THE UPRISINGS
AND AFTERMATH

By Kevin Grisham

On December 17, 2010, a young man named Mohamed Bouazizi lit himself on fire in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, launching a series of protests against unjust rule that became known as the Jasmine Revolution. One could not have predicted at the time that people across the Middle East would follow suit with their own revolts against tyranny and injustice. The protests unseated long-serving dictators such as Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, and gave citizens the voice to challenge the political, economic and social landscape of the Middle East. Bouazizi’s act of self-immolation did not provoke the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ on its own, but it was symbolic of the growing dissatisfaction with the unchallenged corruption and repression exhibited by numerous dictators. It also became a symbol of freedom for those desperate for change in the Middle East.

Even as the people used non-violent protests, the regimes in power often responded with varying degrees of violence. Technology and social media enabled people outside of the Middle East to watch as governments used aggressive punitive measures to silence voices of dissent. Digital media also gave discontented populations a

Chapter Glossary

Arab Spring/Uprisings/Revolts: These terms are often interchangeably used to refer to the 2010-2012 period of mass protest and revolt in countries across the Arab region, particularly in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and throughout the Gulf countries.

Green Movement: The peaceful protests (and subsequent movement) that followed the 2009 contested elections of Ahmadinejad in Iran. The color green was used symbolically by this movement.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs): Individuals who have fled their homes but not crossed international borders.

The Islamic State/ISIS/ISIL/Daesh: A militant group of Islamists who have been active since the late 1990s but have been particularly aggressive and successful in taking over territory in today’s Syria and Iraq.

Jasmine Revolution: the 2010-2011 protests in Tunisia that led to the ouster of its president.

Refugee: A person who has been forced to leave their country due to war, persecution, or natural disaster.

Relative deprivation theory: the idea that social or political movements result from a shared sense of discontent or deprivation, especially in comparison to what other societies/groups may have (i.e. wealth, opportunity, etc).

Youth bulge: a momentary increase in the share of the youth that makeup a country’s population.
lens into other people’s experiences across the world, sparking greater awareness among people living in oppressive political environments, and providing glimpses of the opportunities, access, and freedom they had been denied for so long. Educated young people, struggling to find employment, economic stability, and freedom of expression in the Middle East, had grown weary of the status quo.

Of course, the events of the Arab uprisings were not the first protests in the modern Middle East, and certainly will not be the last acts of defiance. Several states continue to struggle with lawlessness and war. In most cases, the repression has only redoubled as governments try to reassert their dominance. States like Iran and non-state actors like the Islamic State have contributed to even greater regional instability in their attempts to influence politics or wrest control of vulnerable areas. Syria remains the most notable, and tragic, example of how the uprisings failed to live up to the hopes and expectations of the protestors and supportive onlookers. Nonetheless, this momentous period ushered in a new era of consciousness, activism and open opposition that is unlikely to be abandoned despite the severe backlash of government officials and non-state actors. In this chapter we will look closer at the emergence and consequences of these collective demands for reform, and offer insight on the global implications of the uprisings.

The Uprisings

The massive protests in the streets of Tehran following the 2009 re-election of President Ahmadinejad gave rise to a new, heightened level of social awareness across the Middle East as people began to demand better lives. Whether they took place in the streets of Tehran (Green Movement), the various public squares throughout the Arab world (Arab uprisings), or the green space of Gezi Park in Istanbul, Turkey, the uprisings can be attributed to a variety of factors. They included: the “youth bulge” (explained below); severe economic struggles among the people; a lack of agency in the political system; and an overall desire for more when
people compared their lives to the world outside of the Middle East. These factors do not act independently of each other but are very much intertwined and lead to feelings of hopelessness. This interaction is most notable when looking at the demographics of the Middle East and their connection with economic indicators (e.g., unemployment). The shifting age structure of the Middle East has combined with other demographic issues to create an environment in which unemployment, underemployment and lack of job creation are extensive. Governments of the region have been unable or unwilling to address these issues. In addition, food and water shortages; rapid urbanization; and the insufficient provision of housing, education, and medical care laid the foundation for a massive social movement by the people.

In the 1980s, the Middle East had one of the fastest population growth rates in the world. In the 1980s, the Middle East had one of the fastest population growth rates in the world. From 1980 to 2010, the world’s annual growth rate was 1.5% and at the same time, the Arab region of the Middle East had a growth rate of 2.4%. These growth rates peaked in 2010 and have since been declining, but thirty years of unexpected growth resulted in a ‘youth bulge’ – a momentary increase in the share of the youth that make up a country's population. For example, in 2015, 50% of the population in Egypt was between 1 to 24 years of age (33% in the U.S. for comparison). The youth bulge is not an issue by itself. Some countries in East Asia and Southeast Asia have taken advantage of the youth bulge by using it to help to build their economies. But, the governments of the Middle East do not have the infrastructure to use this human resource, leading to high unemployment levels among young people – for example, in 2014, the Gaza Strip had an unemployment rate of 45% and Yemen’s was 27%. These rates are shockingly high in comparison to many countries in Europe and North America where unemployment levels are between 6% and 10%. This region-wide scarcity of opportunity has fueled the growth of a disaffected youth population who hold their government leaders responsible for the situation.

These large youth populations also want to have a political voice and to be participants in the governments and politics of their countries. As a result of the protests that began in Iran in 2009, governments of the Middle East have become aware that their youth populations in particular need channels through which they can air their grievances, and, more importantly, play an active role in building their own futures. In fact, vocal complaints about abusive and corrupt systems, and distinct calls for more democratic governance and social justice came as early as 2003. Therefore, contrary to various media reports at the time of the uprisings, people in the Middle East and scholars of Middle East were not necessarily surprised by the uprisings. The greater surprise perhaps is that it took so long for the regional discontent to make its way to the surface in the form of mass demonstrations.

The reactions across the Middle East are not exceptional; demands for the justice and freedom afforded to other people are universal. Relative deprivation theory is a concept that helps explain
the stressors experienced in the region. Relative deprivation is when an individual feels deprived and is discontented in comparison other groups of people like themselves; in this case, young people decried the lack of opportunities afforded to others across the world. Most social and political movements – including those behind the uprisings in the Middle East develop from these shared feelings of deprivation.

**A Timeline in Brief**

There are many potential starting points and important moments that influenced the uprisings. It is important to realize how large a role history plays in contemporary political dynamics. Several of the chapters in this digital book look at the different factors that have contributed to governmental dysfunction and popular frustration and discontent. Consider the countless empires that shaped cultures; the effects of colonialism; extensive external political maneuvering; wars and invasions; overzealous dictators; religious interests; and so much more. For our purpose here, let’s look at the recent major events that proved to be catalysts for change in the Middle East.

Following the controversial re-election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as president of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2009, millions of indignant protesters flooded the country’s streets in a series of demonstrations, including the silent rally of June 15, 2009 in Tehran at Azadi (Freedom) Square. This rally attracted the largest crowds of protestors in Iran’s history. The mayor of Tehran estimated the crowd size at three million and every segment of society – young and old, professionals and students, women and men – came to protest against the results of the election and the continuation of the Ahmadinejad regime. This initial uprising, known as the Green Movement, continued throughout the
summer and fall of 2009. Peaceful protests were met with violence by the Iranian government’s security forces and the government was eventually successful in suppressing and bringing an end to the widespread demonstrations. The Green Movement gained significant media attention and laid the foundation for additional demands for reform, along with more protests and clashes throughout the region.

On December 17, 2010, the young fruit vendor’s actions in Tunisia would begin the next major wave of protests in the Middle East. This group of protests is often referred to as the Arab Spring, Arab Uprisings, or Arab Revolts. Generally quiet and unremarkable, small Tunisia was suddenly in the headlines and its people provided the inspiration and precedent its neighbors needed to mount their own campaigns. The momentum in Tunisia led to actual government reforms; this has not been the case elsewhere, making it the sole semi-success story of the Arab Spring movement.

By late January 2011, Egyptians were taking to the streets of Cairo and filling Tahrir (“liberation” in Arabic) Square in an attempt to unseat Hosni Mubarak who had been the unchallenged head of state for 30 years. Simultaneously, protests began in Lebanon and Yemen. Rallies calling for the overthrow of Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh and the ‘Day of Rage’ protests in Lebanon against a proposed Hezbollah-controlled government occurred within days of the protests in Egypt. By February 2011, demonstrations had taken place in Bahrain, Libya, Jordan, and Morocco. Shortly thereafter, the President Bashar Al-Assad regime began to brutally suppress peaceful protests, leading to the eventual outbreak of a full civil war in Syria.

A Closer Look at Turkey

The term “Arab Spring” does a disservice to the movements that have taken place prior to that period (such as the Iranian Green Revolution detailed above that took place in 2009) or in other
areas outside of the Arab world, such as Turkey. The 2013 Gezi Park demonstrations in Turkey began ostensibly as opposition to government plans to replace a park in Istanbul with income-generating real estate such as malls. A small response to a local project quickly evolved into nationwide demonstrations against the perceived authoritarianism of then prime minister and current president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The demonstrations soon outgrew the small park and spread to nearby Taksim Square, the country’s symbolic rallying point, where protestors built barricades and established a tent city for several weeks. From there, they demanded an end to the Gezi development project and later called for the resignation of Erdoğan after his directives led to violent police responses resulting in several deaths and thousands of injuries from the excessive use of teargas, water cannons, and rubber bullets.

The Taksim Solidarity group had formed in 2012 after the government announced plans to redevelop Gezi Park, one of the last remaining green spaces in central Istanbul. The collective had five central demands: Gezi Park should remain a park; governors and police chiefs and everyone who gave orders for, enforced or implemented violent repression should be dismissed; the use of teargas bombs and other materials should be prohibited; detained citizens should be released; and freedom of speech should be protected and bans on meetings or demonstrations should be lifted. Later, issues like gender discrimination and access to health care and education were raised. Protests broke out in cities across Turkey. Ordering police to clear the square, Erdoğan openly expressed his disdain for his people’s new confidence and defiance. Repeated orders to leave the site were followed by harsh and heavy-handed police tactics that included not only the above mentioned violence but also emphasized the removal of protest signs that criticized Erdoğan’s rule. Undeterred by the population’s resistance, the president did not compromise, according to one account: “Erdoğan sounded unapologetic and defiant in confronting the biggest challenge of his ten-year rule. ‘I am sorry but Gezi Park is for taking promenades, not for occupation. I invite all demonstrators, all protesters, to see the big picture and the game that is being played. Those who are sincere should withdraw. I expect this from them as their prime minister.’” The president blamed

Occupy Wall Street and members of New York City’s Turkish community gathered in Occupy’s old base in Zuccotti Park near Wall Street in 2013 to protest the Turkish government’s bloody crackdown on peaceful protesters. What began as an effort to preserve a small park in Istanbul’s Taksim Square became a national campaign against Turkey’s government.

Photo by Michael Fleshman.
foreign forces and terrorists for manipulating the Turkish people and fomenting the disturbances.

Protesters were just as resolute. Several members of the Taksim Solidarity group would face criminal charges and prison sentences for their efforts; trials continue to this day with such charges as “starting a criminal organization”. But the episode was also recognized as a notable turning point for Turks who came together in a united stand irrespective of class, social, ethnic, and religious differences. People were emboldened by their numbers and ready to confront their leaders in an atmosphere charged with hope and empowerment. One journalist, Ayse Çavdar, explained:

"Gezi brought down the walls between conservative Muslims and secularists, nationalist Turks and Kurds, Alevis and Sunnis, men and women. Everybody started talking. Why should the state tell me what to think about Kurds, about Alevis, or about my neighbours? I’ll decide that myself. They should worry about healthcare, education, maybe sidewalks. We now have a taste of what it is like to go out in the street. We are now a society that got a taste of what it is like to challenge our government. That never existed in Turkey."

A founding member of Taksim Solidarity, Mücella Yapici, who faced 29 years in jail, felt the impact of Gezi Park mobilization would be significant and long-lasting. "A new solidarity was born in June, and it’s not over," she was quoted as saying. "The most important thing is that the people re-learned how to raise their voices against the crimes and injustices that are being committed against them. Gezi was a lesson in democracy."

Since that period, Mr. Erdoğan has clamped down on civil rights, blocking social media sites such as Twitter and YouTube; worked to erode the powers of Turkey’s parliament; and become increasingly autocratic, accusing his opponents and activists of trying to deliberately undermine him. In May 2016, he fired Prime Minister Ahmed Davotglu for criticizing the increasingly authoritarian nature of Erdoğan’s government.

Sympathizers with the protesters have suggested the Gezi Park demonstrations may have reminded President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan that as the leader of a democracy (and not a monarchy), he cannot rule Turkey without the support of the people but his responses have shown that he is intent on limiting rights, freedoms, and government accountability.

The Aftermath of the Revolts

The governments’ responses to the protests varied from limited skirmishes between police forces and citizen activists to extreme acts of violence against non-violent demonstrators. Likewise, the outcomes of the uprisings have varied from country to country. Muammar Qaddafi became the first Arab leader to unleash the full power of his military and internal security forces against the people of
his country. Hundreds were killed in the first week of protest by Libyan military forces loyal to Qaddafi. The uprisings in Syria led to a modern day tragedy where, as of February 2016, over 450,000 people had been killed, including tens of thousands of children. The uprisings since 2009 have steered some countries including Syria, Yemen, and Libya into protracted civil wars with enormous numbers of deaths and displacement as well as impacts on national infrastructure, education, employment, governance and basic services. In the case of Tunisia, the uprisings led to a more participatory form of government with parliament elections in October 2011, and its subsequent adoption of a new constitution in January 2014.

Though each case is unique in its precursors and outcomes, some general trends emerge. There were notable distinctions between how monarchies and dictatorships handled the uprisings, even if the uprisings across the region were reactions to similar types of complaints. The perception by the people of their kings as a sort of benevolent father-figure affords those leaders a higher degree of loyalty. The oil-rich Gulf States were able to gain favor from their populations by increasing per-capita subsides. They also supported similar efforts in the less wealthy monarchies of the region (Jordan, Morocco). Bahrain experienced more volatile protests, but they were followed by commissions and reforms ordered by Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa that directly responded to protesters’ demands. Leaders of countries affected by the youth bulge such as the United Arab Emirates and Qatar are tackling the problem through a diversification of their economies, reducing reliance on dwindling supplies of fossil fuels. The Kingdoms of Morocco and Jordan, considered more tolerant and progressive relative to other Arab monarchies, took advantage of the financial aid of the Gulf States, but also enacted several reforms: they have codified the rights of their minority citizens and made other gradual efforts to improve the quality of life for all. Monarchs are realizing that they must make compromises to appease their people’s needs and demands if the leaders want to hold onto that loyalty.
In contrast, dictators have stayed in power as a result of building cults of personality and applying relentless, repressive authoritarian rule. They have relied on tyranny, corruption, and the abuse of their executive powers to maintain their regimes, and they had no intention of simply acquiescing to popular demands when the demonstrations started. Instead, they supplemented their usual tactics with brutal police and military might to physically stop voices of dissent, and further restricted freedom of speech, movement, and assembly. Some dictators were toppled and executed or have stood trial (Egypt, Libya), some fled (Tunisia), and some refused to cede power (Syria) or continued to meddle destructively in their country’s affairs (Yemen). Bans on unions, organizations, and NGOs have paralyzed civil society in a number of these countries, as have pervasive violence, show trials, and imprisonment.

There have also been global implications to the regional uprisings. The emergence of non-state actors such as the Islamic State has led to the transnational threat of radicalization. Civil wars and extremist movements have become the norm in the Middle East since the uprisings. The violent, Sunni Islam-based political movement has taken advantage of the power vacuums created in Syria and parts of Iraq, and has risen to become a serious threat both to people and their governments. The Islamic State’s horrifying campaign to establish an Islamic Caliphate and eliminate supposed non-believers has created unfathomable disaster in the region as brutal conflict has led to death and to the massive displacement of people – both refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). According to UNHCR data, by the end of 2014, the top six refugee-hosting countries (Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, Ethiopia, and Jordan) are in or immediately adjacent to the Middle East. Syria and Iraq are the major world producers of refugees or persons in refugee-like situations. These countries and so many more inside and out of the Middle East are being directly impacted by the Syrian civil war and the related violence being perpetrated by the Islamic State. In more vivid terms, in 2014 Lebanon hosted the largest number of refugees in proportion to its national population (232 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants). There are
currently at least 1.5 million registered Syrian refugees in Turkey. The refugee issue has become an international debate due to the massive flow of migrants into Europe amid perceived threats that refugees will bring terrorism with them to the west. Anti-immigration, anti-Muslim, anti-Arab and xenophobic rhetoric have increased in general and within particular political arenas. The unexpected growth in host state populations has resulted in massive humanitarian, logistical, and political problems with no long-term solution in sight. Visit our chapter on Refugees (link) for further insight on the magnitude of this problem, locally and globally.

In addition, the Arab Spring and the subsequent and catastrophic evolution of the Syrian war have raised questions about foreign intervention and the responsibility of powers like the United States to resolve conflicts in the Middle East. In some cases, the U.S. played a central role in either promoting democratic change or supporting autocratic leaders that were aligned with American interests. President Obama’s decision not to aid Syria militarily when the “red line” of chemical weapons was crossed has been met with national and international scorn. The Arab states, affected by spillover from the civil wars, have formed coalitions to fight extremist movements, with moderate success. Some members of the League of Arab States have called for the development of a joint military force. Other countries, most notably Iran and Russia, have joined the fights to maintain their influence in the area.

Finally, the impact that the events had on public consciousness in the Middle East cannot be overstated. The people stood up en masse to confront their rulers. Through social media, they shared their challenges and hopes with the world. Barriers between different segments of society were broken down and citizens gathered together to contest decades of ill-treatment. All of society paid a price; people have lost their lives, their families, their livelihoods, their homes, and their countries, in the years following the uprisings, whether or not they were participants at the time. Regardless of the various outcomes in each country, the desire for change remains a universal sentiment across the region.

As the turmoil endures, the long-term impact of the uprisings in the Middle East is difficult to predict. Children in areas of war will face years of challenges and uncertainty. On one hand, the next generation will know the possibility of change that previous generations did not know. Governments’ attempts to quash the voice of civil society have shown how fearful leaders are to lose their authority. This concept of agency could be powerful for young people, but the upheaval and trauma of war will be difficult to overcome. The current conflicts in the region will deeply affect the psyches, educational access, and economic prospects of the youngest of the region for whom death and destruction have become the norm.
Teaching Tool
Tahrir Square and the Egyptian “Revolution”

Protests generate a lot of information. From why to protest, to communicating where to go, to documenting daily events and handling pressing necessities, there is quite a trail of documentation of just how a protest works. Consider the following compilation of primary source documents such as flyers other correspondence circulated in the square during the protests.

Tahrir Documents:
http://www.tahrirdocuments.org/

This website – sponsored by the University of California, Los Angeles – is an archive of papers, flyers, and statements from the 2011 Egyptian uprisings and subsequent events. These documents include both the originals which have been scanned and their English translations. The project is not affiliated with any political organization, Egyptian or otherwise. The examples that follow are just a tiny sample of the original documents that you could direct your students to in order to understand more about the activities of protestors in Egypt during 2011-2012.

Organizing protests and planning for the needs of large crowds takes a lot of coordination. Have students read the following documents, in addition to others you may choose from the resource above, that provide insight into the types of logistical concerns that were faced by the protestors in Tahrir square:

   The Pact of Your Square

   The Revolution is in the Service of the People

   Where Are You, You Strong Children of Our Country?
   http://www.tahrirdocuments.org/2012/01/where-are-you-you-strong-children-of-our-country/

   The Revolution of the Down trodden

Have students compare the types of concerns they learned of above with those faced by the Occupy Wall Street protestors:

   Why Homelessness Is Becoming an Occupy Wall Street Issue
   http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2011/10/homelessness-occupy-wall-street
**Discussion/Essay Questions**

Use the following questions as basis for a class discussion or assign the essay option.

Essay Option: Compose an essay that informs your reader as to the topics of the following questions. In your essay, be sure to include specific references to the text(s) that are correctly cited, use proper grammar, and include introductory and concluding statements and transitions where appropriate.

1. Given what you’ve learned from the above readings and also thinking beyond merely logistical concerns, what kinds of obstacles keep people from protesting? Be sure to cite evidence from the texts.

2. Are protests are effective? Why or why not? What makes a protest successful? Be sure to cite evidence from the texts.


4. After reading through the above timeline, were the 2011 protests in Egypt were successful? Why or why not? What did the subsequent protests in Egypt tell us about their ultimate success? Be sure to cite evidence from the texts.

**Project:**

Either in small groups or individually, research a widespread protest in the United States (such as a “Black Lives Matter” or the 2011 Wisconsin protests), the Middle East (for example, the Iranian “Green Movement”, The Tunisian “Jasmine Revolution”) or any other example you can think of.

Compose at least ten questions that you would like to know the answers to about the protest that you are researching, then find the answers using reputable websites. Once you have compiled your research, create a presentation and then deliver it to your class. Be sure to your presentation cites evidence from your sources. In addition to your own questions, your presentation should answer the following:

1. What types of obstacles were faced by the protesters?
2. What challenges did they have to overcome?
3. What were the demands of the protestors and were they ultimately met? If so, why were they successful? If not, was the protest a failure? Why or why not?
For Further Exploration  
**Tahrir on Film: Review Essay**

Video footage of the protests in Egypt’s square is ubiquitous; students may have witnessed the images of the brightly lit concentric circles of protestors in Tahrir at night. Others may have heard songs or chants that circulated on social media during the protests. To use a cliche, this revolution was televised! Amidst the cacophony of visual media about the protests, two documentary films were instrumental in educating European and American audiences about the efforts of protestors in Tahrir Square from 2011 on. Select one of these two films whose plots are detailed on the next page (or another film students would prefer to watch and critique, many are widely available) and have students write a short film review.

A film review usually would include the following components:

1) A very short film synopsis (without any spoilers or giving the ending away);
2) Background information on the filmmaker or actors or other information of note
3) Film critique: what worked, and what didn’t? Points are argued and backed up with examples from the film in question;
4) An overall evaluation of the film: would you recommend others to see it? Why or why not?

**The Square (2013)**  
*streams on Netflix*

Directed by Jehane Noujaim

Synopsis: The Egyptian Revolution has been an ongoing rollercoaster over the past two and a half years. Through the news, we only get a glimpse of the bloodiest battle, an election, or a million man march. At the beginning of July 2013, we witnessed the second president deposed within the space of three years. **The Square** is an immersive experience, transporting the viewer deeply into the intense emotional drama and personal stories behind the news. It is the inspirational story of young people claiming their rights, struggling through multiple forces, in the fight to create a society of conscience.
**Tahrir: Liberation Square (2011)**
Directed by Stefano Savona

Synopsis: "Soon after the first reports came about the occupation of Tahrir Square, filmmaker Stefano Savona headed for Cairo, where he stayed, amidst the ever-growing masses in the Square, for weeks. His film introduces us to young Egyptians such as Elsayed, Noha and Ahmed, spending all day and night talking, shouting, singing, finally expressing everything they were forbidden to say out loud until now.

As the protests grow in intensity, the regime’s repression becomes more violent, with the terrifying potential for massacre never far away. TAHIRIR is a film written in the faces, hands, and voices of those who experienced this period in the Square. It is a day-to-day account of the Egyptian revolution, capturing the anger, fear, resolve and finally elation of those who made it happen."
Teaching Tool

Youth and Rebellion: The Graphic Novel and Iran

The graphic novel is an increasingly popular medium and helps make complex narratives more accessible. Commonly, young characters or youthful themes also increase these stories’ appeal to students. Have your students read both of the below graphic novels (alternatively, *Persepolis* could also be watched in the excellent 2007 film adaptation). These two stories will help readers understand the events of Iran’s hotly contested election in 2009 (and an important precursor to the Arab Uprisings), but will also fill in the critical historical background of Iran’s 1979 Islamic Revolution and the events and social changes that followed.

**Zahra’s Paradise** by Amir and Khalil, 2011. *Zahra’s Paradise* is a graphic novel set in Iran after the elections of 2009. It brings together fiction and real people and events and has been compared to *Persepolis*.

**Persepolis I & Persepolis II** by Marjane Satrapi, 2004 and 2005 respectively. A combined volume was released in 2007. The two-volume memoir in graphic novel style describes the author’s childhood during the Iranian Revolution, her schooling abroad during the Iran-Iraq War, and eventual return to her homeland. (Note: Sexual encounter in book 2.)
Discussion/Essay Questions

Use the following questions as basis for a class discussion or assign the essay option.

**Essay Option:** Compose an essay that argues as to the effectiveness of using the medium of graphic novels in portraying political and social life in Iran. In your essay, be sure to respond to the following prompts, include specific references to the text(s) that are correctly cited, use proper grammar, and include introductory and concluding statements and transitions where appropriate.

1. After reading these two graphic novels/memoirs, is it fruitful to compare the 2009 Green Revolution in Iran with Iran’s 1979 Islamic Revolution? If not, why not? If so, what conclusions can be drawn from the comparison? Be sure to cite evidence from the texts.

2. What are some of the ways the young characters in both texts cope with surveillance of the Iranian state? Drawing examples from the texts, what are the challenges to growing up in Iran? What are some of the advantages? Be sure to cite evidence from the texts.

3. How do the authors use humor/sarcasm to critique state and/or religious leadership? What is their purpose in doing so? Be sure to cite evidence from the texts.

4. What about the graphic/comic artform helps these authors tell their stories more effectively? What could be seen as surprising about the imagery, if anything? What about the imagery, if anything, could overturn or reinforce possible stereotypes? Would the stories have been as effective if they had been told in a traditional narrative form? Be sure to cite evidence from the texts.

**For Further Exploration:**

While each individual, each family, each local neighborhood, each town, city, or nation has its particularities, there are some points of fruitful comparison. Taking what you learned about youthful aspiration, political repression, and socio-economic pressures from the two graphic novels that focused on the Iranian experience, have students read and discuss *Metro: A Graphic Novel* by Magdy El Shafee. The book reflects the corruption and disintegration of the social system under Mubarak’s regime in contemporary Egypt. With a dramatic back-story, *Metro* gives a glimpse into the poverty, discontent and frustration that would lead to massive protests in Tahrir Square and beyond—ultimately unseating Egypt’s long-term President Mubarak.
### Teaching Tool

#### The Uprisings and Social Media

Was the Green movement in Iran a “Twitter Revolution?” Were the uprisings in Tahrir Square a “Facebook Revolution?” Much has been made of the role of social media and personal technology in both mobilizing and documenting the social movements we have seen across the Middle East. Usually this is referenced as a strength or as an innovative tool used by protestors. However, the picture seems more complicated than at first glance. Scholars of the role of media in the uprisings have a decidedly more mixed analysis of social media’s contributions to the uprisings. Have students read the below articles in preparation for a class discussion guided by the questions below.

**The First Twitter Revolution?**

**Social Media Has Been a Mixed Blessing for the Arab Spring**

**Terror on Twitter: How ISIS is Taking War to Social Media**
http://www.popsci.com/terror-on-twitter-how-isis-is-taking-war-to-social-media

**The Truth about Twitter, Facebook, and the Uprisings in the Arab World**

**The 'Smartphone Intifada’ by Daoud Kuttab**

### Discussion/Essay Questions

Use the following questions as basis for a class discussion or assign the essay option.

**Essay Option:** Compose an essay that argues as to the effectiveness of protest groups use of social media. In your essay, be sure to respond to the following prompts, include specific references to the text(s) that are correctly cited, use proper grammar, and include introductory and concluding statements and transitions where appropriate.

1. What are the authors' views about the strengths and weaknesses of social media in Middle Eastern social movements? Be sure to cite evidence from the texts.

2. In comparison with other social movements that predate smartphone and social media technology, how did the uprisings in the Middle East look or act differently due to technology? Use examples from the readings above. What forms of technology were important in these earlier social movements?
movements? Which of these older methods are still present among the protestors in the Middle East today? Be sure to cite evidence from the texts.

3. How important were Facebook and Twitter to the Green Movement in Iran, the Tahrir Square uprisings, or the Tunisian revolution? Would these protests have been equally successful if this new technology didn’t exist? Be sure to cite evidence from the texts.

**For Further Exploration**

**Social Media, Citizen Journalism, and the Blogosphere**

Explore the following sites for a deeper sense of some of the uses of social media and the blogosphere during the period of the uprisings. Citizen journalism (including the capturing of events through personal cell phones or other small recording devices) was central to communication among protesting citizens but also to those on the outside trying to understand events on the ground.

**The Official Facebook Page for the April 6th Youth Movement**  
https://www.facebook.com/pages/April-6-Youth-Movement/199378773499996  
This is the Facebook page for the April 6th Youth Movement in Egypt. This is the movement that was instrumental in leading and organizing the uprisings in Egypt in 2011. They have continued to struggle through social media since the uprisings.

**The New York Times: Watching Syria’s War**  
Edited by Liam Stack  
http://projects.nytimes.com/watching-syrias-war  
While it has been on hiatus since 2014, the New York Times attempted to track the human toll of the conflict in Syria. The primary source are the internet videos that surface all over social media, and Times editors try to put the videos they found into context.

**Rantings of Sand Monkey**  
Egypt: Entries beginning January 2011 (multiple)  
http://www.sandmonkey.org/2011/02/  

**Afrah Nasser**  
Yemen: Entries beginning January 2011 (multiple)  
http://afrahnasser.blogspot.com/  

**Black Iris**  
http://black-iris.com/2013/01/03/jordan-a-2012-retrospective-and-where-the-country-goes-from-here/
MEPC (Middle East Policy Council) Resources

“The Arab Revolutions: A Preliminary Reading” by Yusri Hazran
http://mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/arab-revolutions-preliminary-reading

“The Arab Spring: Its Geostrategic Significance” by Mohammed Ayoob
http://mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/arab-spring-its-geostrategic-significance

“Transition in the Middle East: New Arab Realities and Iran” by Mahmood Sariolghalam

“The Arab Cold War Revisited: The Regional Impact of the Arab Uprising” by Nabeel A. Khoury

“Jordan Since the Uprisings: Between Change and Stability” by Nur Köprülü

“The Arab Reawakening: Strategic Implications” by Chas W. Freeman, Jr.

“Jordan’s Arab Spring: The Middle Class and Anti-Revolution” by Sarah A. Tobin

“Egypt’s Spring: Causes of the Revolution” by Ann M. Lesch

“Jordanian Foreign Policy and the Arab Spring” by Curtis R. Ryan
Sources and For Further Reading


Common Core/Standards

Common Core/Standards/College, Career, and Civic Life (C3)

Anchor Standards Reading

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1
Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4
Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10
Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Anchor Standards Writing

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1
Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.4
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.5
Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.8
Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

Uprisings and Aftermath
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9
Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.10
Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Anchor Standards Speaking/Listening

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1
Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4
Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.6
Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Social Studies ELA Standards by Subject/Grade (9-10)

History/Social Studies » Grade 9-10

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1
Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4
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.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.10
By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 9-10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

ELA Writing» Grade 9-10

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.1
Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.4
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.5
Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.8
Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.9
Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.10
Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

NCSS Themes

2. Time, Continuity, and Change

Through the study of the past and its legacy, learners examine the institutions, values, and beliefs of people in the past, acquire skills in historical inquiry and interpretation, and gain an understanding of how important historical events and developments have shaped the modern world. This theme appears in courses in history, as well as in other social studies courses for which knowledge of the past is important.

Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Institutions such as families and civic, educational, governmental, and religious organizations, exert a major influence on people’s lives. This theme allows students to understand how institutions are formed, maintained, and changed, and to examine their influence. In schools, this theme typically appears in units and courses dealing with sociology, anthropology, psychology, political science, and history.
Power, Authority, and Governance

One essential component of education for citizenship is an understanding of the historical development and contemporary forms of power, authority, and governance. Through this theme, learners become familiar with the purposes and functions of government, the scope and limits of authority, and the differences between democratic and non-democratic political systems. In schools, this theme typically appears in units and courses dealing with government, history, civics, law, politics, and other social sciences.

8. Science, Technology, and Society

By exploring the relationships among science, technology, and society, students develop an understanding of past and present advances in science and technology and their impact. This theme appears in a variety of social studies courses, including history, geography, economics, civics, and government.

NCSS C3 Framework

D2.Geo.5.9-12.

Evaluate how political and economic decisions throughout time have influenced cultural and environmental characteristics of various places and regions.

D2.His.1.9-12.

Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.


Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.

D2.His.16.9-12.

Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.

D4.3.9-12.

Present adaptations of arguments and explanations that feature evocative ideas and perspectives on issues and topics to reach a range of audiences and venues outside the classroom using print and oral technologies (e.g., posters, essays, letters, debates, speeches, reports, and maps) and digital technologies (e.g., Internet, social media, and digital documentary).