jerusalem and murder of Muslims there. The best proof of this is their eagerness to destroy Iraq, the strongest neighboring Arab state, and their endeavor to fragment all the states of the region such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Sudan into paper statelets and through their disunion and weakness to guarantee Israel's survival and the continuation of the brutal crusade occupation of the Peninsula.

All these crimes and sins committed by the Americans are a clear declaration of war on Allah, his messenger, and Muslims. And ulema have throughout Islamic history unanimously agreed that the jihad is an individual duty if the enemy destroys the Muslim countries. This was revealed by Imam Bin-Qadamah in "Al-Mughni," Imam al-Kisa'i in "Al-Bada'i," al-Qurtubi in his interpretation, and the shaykh of al-Islam in his books, where he said: "As for the fighting to repulse [an enemy], it is aimed at defending sanctity and religion, and it is a duty as agreed [by the ulema]. Nothing is more sacred than belief except repulsing an enemy who is attacking religion and life." On that basis, and in compliance with Allah's order, we issue the following fatwa to all Muslims:

The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque and the holy mosque Mecca from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim. This is in accordance with the words of Almighty Allah, "and fight the pagans all together as they fight you all together," and "fight them until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allah." This is in addition to the words of Almighty Allah: "And why should ye not fight in the cause of Allah and of those who, being weak, are ill-treated (and oppressed)?—women and children, whose cry is: 'Our Lord, rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from thee one who will help!"

We—with Allah's help—call on every Muslim who believes in Allah and wishes to be rewarded to comply with Allah's order to kill the Americans and plunder their money wherever and whenever they find it. We also call on Muslim ulema, leaders, youths, and soldiers to launch the raid on Satan's U.S. troops and the devil's supporters allying with them, and to displace those who are behind them so that they may learn a lesson.

Almighty Allah said: "O ye who believe, give your response to Allah and His Apostle."
when He calleth you to that which will give you life. And know that Allah cometh between a man and his heart, and that it is He to whom ye shall all be gathered.”

Almighty Allah also says: “O ye who believe, what is the matter with you, that when ye are asked to go forth in the cause of Allah, ye cling so heavily to the earth! Do ye prefer the life of this world to the hereafter? But little is the comfort of this life, as compared with the hereafter. Unless ye go forth, He will punish you with a grievous penalty, and put others in your place; but Him ye would not harm in the least. For Allah hath power over all things.” Almighty Allah also says: “So lose no heart, nor fall into despair. For ye must gain mastery if ye are true in faith.”
Teacher’s Guide

Name of Text: World Islamic Front Statement – Osama Bin Laden’s Fatwa

Question Composers: Mario Fitzpatrick and Jennifer Chandler

Teacher Background Information:

World history students need to recognize tensions between the Arab and Western worlds. Hostilities between the world religions of Islam, Judaism and Christianity have existed for centuries but many students do not understand the depth and complexities of the situation. Bin Laden’s fatwa clearly shows the intertwining of religion, culture and history in this world conflict. He mentions resentment towards the United States and notes his concern over holy sites controlled by The Jewish state. He clearly disapproves of Western occupation of Arab states. Bin Laden’s fatwa demonstrates the willingness of extremists to go to any means possible to carry out fatwa. The speech contains powerful word choices that strengthen his claims and add support to his reasoning. An example of this is the term “crusader-Zionist” which embodies the deep cultural, almost cellular, memory of the Crusades by bringing it into the present day conflicts of the “ferocious war” (Operation Desert Storm). It exemplifies the political enmity that has existed for nine centuries. This speech is a founding document/groundwork for Al Qaeda’s 9/11 attacks and further inspiration for splinter global terror groups. This became the blueprint for future terror attacks such as London, Madrid and Saudi Arabia.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Dependent Questions</th>
<th>Teacher Notes and Possible Textual Evidence for Student Answers</th>
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<tr>
<td>Who is Allah? What evidence from the text suggests who he is?</td>
<td>Answer:</td>
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<td>Line 5 – praise be to Allah, controls the clouds, defeats factionalism</td>
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<td>Line 9 – worshipped</td>
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<td>Line 13 – made Arabian peninsula flat and circled it with seas</td>
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<td>Line 59 – Almighty</td>
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<td>Line 66 – call on every Muslim who believes in Allah</td>
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<td>Line 72 – Almighty Allah said: Oh ye who believe . . .</td>
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<td>Line 80 – for Allah hath power over all things</td>
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<td>Response – god, deity, central figure of the religion of Islam</td>
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<td>Purpose: This question orients students to the name Allah.</td>
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<td>What does Bin Laden mean in line 13 when he refers to “the crusader armies spreading in it like locusts, eating its riches and wiping out its plantations?”</td>
<td>Students should refer to the footnote referring to who the crusaders are;</td>
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<td>Line 12 – have spread in the Arabian Peninsula</td>
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<td>Response – western armies taking resources and wiping out the Muslim people</td>
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<td>Purpose: This question is meant to 1) draw attention to the footnote giving historical context and 2) draw parallels between the crusaders of the 11th-13th centuries and the U.S. now.</td>
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<td>Who is Bin Laden’s audience for the Fatwa? How do you know?</td>
<td>Line 7 – our Prophet</td>
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<td>Line 12 – those in the Arabian Peninsula</td>
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<td>Line 16-17 – we and you</td>
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<td>Line 17 – we should all agree</td>
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<td>Line 23-24 – neighboring Muslim peoples</td>
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<td>Line 34 – Muslim neighbors</td>
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<td>Response – Arabs in the Arabian Peninsula, devout Muslims, those that hate the West – we should all agree how to settle this matter (matter – crusader armies – the West that has invaded Arab lands)</td>
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<td>Purpose: This question is designed to help students understand that Bin Laden is attempting to unite Muslims in an organized resistance against the west.</td>
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| On lines 18-19, Bin Laden introduces the significance of current events and reminds readers of three facts (claims) everyone knows. What are those three facts? | Line 20-21 – United States has been occupying the holiest lands of Islam…  
Line 33-34 – So they come to annihilate what is left  
Line 36 – serve the Jews’ petty state  
Purpose: This question is intended to draw students to the 3 claims so they can answer the following questions. |
| What is Bin Laden’s first claim? What evidence does he use to support it? | Claim:  
Line 20-21 – U.S. occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places  
Evidence:  
Line 21 – plundering its riches  
Line 21-22 – dictating to its rulers  
Line 22 – humiliating its people  
Line 22 – terrorizing its neighbors  
Line 22-24 – turning its bases in the Peninsula into a spearhead through which to fight the neighboring Muslim peoples  
Line 26-27 – Peninsula as a staging post  
Purpose: This question shows students how Bin Laden built his case around the perceived barbaric practices of Americans. |
| Bin Laden’s second claim addresses America’s aggression in the Middle East. What types of persuasive words and phrases does he use to make his claim more effective? | Line 29 – great devastation  
Line 30 – huge number  
Line 31-32 – horrific massacres  
Line 33 – ferocious war  
Line 33 – fragmentation, devastation  
Line 34 – annihilate and humiliate  
Purpose: By using persuasive words that are very incendiary, Bin Laden is inciting violence against the aggressor. This question is intended to show students the power of persuasive language. |
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| According to Bin Laden’s third claim what two countries are his enemies? What does he see as their motives? | Several lines cite – Americans  
Line 36 – serve the Jews petty state  
Line 36 – divert attention from its occupation of Jerusalem and murder of Muslims there  
Line 37 - Eagerness to destroy Iraq  
Line 38 - Fragment states of the region  
Line 40 - Guarantee Israel’s survival  
Line 41 - Occupy the Arabian peninsula  
Purpose: This question is designed to point out that this Fatwa is targeting the U.S. (Christian) and Israel (Jewish). |
| In line 50, what does “on that basis” refer to when Bin Laden issues the fatwa to all Muslims? | Line 42 – crimes and sins committed by the Americans  
Line 42-43 – clear declaration of war on Allah, his messenger and Muslims  
Line 43-44 – ulema unanimously agree  
Line 44 – jihad is an individual duty if the enemy destroys Muslim countries |
| What religious references does Bin Laden use to motivate Muslims to respond to his fatwa? | Line 54 – liberate the mosques  
Line 56 – unable to threaten Muslims  
Line 56-57 – words of Almighty Allah  
Line 63-64 – be rewarded  
Line 64 – comply with Allah’s order to kill the Americans  
Line 66 – Satan’s U. S. troops and devil’s supporters  
Line 68 – who believe/apostles  
Line 74-75 – punish you with a grievous penalty |
<p>| In line 72, what two things make up Allah’s wishes? | Line 64 – kill the Americans and plunder their money wherever and whenever they find it |</p>
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<td>Bin Laden, in the final paragraph, quotes directly from the Koran (Muslim holy book). How might this motivate Muslims to carry out the fatwa? How do these words connect to previous portions of the text?</td>
<td>Lines 72-77 - Don’t worry about what is happening on earth, you have nothing to lose as long as you are doing what Allah asks and you will be rewarded. Line 53 - duty Line 57-62 - fight the pagans, fight the oppression, prevail justice, why should you not fight for the cause of Allah</td>
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Writing Prompt:

In order to motivate his audience to respond to his directive, Bin Laden uses history, logic, religion, and word choice to justify his fatwa. Locate each by completing the graphic organizer. Once you have all the information, determine which technique is most effective by ranking your choices 1 – 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Type of Claim</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Textual Evidence</th>
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<td>Historical Reference</td>
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|          | **Historical Reference** | Links current world situation to the Medieval Crusades Points to American presence in the Middle East/Iraq Identifies American support of the state of Israel/plight of the Jews | Line 13 – crusader armies                                                                                                                                     Line 26 – Americans’ continuing aggression against the Iraqi people  
Line 41 – continued occupation of the Peninsula  
Line 20 – for over seven years the United States has been occupying the lands of Islam  
Line 36 – to serve the Jews’ petty state                                                                 |
|          | **Logic**            | Muslims are under attack and must defend themselves  
The situation is bad  
It is our duty to respond  
We can call on others to help                                                                                                                                  | Line 13 – encircled                                                                                                                                            Line 14 crusader armies spreading in it like locusts, eating its riches and wiping out its plantations  
Line 16 – in light of the grave situation                                                                                                                     Line 52-53 – the ruling to kill is a duty  
Line 65-66 – we can also call on Muslim ulema, leaders, youth and soldiers                                                                                 |
|          | **Religion**         | Quotations from the Islamic holy book, the Koran  
Muslims are commanded by Allah to make sure no one is worshipped but Him  
Crimes and behaviors are a direct insult to Islamic beliefs  
Fight to defend places sacred to their religion  
Do it for an eternal reward or risk punishment from Allah                                                                                               | Lines 5-7 – portions of the Koran  
Line 9 – ensure that no one but Allah is worshipped  
Lines 54 – liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque . . . lands of Islam  
Lines 47-50 – portions of the Koran  
Lines 42-43 are a clear declaration of war on Allah, his messenger, and Muslims  
Line 63 – with Allah’s help . . . all who believe  
Lines 71-77 He will punish                                                                                                                                   |
|          | **Word Choice**      | Bin Laden uses words of shame to motivate Muslims to rise up and defend their honor  
Bin Laden uses many words of violence indicating that in his opinion violence is the only possible solution                                                                 | Words of Shame                                                                                                                                                Line 10 – humiliation and scorn  
Line 28 – helpless  
Line 33 – fragmentation and devastation  
Line 34 - humiliate  
Line 40 – disunion and weakness  
Line 59-62 – weak, ill treated and oppressed  
Violent Words                                                                                                                                                Line 8 – sword between my hands  
Line 10 – shadow of my spear  
Line 21 – plundering                                                                                                                                             |
Bin Laden uses many words of persuasion, working to create a clear distinction between Arabs and the West and to challenge anyone who might question his reasoning.

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<th>Line 21 – dictating</th>
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<td>Lines 22 – turning its bases into a spearhead through which to fight the Muslim peoples</td>
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<td>Line 34 – annihilate</td>
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<td>Line 37 – murder of Muslims</td>
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<td>Line 38 – endeavor to fragment</td>
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<td>Line 41 – brutal crusade occupation</td>
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<td>Line 42 - crimes and sins</td>
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<td>Line 57 – fight</td>
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Persuasive Words
Line 17-18 – we should all agree how to settle the matter
Line 18 – no one argues
Line 18 – that are known to everyone . . . everyone
Line 25 – all of the people have now acknowledged it
Lines 30-31 – despite . . .despite all this
Lines 37 – best proof
Line 42 – a clear declaration of war
Line 44 – unanimously agreed
Line 66 – Satan’s US troops and the devil’s supporters
Checklist identifying key points that will assist in measuring student success and/or difficulty with the close reading and/or writing prompt

Measuring Student Success

- Students recognize tensions exist between the Western world and the Arab world.
- Students work together collaboratively to evaluate Bin Laden’s use of historical references, logic and religion to justify his claim.
- Students will understand the significance of a fatwa.
- Students will identify and analyze Bin Laden’s deliberate word choices and their effectiveness.
- Students will learn that 9/11 was not an isolated event, but linked to a complex world situation deeply rooted in history.

Common Core State Standards

- Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
- Determine the central ideas or information of a primary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
- Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims.
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

World History Nevada Social Studies Content Standards

- Describe tensions in contemporary Islamic countries over reconciling traditional and Western influences.
- Analyze the political and religious factors that contribute to the instability in the Middle East.
- Describe how political and economic alliances affect peoples and countries.
- Analyze how the contemporary political climate has changed personal and national security within and among nations.