



## Teacher/Viewing Guide

### Arab American Stories – Episode 101

**Robby Ameen**

Musician/Drummer

**Grade Level** 9-12

#### **Episode Overview:**

Robby Ameen was born in New Haven, Connecticut and lives in New York City. His grandparents on both sides came to the United States from Lebanon. As a young boy he discovered a passion for the drums, and today he is a world renowned Afro-Cuban Jazz drummer. This episode examines what interests define a personal culture and explores how influences such as music, language and distinctive practices can develop into a unique American cultural experience for individuals of all backgrounds.

Students should be challenged to think about their own notions of ethnic identity and the boundaries that we often draw around particular groups. Students should also think about their own unique cultural experience and what has influenced them in their community and life, and what other cultures they enjoy and/or identify with.

#### **Previewing Questions:**

1. What is American culture?
2. What makes someone Latino, Arab American, African American or part of another group?
3. How is your community or culture unique?

#### **Vocabulary:**

1. Afro-Cuban Jazz: The earliest form of Latin jazz. It mixes Afro-Cuban clave-based rhythms with jazz harmonies and techniques of improvisation.
2. Culture: The customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group
3. Ancestry: One's family or ethnic descent
4. Druze: Religion and group of people living primarily in Lebanon, Syria, Israel, and Jordan--and often in the mountainous regions of those countries.

#### **Lesson Overview/Review:**

After viewing the segment on Robby Ameen, students should be prepared to discuss the concept of ethnic and cultural identity.

**Journal option:** Have students take a moment to write about their own ideas about culture and identity. In the episode, Robby Ameen states "The people you spend your time with... becomes more who you are than your blood." Use this statement as a writing prompt for student journals. Encourage students to not only write about their ethnic identity, but also the different identities that make up their own personal experience. Perhaps they live or interact with a community that is different than their own. How has that experience created a unique cultural identity? Perhaps their own culture is made up of family experiences or traditions or experiences with friends, their community or school. Encourage students to think broadly about the concept of culture.

**Post-viewing Class discussion:** After viewing the segment, consider the following questions:

1. In the episode Robby Ameen states that his grandparents changed their last name to Sams. Why do you think they and many other immigrants would change their last name when they immigrated to the US?

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2. How can language, music, food and other experiences create a unique culture?
3. Robby Ameen jokes that his daughter would have a particularly complicated passport as a Lebanese Cuban. What complications do you suppose he is speaking of?
4. How is Robby Ameen's experience uniquely American?

**Activity:** Robby Ameen is best known for his AfroCuban Jazz music. His surroundings led him to explore this unique form of Latin Jazz. Throughout history, music has played an important role in the development of culture. Students should work in groups to explore how the music they listen to may have influenced culture or have helped to create cultural identities. Working in groups of three to five, have students:

1. Identify the music they each listen to.
2. Using the Internet, research appropriate sites about the history of that music.
3. Identify the cultural influences on that music.
4. Determine if there are any new or existing cultural identities that have emerged from that music.
5. Demonstrate their findings to the class through a presentation that includes examples of their music and the cultural influences and identities that they found. Use appropriate technologies, such as media and publishing tools, to give a rich and interactive demonstration.

**Explore online:** Use the following resources to allow your students to further explore the topic and the Arab American community.

1. <http://www.robbyameen.com/>
2. <http://www.arabculturalcenter.org/>
3. <http://palantelatino.com/2012/03/30/afro-cuban-jazz-bringing-cultures-together/>

### Interdisciplinary Options Art/Music Education

In this episode, students learn about and hear a unique form of music created through the fusion of Cuban and jazz influences. Students hear from one of the leading percussionists of this unique music style.

### Common Core Alignment

- RI7 Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.
- W6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.
- SL2 Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.
- SL5 Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.