Dark Days in Afghanistan

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K. Camelon, Grade 7/8 teacher
Admaston, ON

Hay'sxw'qa!
LesPlan is grateful to the Lkwungen Peoples, the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, on whose unceded land we now live, and do our work.

We welcome your comments and appreciate your suggestions. Please contact us at any time.
1. Divide the class into two groups. Write the following on the board:

- Afghanistan
- Taliban

2. Assign one topic to each group and have students brainstorm what they know about their topic.

   Note: Before beginning this activity, be aware of the backgrounds of your students, as the topic may be personal for some of them. Remind students that their ideas should be presented in a factual, objective manner when sharing.

   Afghanistan: It’s a country in Asia; foreign countries including the U.S., the UK, and Canada have pulled troops out of the country; Kabul is the capital city; etc.

   Taliban: An Islamist group in Afghanistan; it wants to secure Afghanistan from outside influence; it has taken over control of most of the country following the removal of foreign troops; etc.

3. Next, have students view the following news report to get a sense of what is happening currently in the streets of Kabul, Afghanistan’s capital, following the Taliban takeover of the country:
   [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NtgMK-dGQc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NtgMK-dGQc)

   Show the video twice; once without sound and another with sound. During the first viewing, have students note what images stand out to them. *(For example: Life looks quite normal; there are sellers on the street; people are riding bikes; traffic looks normal; some women in the streets are wearing head scarves; some men in trucks are carrying automatic weapons, waving to the camera; some women are hiding their faces; some are wearing masks; crowds are waving Afghan flags in the street; etc.)* During the second viewing, have students listen for additional details that may or may not agree with what they are seeing. *(For example: More shops are open; more people in the streets; fewer women; women are not always wearing full burkas; there is fear that the Taliban will put strict restrictions on women in the coming days; strong presence of highly armed Taliban fighters patrolling the streets; still large panicked crowds at the airport; senior Taliban leaders have been meeting with Afghan politicians; some Afghans are waving the Afghan flag in the streets to protest the Taliban; the Taliban fired shots in the air to disperse protesting Afghans; etc.)*

4. Finally, invite students to set a purpose for reading the article, referring to the resource page **Setting A Purpose Before Reading** as needed.
Fear and frenzy gripped the people of Afghanistan in August. That’s when the country abruptly fell to the Taliban, a militant group of **Islamist insurgents**.

It took just two weeks for the Taliban to sweep through the country, taking control of one city after another. Their campaign ended on August 15, when they seized the capital city of Kabul.

“There was a big panic in the people who were out on the streets,” said Ali Latifi, a Kabul resident. “You could see literally hundreds and hundreds of people suddenly running in different directions.”

Shortly after the Taliban victory, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani fled the country. Afghan citizens, too, descended on Kabul’s airport. Some clung to planes on the tarmac that were carrying departing American troops and workers. They were hoping to escape.

**A 20-YEAR WAR**

The Taliban takeover marked the troubling conclusion of a two-decades-old war between the United States and the Afghan insurgents. It’s the longest war the U.S. has ever fought.

The conflict was triggered by the events of September 11, 2001 – a day now known simply as 9/11. On that morning, **al-Qaeda** terrorists flew hijacked passenger jets into New York’s World Trade Center and the **Pentagon** building in Washington, killing nearly 3000 people.

In response, one month later, the U.S. invaded Afghanistan. The **NATO** alliance, which includes Canada, also joined the fight. Western countries were aiming to overthrow the Taliban, who controlled the country.

The reason? The U.S. claimed the Taliban let al-Qaeda live and train in Afghanistan. The Taliban was also accused of

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**Definitions**

**al-Qaeda**: a radical Sunni Muslim terrorist group dedicated to eliminating a Western presence in Arab countries

**insurgent**: a person who fights against an established government or authority

**Islamist**: a supporter of Islamic fundamentalism

**NATO**: an international organization of 28 European and two North American countries who have agreed to support one another if attacked

**Pentagon**: the headquarters of the U.S. Department of Defense

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**About Afghanistan**

Afghanistan is a land of both mountains and plains. It experiences cold winters and hot summers and is often threatened by earthquakes and floods.

At 652,225 square kilometres, the nation is about as large as Manitoba. Most of the 40 million people belong to one of four ethnic groups: Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, and Uzbek. Almost the entire population is Muslim.

Afghanistan is one of the world’s least developed countries, ranking 169 out of 189 nations.
hiding Osama bin Laden, the mastermind behind 9/11.

A DEADLY CONFLICT
The alliance soon ousted the Taliban and in 2004, a U.S.-backed government took over. But the stubborn insurgents proved hard to fully conquer. So the U.S. kept sending more troops to try to gain control. The number of American soldiers peaked at 110,000 in 2011.

That year an elite U.S. Navy SEAL team killed Mr. bin Laden. Yet the war dragged on. The U.S. was determined to establish a democracy in Afghanistan, to help the country rebuild, and to train the Afghan army to defend the country.

A DEAL IS STRUCK
So in 2020, then-U.S. President Donald Trump committed to withdrawing U.S. troops by May 1, 2021. When President Joe Biden was elected last November, he continued down that path. At the time, some 2500 U.S. troops remained in Afghanistan.

“It’s time to end America’s longest war,” he said, announcing a plan in April to leave within five months.

That was all the Taliban needed to hear. As U.S. troops began leaving, the insurgents quickly mobilized. By early May, the group had many checkpoints on the main roads. This display of power weakened Afghans’ faith in their government. It also sapped the Afghan army’s morale.

Still, no one expected the Taliban to regain control so quickly. Many still thought it would take months for Kabul to fall. Instead, it took ten days.

THE TROOPS RETURN
In late August, the U.S. sent 5000 troops back to Afghanistan. Their job was to help get U.S. and allied personnel out. That included thousands of soldiers, citizens, and embassy employees and their families. The troops also rescued interpreters and others who had helped them during the war.

Meanwhile, since the end of May, about 250,000 Afghans have fled their homes. And women fear they will lose all the gains they made over 20 years. Already, said one, they’re being prevented from attending universities. Male relatives are filling in for them at work.

“To the world, [Kabul is] just a city that collapses,” said another woman, “but to me, it’s not just a city. Thousands of souls collapse. Millions of dreams collapse – our history, our culture, our art, our beauty, our life.”

WHO ARE THE TALIBAN?
The Taliban emerged in Afghanistan in the early 1990s during a civil war. By 1998, 90 percent of all Afghan territory was under Taliban control.

The group follows a strict form of Islam. When in power, it imposed a system of Islamic law called Sharia. TV, music, and cinema were banned. Men were forced to grow beards. Women were denied education, had to restrict their activities and wear burkas, and blindly obey men. Those who objected risked harsh penalties – including death.

DID YOU KNOW?
Between 2001 and 2014, 40,000 Canadian soldiers fought in Afghanistan with their NATO allies and helped to rebuild the country. A total of 165 Canadians died during the war.

However, many Americans were losing patience with the conflict. The war and reconstruction efforts cost at least one trillion dollars. Worse, over 2400 U.S. soldiers died in battle. Other coalition troops, and tens of thousands of Afghans, died too.
AFGHANISTAN FALLS TO THE TALIBAN

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. List at least three important background facts about Afghanistan.

2. Who are the Taliban?

3. When did the Taliban first take power in Afghanistan?

4. Describe life in Afghanistan after the Taliban first took power.

5. Describe the events that happened in the United States on September 11, 2001.

6. How did the United States and its allies respond to the 9/11 attacks?

7. Why did U.S. troops remain in Afghanistan for 20 years?

8. Why did the U.S. decide to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan?

9. What did the Taliban do after U.S. soldiers started to leave?
INTERNATIONAL
AFGHANISTAN FALLS TO THE TALIBAN

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

1. There is global concern for the welfare of the people of Afghanistan. Women in particular are terrified they’ll face harsh treatment from the Taliban and will lose all the gains they made over the last 20 years. Since the takeover, said one woman, “Girls were not able to go to their universities; girls were asked to go to their home and male relatives [had to] fill in... their positions [at work].”

As you see it, how will day-to-day life change for Afghan women with the Taliban in power? Give examples to support your response.

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

2. NATO is an international organization of 30 countries, including the U.S. and Canada, that have agreed to support each other if attacked. The U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan, which was supported by NATO, was intended to overthrow the Taliban, whom the U.S. suspected of supporting al-Qaeda, the group responsible for the events of 9/11.

As you see it, what is the importance of NATO and other global alliances? Explain.

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

3. The article quotes an Afghan woman who said, “To the world, [Kabul is] just a city that collapses, but to me, it’s not just a city. There are thousands of souls that collapse, there are millions of dreams that collapse – our history, our culture, our art, our beauty, our life.”

How do you see these aspects of life in Afghanistan ‘collapsing’ under Taliban rule? Give reasons to support your response.

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________
INTERNATIONAL
AFGHANISTAN FALLS TO THE TALIBAN

QUESTIONS FOR ONLINE EXPLORATION

Note: The links below are listed at www.lesplan.com/en/links for easy access.

1. There has been harsh criticism of President Biden and the U.S. government for poorly planning the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. Critics point to the fact that Mr. Biden’s administration has now been forced to dispatch 5000 troops back to Afghanistan to help safely evacuate U.S. and allied personnel.

View any of the following links to learn more about why President Biden stands behind his decision and how critics are reacting:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xuZ-R1aYpOo
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_G7OhAp4J4
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7ECiCgi9-A

Do you agree with President Biden, or his critics? Explain.

2. According to the United Nations, since the end of May, about 250,000 Afghans have fled their homes. Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani activist for female education and the youngest winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, has spoken about her concerns for the women and girls in Afghanistan under Taliban rule:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRopNHZDBto

How does she hope that foreign countries involved in peace talks with the Taliban will act to support the people of Afghanistan? Do you agree with her ideas? Explain.

3. Afghan Canadians are speaking out and imploring the Canadian government to do more to support the people of Afghanistan. Learn more about what they want Canada to do and how the government is reacting to their pleas:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojxlYDorLis
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5BDYn8CWOQ
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZGJd5L554Ol

As you see it, what should Canada’s role in supporting Afghanistan be? Give examples to support your response.
Complete this map assignment to better understand the article *Dark Days in Afghanistan*.

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Obtain the required resources and read all the instructions before starting.
2. Colour your map after all labelling is completed.
3. Print in pencil only first, then go over the printing in black ink.
4. Work carefully and neatly.

**Resources Required:** pencil, black pen, pencil crayons, ruler, eraser and an atlas.

**Part A**  Locate and label Afghanistan in CAPITAL letters and shade it yellow.

**Part B**  Locate and label the capital of Afghanistan and **underline** this city name.

**Part C**  Locate and label the following countries in CAPITAL letters and shade each as indicated:

- India (brown)
- Pakistan (purple)
- Iran (green)
- Turkmenistan (brown)
- Uzbekistan (orange)
- Iraq (yellow)

**Part D**  Locate and label the capital of each country and **underline** each city name.

**Part E**  Locate and label the following countries in CAPITAL letters and shade each as indicated:

- Nepal (orange)
- China (red)
- Kazakhstan (yellow)
- Tajikistan (pink)
- Kyrgyzstan (green)
- Russia (purple)
- Turkey (brown)
- Syria (purple)
- Kuwait (pink)
- Oman (orange)
- Saudi Arabia (red)

**Part F**  Locate and label the following and shade all salt water dark blue:

- Indian Ocean
- Arabian Sea
- Persian Gulf
- Black Sea

**Part G**  Locate and label the following and shade all fresh water light blue:

- Caspian Sea
- Aral Sea

**Part H**  Shade all remaining territory grey.

**Part I**  Complete your map with a frame, title and compass. ★
INTERNATIONAL

AFGHANISTAN FALLS TO THE TALIBAN

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

A. Write the letter that corresponds to the best answer on the line beside each question:

_____ 1. What is the population of Afghanistan?
   a) 5 million  
   b) 23 million  
   c) 40 million  
   d) 112 million

_____ 2. When the Taliban first came to power, the group imposed a rigid legal system called:
   a) common law  
   b) Sharia law  
   c) civil law  
   d) Canon law

_____ 3. Who negotiated an agreement to remove U.S. soldiers from Afghanistan?
   a) President Trump  
   b) President Biden  
   c) President Putin  
   d) President Ghani

B. Mark the statements T (True) or F (False). If a statement is True, write one important fact to support it on the line below. If a statement is False, write the words that make it true on the line below.

_____ 4. True or False? The U.S. attacked the Taliban in 2001 because the group had allowed al-Qaeda to live and train in Afghanistan.

_____ 5. True or False? Canada sent some 85,000 troops to Afghanistan.

_____ 6. True or False? The U.S.-led war in Afghanistan lasted 20 years.

C. Fill in the blanks to complete each sentence.

7. The Taliban is a militant group of Islamist ___________________.

8. The U.S. spent one ___________________ dollars on the war in Afghanistan.

9. After the Taliban takeover, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani ___________________ the country.

D. Respond to the following question in paragraph form. (Use a separate sheet of paper if necessary.)

10. Do you agree or disagree with the U.S. decision to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan? Give reasons to support your response.
There are a number of reasons we read, and setting a purpose for reading – knowing WHY we are reading – helps us to focus on important information and to better understand and remember what we read. It also helps us decide HOW we will read the text.

We don’t read all texts for the same purposes or in the same way. For example, we read an instruction manual for a new Blu-ray player for a different reason than we read a book or a website. How we will read it – the strategies we use – will also differ. We are more likely to skim to find the information we need in a manual. Once we find what we need, we might read the instructions carefully to figure out what to do. Then, we stop reading, put the manual down, and carry out the steps. We may have to reread if we get confused or forget what to do.

This is a very different approach than the one we would use to read a book. When we read a book, we usually read cover-to-cover. We read carefully so we don’t miss any details because we want to understand the whole story. Sometimes we make connections or create images in our minds as we read to help us better understand what we are reading. Depending on its length, we may put the book down before we finish reading it but we will start reading where we left off.

Good readers are flexible and responsive. This means that they match their reading strategies to their purpose for reading. What types of text do you read? Why do you read them? What strategies do you use to read each of these texts? The chart below is a summary of the main purposes for reading and what each entails.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose for reading</th>
<th>What it looks like</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For enjoyment</td>
<td>Usually student-selected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allows students to choose a variety of genres and forms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allows students to pursue what interests them while developing reading skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To experience something new</td>
<td>Students make connections between their personal experiences and those of people around the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To learn more about themselves and others</td>
<td>Students reflect on what they’ve read and express opinions and perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students develop a sense of their personal values and make sense of the world around them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To gain information</td>
<td>Students use the features of informational texts to gather, analyse and apply what they’ve learned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To understand issues</td>
<td>Students develop a sense of perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students pose questions, acknowledge other points of view, critique the opinions presented and support opinions with evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To appreciate writing</td>
<td>Students respond to text in ways other than written answers to apply what they’ve learned in new contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To appreciate use of media to communicate</td>
<td>Students respond to a variety of media formats (e.g., infographics, political cartoons, videos, etc.) and react to how the format supports the meaning of the message.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Chart adapted from: A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4-6, p. 11.
Students want to know what's happening in their world – but the news can be difficult and time-consuming to teach.

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