Pre-Video Discussion Questions

Can you locate Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan on a blank map of the world? Can you name the countries surrounding them?

What do you already know about Iraq? (i.e. What kind of government does Iraq have? What is the major religion? What is the main language? What is the capitol? Can you name two bordering countries?) What do you already know about Iraqi Kurdistan? (i.e. Is it a country? What countries does it span across? Who are the Kurdish people?)

What is the first thing you think of when someone says “Iraq” or “Iraqi”? What about “Kurdistan” or “Kurd”? 

Once done with the pre-video discussion, please watch our educational video here or discuss the following facts with your class.

Did You Know?

- The area we call Iraq used to be called the Cradle of Civilization or Mesopotamia. It has been inhabited for thousands of years and is the birthplace of the earliest form of writing, a script called cuneiform.
- Iraq was part of the Islamic Empire during the middle ages before becoming part of the Ottoman Empire in the 15th century. After WWI, the region was placed under the control of the United Kingdom by a League of Nations mandate before gaining independence as a monarchy under Faisal I in 1932.
- The Republic of Iraq was created in 1958. Ten years later, in 1968, a coup led by Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr and backed by Saddam Hussein overthrew the republic and installed a Ba’ath Socialist authoritarian regime.
- Saddam Hussein became head of the government in 1979 and entered into several wars during the course of his presidency, including the Iran-Iraq War and the Gulf War.
  - In 2003, the US and the UK invaded Iraq under the assumption that it was hiding weapons of mass destruction and providing a safe haven for al-Qaeda militants. This led to democratic elections in 2005 and the execution of Saddam Hussein a year later. No weapons of mass destruction were found, and this invasion remains controversial.
  - Currently, there is a rise in unrest and sectarian conflict in Iraq and the militant group Islamic State, formerly known as ISIS, has taken control of a large portion of the country.
- Iraqi Kurdistan is an autonomous region in Iraq governed by the Kurdish people, a non-Arab ethnic group with a presence in Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Turkey. The Kurds were subject to persecution under Saddam Hussein’s reign and are currently pushing for more independence, with some desiring the creation of an independent Kurdish state.

Once you have either discussed Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan’s history or watched our educational video, please watch our video of Iraqi youth discussing misconceptions here.
Post-Video Discussion Questions

What surprised you the most about the students in the video? Did anything they say stick out?

Can you think of any other cultures that are unfairly stereotyped (i.e. Asians are good at math, Brits have bad teeth, etc.)?

How do you think we can break stereotypes about other cultures? What can you do when you hear someone using stereotypes?

Further Resources

Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility: American Misconceptions about the War on Iraq
http://www.morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/american-misconceptions-about-war-iraq
If you would like to go more in depth on the Iraq War and how it has been presented to the American public, here is a lesson plan that helps students to explore misconceptions and the facts surrounding the Iraq War. It includes a short survey, quotes from American leaders about Iraq, and ways to discuss conflicting views about the actions of the United States.

Zinn Education Project: How Not to Teach About the Iraq War
http://zinnedproject.org/2013/03/ten-years-after-how-not-to-teach-about-the-iraq-war/
This article calls on educators to look critically about what their textbooks say about the war in Iraq and how to present both sides of the conflict. The page also includes teaching materials for classes learning about terrorism and war.

http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/iraq/index.html?8qa&module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3Ar%2C%7B%222%22%3A%22RI%3A14%22%7D
This page explains the Iraq-ISIS conflict, the Baath Party, and other topics relating to Iraq’s history and culture. It also has a chronology of the New York Times’ coverage of Iraq and multimedia guides to the current conflict. Updated regularly, this source can provide many teaching materials as well as readings for understanding the situation currently.