

The **Interactive Communications & Simulations Group** at  
the University of Michigan  
Presents:

## The Place out of Time Teacher's Guide

Fall, 2009

Here's the URL for the **Place out of Time** web site:

**<http://poot.soe.umich.edu/>**

**Place out of Time** is accessible *only* through this interactive,  
password-protected World Wide Web site.

This project was inspired by the text "A Medieval Banquet in the Alhambra  
Palace," edited by Audrey Shabbas  
(AWAIR Publishers; Berkeley, California, 1993)  
This Teacher's Guide was written with the help of Samara Cherne, Emily Claybon,  
Charles Gragg, and Mara Hoffert

If you have questions or concerns, please call on one of us.  
Our information number is 734-763-5950 and we will respond to calls  
or e-mail (poothelp@umich.edu) as promptly as we can.

*Sincerely...Michael Fahy, Jeff Stanzler, & Jeff Kupperman*  
(Project Directors)

## *TABLE OF CONTENTS*

<b>Place out of Time Introduction and Overview</b> .....	3
<b>Schedule</b> .....	4
<b>In Brief:</b> What are we supposed to <i>do</i> ?.....	5
<b>Step One:</b> Defining the issue.....	6
<b>Step Two:</b> Selecting your character.....	6
<b>Step Three:</b> Writing your character’s <b>resume</b> .....	8
Sample resumes.....	9
<b>Step Four:</b> Playing a character .....	12
Tips for Role-Playing.....	13
<b>Step Five:</b> The Trial: examining our case .....	14
Sample interaction .....	15
<b>Curricular Issues</b>	
Relevance of POOT to curriculum and content standards .....	16
<b>Lesson Plan:</b> <i>Trial at the Alhambra</i> .....	18
1. Format	
2. Student Understanding	
3. Subject Areas	
4. Grade Level	
5. Time Allowance	
6. Summary / Abstract	
7. Benchmark	
8. Key Concept	
9. Unit Focus Questions	
10. Instructional Resources	
Assessment and evaluation .....	19
<b>Appendix:</b> Using the Place out of Time web site .....	21

## I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW:

“Atticus was right. One time he said you never know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them”

- Scout, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 1960

### What is Place Out of Time (POOT)?

POOT is an online simulation of a diplomatic trial at the ancient Alhambra fortress. Students play roles as guests from a range of historic places and times, including a core group from the Middle East and Africa. They interact with Student-Mentors (university students from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and Flint, Michigan, USA) who assist the students in researching specific aspects of their character’s life and times, and adopting the role of their character at the banquet, which culminates the eight-week unit. Each semester, a significant world conflict (sometimes contemporary, sometimes historical) is chosen to be the center of the trial.

Student-Participants may choose historical characters to adopt from our online selection, from the curriculum they are studying in their classroom, or from their own knowledge and interest. Student-developed characters can be fictional or non-fictional; the only rule is that characters must have life experiences that can contribute to resolving the concerns of today's world.

The adopted characters transport their personal knowledge across time barriers to participate in a present-day online trial discussion. For example, Queen Isabella would present views and recommendations on issues as if she were still ruling Spain with King Ferdinand in 1479-1504. Queen Isabella must be familiar with some of the issues of our present day, but more importantly must provide insights based on her experience as co-ruler of Spain during the "Reconquista" and subsequent inquisition. Eleanor Roosevelt must provide insights based on her experiences during the Great Depression or World War II, or another part of her life.

The goal of Place Out of Time is to push students, like Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, to walk in the shoes of another person in order to acquire a deeper understanding of a different time period, and its interconnection to the present day. The purpose of this simulation is to force participants to think critically about loyalty, discrimination, faith, circumstances, power, politics, justice, morals, ethics, diversity and a number of other issues.

**Schedule of Activities:**

*This is a timeline for the Fall 2009 simulation*

***Late September/Early October***

*Choose your character, and research, write, and post your resume. Consider doing one or more in-person activities in your classroom (see pages 6 & 7, and the "teaching materials" section on the POOT site).*

***Oct. 12 – Dec. 4***

*The Trial at THE ALHAMBRA (the scenario will be emailed to you and will also be available on the POOT website).*

***Mid-December***

*Reflection and Debriefing — what happened?*

**B. In Brief: What are we supposed to do?**

*Here's a quick description of the key steps involved in this project to be followed by a more in-depth discussion of each step:*

**Step #1 Defining The Issue**

The Fall 2009 **Place out of Time** simulation will be dealing with questions of justice, ethics, duty, truth, history, and culture...how we define them, how we value them, and where and how they are endangered. For our purposes, these issues are not simply policy questions but personal questions: What does culture, truth, and moral values mean to *me*? Your first step will be to investigate, in whatever ways you see fit and deem appropriate, questions that have some meaning for your students. We have included the **Issue Journal** activity that our university mentors do as one way to explore this issue.

**Step #2 Selecting a Character**

We ask your students, whether individually or in small groups, to "become" a character (either an actual person, or a literary character) and to portray that character in our online conversations. Please consider using your curriculum as a basis for the character choices your students might make. We also have a selection of characters that you are welcome to offer to your students or, if you wish, they may choose other people (from history, from literature, or from the present day) to research and portray. We ask only that any characters chosen have life experiences that can contribute to resolving the concerns of today's world.

**Step #3 Researching and Writing Your Character's Resume**

The resume is the result of your student's investigations of their character's history and life circumstances. It is a means for your students to teach the mentors and other students about their character, *and* it serves the specific function of trying to push the students to "become" their character a bit more. Students write their resumes in the first person, and we strongly encourage them to adopt a style that they feel suits their character, to be dramatic and, most of all, to have fun.

**Step #4 Becoming your character**

Much of our class time with our university mentors is spent "practicing" being their characters by engaging in conversations where everyone becomes their character. We ask that, once you've completed your resume, or once you're engaged in that work, that you take some class time to experience trying to talk as your character, representing your character's ideas, as you've come to understand them.

**Step #5 The Trial at the Alhambra**

We ask that all students participate on a regular basis in the online conversation, our *World Trial at the Alhambra*. These conversations will involve student and mentor portrayed characters, and will provide a variety of opportunities for students to learn about their characters as they try and represent their beliefs and experiences by speaking in their voice. We hope that all student participants will be able to get online and **make postings at least twice a week during the simulation.**

## ***POOT Step by Step: Step One: Defining The Issue***

The mentors spend time each term discussing the current semester's issue and how it relates to themselves and to others. One of the tools we use to explore these concerns is our issue journal activity:

### ***Suggested Activity: Keeping an Issue Journal***

Over the course of three days, keep a record of the incidents, encounters, people/ things you see or experience that \*you think\* have some impact on your sense of the issue. Make some notes for yourself about why/how the things you listed seemed connected to the issue, and be prepared to talk about this in class.

#### **Example on the issue of "Life and Death: Who Decides?" (winter 2007):**

*"I was reading about the execution of Saddam Hussein in the news the other day, and I found myself having surprisingly confused emotions. I'm sure that if there ever was someone who deserved the death penalty, it was Saddam, but when I saw the pictures of him about to be executed, I thought, 'I don't want to see this.' How can anyone have sympathy for that terrible man? And yet...."*

### **Step Two: Selecting your character**

Students must choose and then research their characters so that they can begin the process of truly understanding them (i.e. what is important to their character? When did that person live? How might their character feel about issues of diversity, morality, etc...?). Feel free to set stipulations so that their character exploration furthers your class objectives and goals.

If you can, as you think about putting together your resume, try to give your readers a sense of the times in which you lived, briefly responding to one or more of these questions:

*What was your world like? Peaceful, or a world at war? Who were your enemies?*

*What were the greatest dangers you faced? – What were the greatest dangers ordinary people of your times faced?*

*Who were the people closest to you? What kind of people were closest to you?*

*What, in your time, impresses you as particularly different from what you have seen of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?*

*What mattered most in terms of social relations? Was it race? Religion? Gender? Social class?*

### ***Suggested Activity: Me and my character***

**Here is an activity we use with our mentors to help get them into their character's mind:**

Contrast your personal reaction to the scenario below with that of your character (this can be done as a discussion or written assignment). Use one or more of these questions to guide your response (first as yourself, then in character):

- What is the problem here? (\*is\* there a problem?)

- What is the first question you would ask about this situation?
- Why do you think that this situation has come to pass?
- What would you do?

**Sample scenario (from "Life and Death" issue):**

According to her husband's account, that June night was the night Dr. Ann Mueller had simply had enough. Enough of watching her beloved son Kent becoming a shadow of the person she loved so deeply. Enough of hearing him struggle, night in and night out, with the simplest tasks. It still seemed unreal that barely more than a year before, at the age of 29, Kent Mueller had been diagnosed with one of the most horrifying diseases imaginable. He'd been dropping his hammer at work, and falling off his motorcycle. He went for tests. The doctors told him that he had Lou Gehrig's disease--amyotrophic lateral sclerosis --something that would likely kill him, probably by causing him to choke to death on his own saliva in a helpless, terrified rage. Long before that, the fiercely independent Kent, a landscaper and construction worker who loved being outdoors, would, little by little, lose the ability to walk and to go to the bathroom by himself. He would be in constant pain from severe muscle cramps.

By that June night, 13 months later, most of the doctors' grim prognosis had come to pass. Kent was barely mobile, and his pain was constant and had often brought this normally stoic young man to helpless tears. He was no longer able to work, of course, and his dependence on his parents—for everything—had left him profoundly depressed. That night, according to his father's testimony, Kent told his parents that he no longer wanted to live. But the father added that this wasn't the first time that Kent had said such a thing—his emotions ran hot and cold as he dealt with the physical challenges that accompanied his disease. Yet somehow, on that June night, Ann Mueller decided it was time to take matters into her own hands. As the father related it, the three family members spoke into the night, Kent continuing to insist that he had simply had it, and he solemnly asked his mother if she would help him. Facing an extraordinarily difficult decision, Dr. Ann Mueller took the law into her own hands and administered a fatal dose of potassium chloride to her son.

Moments after Dr. Mueller injected her son, Kent Mueller was gone. Dr. Ann Mueller picked up the phone and told the 911 operator that her son was dead, and that she was responsible, guilty of murder in the eyes of law.

**Learned guests, we do not ask you to judge this case as a matter of law per se. (Although you should know that the mother had broken the law by taking her son's life, the law expressly forbidding physicians from assisting patients with taking their own lives, regardless of circumstance). We ask rather that you respond to this case as a matter of morality, or of personal philosophy.**

**You might consider questions such as:**

**What is the first question you would ask about this situation? What is your conjecture about why this has come to pass?**

**Does this story represent something morally healthy, or morally corrupt? Something dangerous?**

**What do you think a just outcome for Dr. Mueller should be? Which aspects of your personal experience helped you to reach a decision?**

### Step Three: Writing your Character's Resume

In 2-3 paragraphs, tell everyone something about the kind of person you are, your experiences, your beliefs and your passions. In talking about yourself and telling everyone something of your "story", we would like for you to make a specific connection to the current theme issue. Do your character's religious beliefs would lead him or her to define the issue in a particular way? Is your character a "doer" or a "thinker"? Does your character favor strictness or nurturing? What might your character have to say about our responsibilities to one another? Who should one be most loyal to, and when is it acceptable to oppose governments and leaders?

#### Why write a resume?

\*We're hoping to meaningfully enhance this research task with an aspect of "real-world" applicability. The students' work on this resume is a culmination of their research into their character, but **it is also a means to teach other students about their character and it serves the specific function of trying to push the students to "become" their character a bit more.** We encourage the students to write this resume as if they were their character, picking up the pen to tell others, somewhat informally, about who they are and even what "makes them tick". One of the challenges of this activity is to try and represent your character, as much as possible, from your character's own perspective. Sometimes your character will have done things you don't agree with, or that we might question from our present-day perspective. While we encourage you to think about such issues, we ask you to do so *primarily* so that you can present your character's thoughts and motivations in as genuine a manner as you can. **Be** your character, take some dramatic license, and have some fun writing your resume.

## Sample Resumes

Here are some examples of how resumes might look. We want to encourage you to feel free to be creative with the style in which you present your resume. The first of these, written about the Malian King Mansa Musa, is written in a standard narrative format. The second, for the fictional character Winnie Foster from the book, "Tuck Everlasting," is done in the form of a letter. By the way...all of these characters are available to be played in Place out of Time; just let us know if you want to give one of them a try!

### Sample Resume #1: Mansa Musa

"I am a strong believer that there is a reciprocal relationship between myself, the Emperor, and my citizens. All of my followers are equal in the eyes of Allah, our Muslim God. I have given them great libraries, mosques, and universities to allow them to flourish the way they've helped Mali flourish under my rule. Their loyalty in my pilgrimage has given me great respect and I feel I need to give back to my people respectively. I believe that people should be responsible and loyal to their faith and to God. If you are loyal to your religious leader, he will give you in return compensation for your devotion. Because of my strong ties to my people, I was able to form a community that required no government and legislature to maintain power and prestige. No hierarchy was mandated to keep me above my devout followers. It wasn't until my death that Mali lost its discipline and influence.

"Mali never again had a leader that was powerful or influential enough to hold it together. The wealth and power that Mali possessed were never again fully displayed by an African Empire." (Jackson, 212) It is hard for me to say whether other countries should help if one is in devastation or nearing a famine-state. I believe that nature has it's way of limiting our resources and because Mali was so richly blessed with nutrient soil and water to cultivate an array of crops, (like peanuts, cotton, grains, and salt to preserve the "shelf-life" of the fish caught in the Amazon,) we prospered because that was the land we were blessed with. If I had a surplus, I would help surrounding countries that I trade with or may have influence over to aid us in cultivation and other tasks. I would not give without expecting some kind of reimbursement, whether it be in increments of time or tangibles.

However, it is not an individual's fault if the land is unfertile and therefore they should not starve and I would offer them what help I could. I am a strong believer and enforcer of giving to receive, and I give to my people to receive the rewards of having influence over other borders. I will use such an influence to rally for international cooperation in support for famine relief in Africa. I can manipulate those around me to give and expect forgiveness in Allah's world for whatever sins they may have committed. There are many things I can do with this great power of influence. But, in return, I want to be recognized throughout time and space as one of the greatest leaders in African history. (Which I am!)

**Reference:** Jackson, John. **Introduction to African Civilizations.** (The Citadel Press; New Jersey, 1970).

**Sample Resume #2: Winnie Foster**

Dear Jesse Tuck,

If you find this letter that I have left for you underneath the tree that we met in front of, then it will mean that I have passed away due to my own mortality. Jesse, when I first met you when I was 11 years old and you looked like you were 17, my life changed forever. You met me in the woods when I ran away from my parents who wanted to force me to go to a finishing school. I didn't want to be a prim and proper woman like my mother wanted me to be. I was sick of wearing corsets, playing the piano, and only doing what my parents told me to do.

When you found me lost in the woods your brother took me to meet your family. He was so rough with me, and acted like he hated me. I learned that he didn't directly hate me, but instead hated to be alive. He had once had a wife that he loved dearly and two children who had died. When they died a large part of him died, too. But, as gruff as he was, your parents made up for it.

I felt instantly at home with you and your parents, even more comfortable than I had ever felt with my own parents. I stayed with your family while my own parents worried day after day about my alleged kidnapping. I had so much fun with you all that I did not know how many days I stayed away after running away from home. I had no idea at the time how much pain I put my parents through. I do vividly remember how you took me hiking and camping in the woods, and swimming in the river. I was never allowed to do anything like this before, and when I went back to my family I dreamed about every single moment that we shared together. One night you decided to tell your family secret to me. I could not believe that your family all drank from a spring and completely stopped getting older, and became immortal. You told me that you were actually over 100 years old! More than anything at that moment I wanted to run to the spring and drink from it because I wanted to be with you forever. It sounded so glamorous to never get old and not have to worry about dying.

I will never forget the conversation that I had with your father on the lake after you shared your secret with me. He said, "You can't have living without dying. So you can't call it living, what we Tuck's got. We just *are*, we just *be*, like rocks beside the road" (Babbitt 57). It took me a while to even begin to understand that. I knew that I "would go out of the world willy-nilly someday. Just go out, like the flame of a candle, and no use protesting. It was a certainty" (Babbitt 57). After this conversation with your father I still exclaimed that I didn't want to die. He told me that I should not fear death, but instead fear a life that was un-lived. He tried to explain to me how he wanted to grow and change and be a part of the cycle of life again, but he couldn't. I thought a lot about how "everything's a wheel, turning and turning, never stopping. The frogs is part of it, and the bugs, and the fish, and the wood thrush, too. And people. But never the same ones. Always coming in new, always growing and changing, and always moving on. That's the way it's supposed to be. That's the way it *is*" (Babbitt 56).

After that boat ride things became complicated when your mother hit the man who was in search of the spring for selfish reasons. He wanted to tap the spring and sell the water to anyone for a very high price. Your mother felt that she needed to protect the special spring because of how dangerous it could become if it was not handled with care and thought. Your mother went to jail for the crime because the man died. After we set her free from the jail I knew that I would not see you for a long time because people

would be looking for you. You gave me a bottle of water from the spring and told me that I should drink it when I turned 17.

I had such a hard time deciding whether or not to drink water from the spring. I loved you so much and wanted more than anything to spend eternity with you. You obviously know the outcome, my mortal death, because you are reading this letter. I poured out the water from the bottle onto a toad that I am sure is still living. But, I want you to know that I thought a lot about the benefits of drinking the water: never dying, being able to be young forever, never getting sick or physically hurt, and having so much time that I never had to rush again. My list of positives went on from there. But, I thought a lot about the negatives: never growing up, never dying, watching everyone that I love die around me, and more. I thought so much about what your father said to me over and over again. I decided to live a full life, and I believe that I did.

I want to thank you, Jesse, for sharing your secret with me. I do want to let you know that I never told anyone about it, including my parents. There are so many reasons why you are important to me, and I hope that you know that in your heart. Going through this decision process made me think a lot about my own fear of death. I now realize that death is a part of life. I hope that you know that I never forgot about you.

Love always, Winnie Foster Jackson

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### References

Babbitt, Natalie. Tuck Everlasting. New York: Bantam Skylark, 1975.

Otis, Rebecca. "Carol Hurst's Children's Literature Site." Tuck Everlasting. <http://www.carolhurst.com/titles/tuckeverlasting.html> (11 November 2002).

### **Step Four: Playing your Character**

We will be talking about what governments, churches and international organizations should be doing regarding the current issue of the trial. We will also be talking about what we, as individuals, should be doing and thinking about. While you are thinking about the , we're asking you to take on the challenge of playing a character, perhaps a contemporary figure, maybe a historical figure with something to say on these issues, or perhaps even a character from a novel you might be reading. This isn't easy. We're asking you to learn enough about an actual person, or a literary character, to be able to take a "good shot" at being that character and trying to speak in a voice that seems to fit with your sense of their beliefs.

Some questions to ask yourself as you read about your character, and think about her life:

What do you think your character sounded like?

Was she a woman of the people?

Would he look down his nose at others?

What did she enjoy and what ideas would she have championed?

What kinds of people might have gotten on his nerves?

Have some fun with it, and when you're writing in character, try your best to be true to your vision of your character in her/his time. Remember that you're going to need to take your best guess—an informed guess—about the answer to the kinds of questions written here. That is fine. We want to encourage you, as you learn more about your character, to allow yourself to play a bit.

## *Tips for Role Playing*

### **READ**

In order to fully appreciate the persona of your character, it is helpful to see how s/he is or was perceived by more than one author. For non-fiction characters, look for novels, biographies, newspaper and magazine articles. For fictional characters, literary criticisms and written articles are helpful. For both **www.google.com** searches often provide a number of appropriate resources to investigate. You do not need to read ten books from cover to cover, but it is a good idea to choose relevant chapters within your character's life to explore.

### **DON'T WALK THE LINE UNLESS THAT IS YOUR CHARACTER**

Even if your character represents a manipulative, discriminatory, detestable human being, let yourself fall into the role. The point of this simulation is to take different personalities, throw them into the same room and watch them interact. You will learn a great deal about yourself, your character and the world by affording yourself the permission to become your character. By the same token, do not think that what a character in our simulation says is what the person behind the identity believes. When you walk into the POOT simulation, you leave your own beliefs off the keyboard!

**PARTICIPATE IN ROLE-PLAY**

Your teacher will guide you through exercises to help you talk about your thoughts as both your character and yourself. Actively participate in these activities. This is a time to receive feedback and grow into your character. Hopefully, you will have time to dress in character and respond to a number of questions in character. Use this time to develop a stronger sense of what it is you want to investigate about your character.

**REFLECT**

It might also be wise to keep a journal where you can reflect and comment on your feelings regarding the space between your own persona and your character's. By writing it down, it might help you process what you have learned.

**SEEK HELP FROM THE MENTORS**

If you don't know how to respond to an issue, ask for help. Your teacher is a resource, but so are the University of Michigan mentors. They are experts at this type of interaction and serve as a good source of assistance. And they want to help, so use them.

## Step Five: Trial at the Alhambra

As your character, you will be deliberating the issues surrounding a trial based on the following scenario. While the scenario is fictional, aside from the Trial at the Alhambra itself, it is based on real events.

*Scenario for FALL, 2009*

When the Court of All Time convenes next month at Spain's Alhambra Palace, participants will be discussing a case so explosive that, by agreement between court authorities and the British government, specific details cannot be made available publicly at this time (though informed sources report that it touches upon matters related to internet-based "social networking"). For the benefit of our worldwide audience, however, we can offer information about the setting in which our trial will take place. Partially in response to the threat of terrorist activity, the British government recently took the controversial step of publishing a list of people from around the world who are banned from entry to Britain, charged with "spreading hate," and seeking "to provoke others to serious criminal acts and foster(ing) hatred which might lead to inter-community violence." This list included the Dutch anti-Muslim politician Geert Wilders, militant Israeli settler/activists and members of the Palestinian Hamas organization, and many others, including the conservative American talk show host Michael Savage. Indeed, this story came to the attention of many owing to Mr. Savage's fiery denunciation of the action taken by the British Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith, calling her a "clown" and threatening to bring a lawsuit against her.

In preparation for our main case, it will be vital for the esteemed members of the court to discuss the merits of Secretary Smith's claim that "coming to (Britain) is a privilege and I refuse to extend that privilege to individuals who abuse our standards and values to undermine our way of life. Therefore, I will not hesitate to name and shame those who foster extremist views as I want them to know that they are not welcome here," and to think carefully about what we mean when we ask our government to protect us in a time of international terrorism, and whether words, in and of themselves, can ever constitute a danger.

## Sample Interaction

Just so that you have an idea of how the conversations can look, here's an interaction, from a previous simulation that put King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella on trial for expelling the Muslims from Spain in 1492. It starts with a joint posting by the Israeli leader, Yitzhak Rabin, the great Muslim soldier, Ibn Tashfin, and the poet and military leader, Samuel Ibn Nagrila. The biblical figure Cain (of Cain and Abel fame) responds and then we hear from Queen Isabella herself. As you read the postings, see what you can sense about the characters and their styles.

### Group Post- Yitzhak Rabin, Ibn Tashfin & Samuel Ibn Nagrila

For all of those confused souls here, let us persuade your opinions about the case. As members of the Jewish and Muslim communities, we have all been discriminated against in one form or another. This is an ignorant act that should not be tolerated any longer. There is no reason that individuals of various religions can not live together in harmony, especially if they are under a strong leader. All three of us ask for your votes of confidence in this case because Isabella should pay for her wrong doings. We want to see diversity and Jewish and Muslim prosperity restored, not only in Spain, but throughout the world. Please respond either publically or privately with your thoughts. We all look forward to hearing from you!

**Subject: I'm Not confused, I'm Cain**  
**Posted by [Cain](#)**

Queen Isabella already has proven herself superior to all of you. Why should I give you my votes of confidence? If you want to complain about "why various religions can't get along," well do that, and continue to, but keep in mind that everything in history happens for a reason. Queen Isabella took over The Iberian Peninsula because it was her right. She had the authority, and the power. Why can't you all understand that? You guys are pathetic thinking you can change the minds of the elite. I'm surprised that God didn't give you a curse rather than me.

**Subject: Discrimination, you say?**  
**Posted by [Isabella of Castile](#)**

I have no idea why you, Yitzhak Rabin, say I have discriminated against the Jewish and Muslim communities. I have welcomed them with open arms into a strong community, Christianity. Our community is not about running away or discrimination. Our community is about loving one another. I have asked for coexistence and love so that we may join together under God. I thank Cain for understanding that God is the superior being we must follow. Yes, I did have authority, and that authority came from God. Maybe you should reexamine your own faith and learn a bit more about your religion. You should definitely see my point. Your people ran away. I didn't push them out. They chose not to follow the true faith. I am so tired of arguing....

## II. What is the relevance of Place Out of Time to Curriculum and Content Standards?

The Place Out of Time activity does not assume familiarity on the part of students or their teachers with the history of Muslim Spain—Al Andalus. The working assumption, borne out by experience, is that in the process of interaction with the characters of this period, students not only learn not about important figures and features of Al-Andalus but, to an equal degree, make important discoveries about the characters they have chosen to portray, no matter what period of history they represent. Accordingly, classrooms covering the American Revolution or Modern World History in their curricula, can find equal benefit in participating.

Few teachers have the luxury of engaging their students in activities that do not in some way articulate with content standards and draft benchmarks. POOT is both an intrinsically creative and innovative activity, *and* it is distinctly aligned with the social studies content standards of the 1996 Michigan Curriculum Framework, addressing **Strand I, Historical Perspective**, specifically, Standards 1, 2 and 3 (Time and Chronology, Comprehending the Past, and Analyzing and Interpreting the Past); **Strand II, Geographic Perspective** (specifically, Standards 1, 3 and 4 (Diversity of People, Places and Cultures; Location, Movement and Connections; and Regions, Patterns and Processes); and **Strand VI, Public Discourse and Decision Making** (specifically, Content Standards 1 (Identifying and Analyzing Issues) and 2 (Group Discussion)).

### Benchmarks

As an example, the intended learning outcomes of the Banquet activity are represented by the following benchmarks within the Geographic Perspective strand:

Content Standard 1: All students will describe, compare, and explain the locations and characteristics of places, cultures and settlements. (People, Places and Cultures)

#### **Middle School Benchmarks:**

*Locate and describe the diverse places, cultures, and communities of major world regions (II.1.MS.1).*

*Describe and compare characteristics of major world cultures including language, religion, belief systems, gender roles, and traditions. (II.1.MS.2).*

In the simulation, learning about diverse places, cultures and beliefs is an *active process* that is student-centered. The research that participation in the activity requires of students is immanently purposeful, because participation in the Banquet requires that students come to know and in some sense “own” the characters they portray for the simulation. *What would a caliph of the 8<sup>th</sup> Century have to say about the problem of hunger in the world today? What would Napoleon, or Leonardo da Vinci, have to tell us about security?* It is through the imaginative

interplay between historical (or contemporary) characters assumed by students and university mentors that students become engaged with the realities, ideas and values of diverse societies and epochs.

The processes of locating, describing and comparing are most effective when students are made active agents in their own education. In POOT activities this is discursive exercise, in which student not only assimilate but actively produce the discourse themselves. As with other ICS activities, the preponderance of the learning experience takes place “off line” where students actively work with their teachers and peers to research, explore and develop the characters they bring to the simulation.

## Lesson Plan: *Trial at the Alhambra*

### Format:

This lesson plan generally follows the format of the State of Michigan Sample Curriculum and Plans for Education (SCOPE) (<http://www.michigan.gov/scope>).

### Student Understanding:

As a result of this unit, students will understand that contemporary conflicts often arise from a variety of political, economic, historic, and geographic factors. Students will be able to discuss different approaches to resolving these issues, calling upon lessons from both the past and the present.

### Subject Areas:

Geography, Economics, World History, Government, African Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, European Studies, American Studies

English/Language Arts: Literature, Creative Writing

### Grade Level:

Grades 6-9

### Time Allowance:

Two hours per week (in or out of class) for seven weeks. Many students get excited about this simulation and wish to spend more time responding and posting. All we ask is for a 2 hr/week minimum.

### Summary/Abstract:

In this lesson, students participate either independently or in pairs in an interactive computer simulation, where they adopt the role of either a fictional or a non-fictional character in history, step into that character's "shoes," and work to apply actual lessons from history toward finding. Students start by either selecting one of several pre-designated characters whose life experiences and beliefs are relevant to the issues of the trial, or by choosing a person (or a fictional character) they are studying/reading about in their home classroom. In addition to pairing themselves with classmates, students also work with University of Michigan mentors who guide them in researching their characters. The topic of the simulation guides student thought processes as they create issue journals, and as they research their character and write a biographical **resume** about their character, while investigating significant issues or crises that took place during their character's lifetime. Based on this research and the new perspectives they develop, students come together for the culminating activity, the *World Trial at the Alhambra*, as they represent their character's historical perspective in discussions covering a range of concerns of our present day. They are assisted inside the walls of this virtual medieval palace by significant figures that are played by University of Michigan mentors.

**Benchmark(s):**

This lesson is aligned with the social studies content standards of the 1996 Michigan Curriculum Framework. Specifically, Strand VI, Public Discourse and Decision Making, Content Standards 1 and 2 are addressed. The intended learning outcomes of the lesson are represented by two benchmarks within this strand:

Content Standard 1: All students will state an issue clearly as a question of public policy, trace the origins of the issue, analyze various perspective people bring to the issue and evaluate possible ways to resolve the issue. (Identifying and Analyzing Issues).

High School Benchmark: Generate possible alternative resolutions to public issues and evaluate them using criteria that have been identified (VI.1.HS.1).

Middle School Benchmark: Explain how culture and experiences shape positions that people take on an issue (VI.1.MS.3).

Content Standard 2: All students will engage their peers in constructive conversation about matters of public concern by clarifying issues, considering opposing views, applying democratic values, anticipating consequences, and working toward making decisions (Group Discussion).

High School Benchmark: Engage each other in elaborated conversations that deeply examine public policy issues and help make reasoned and informed decisions (VI.2.HS.1).

Middle School Benchmark: Engage each other in conversations that attempt to clarify and resolve national and international policy issues (VI.2.MS.1).

**Instructional Resources**

1. Place Out of Time Interactive Computer Simulation
2. Teacher's Guide
3. University of Michigan Mentors
4. Student-directed Research

**Assessment & Evaluation**

We hope that students will take away some significant skills and affects from their participation in the Place out of Time project. Here are some of the learning goals (taken from the Michigan Curriculum Framework Benchmarks) that reflect some of these skills and affects we hope will be enhanced in your students as a consequence of their participation in Place out of Time (goals for student learning in bold, with actual benchmark language in italics)

**I would like my students to become better able to derive their own meanings from the words of others, as well as striving to understand the intent of the author.**

*[Language Arts.3.MS.5... "Select appropriate strategies to construct meaning while reading, listening to, viewing, or creating texts. Examples include generating relevant questions, studying vocabulary, analyzing mood and tone, recognizing how authors and speakers use information, and matching form to content."]*

**I would like my students to be able to identify and articulate their own criteria for evaluating the thoughts and ideas of others.**

*[Language Arts.12.MS.5... "Refine their own standards to evaluate personal and public communications within a responsible and ethical system for the expression of ideas."]*

**I would like my students to be better able to make connections between social and cultural issues in other countries and manifestations of those issues in their own lives.**

*[Social Studies.II.5.HS.2... "Explain the causes and importance of global issues involving cultural stability and change, economic development, resource use, environmental impact, conflict and cooperation, and explain how they may affect the future".]*

**I would like my students to be better able to consider an issue, articulate their own point-of-view, and attentively engage in a discussion about that issue.**

*[Social Studies.VI.2.MS.1... "All students will engage their peers in constructive conversation about matters of public concern by clarifying issues, considering opposing views, applying democratic values, anticipating consequences, and working toward making decisions".]*

## Appendix: Using the POOT web site

We wanted to pass along a few tips that will guide you through the mechanics of getting your kids started in **Place out of Time**. As soon as your students choose their characters, IDs will be generated for them that will allow them to get onto our **password-protected** site and take part in the conference discussions.

Signing On .....	22
<b>Resumes</b> and How to Post Them. ....	23
Communications: <b>Public Conversations</b> . ....	23
Communications: <b>Private Conversations</b> . ....	23
Getting Around the Site: <b>The Foyer</b> . ....	23
Forum Discussions (and what they look like). ....	31-32

### Signing On

Once you choose your character and are registered in our system, you'll get an ID made up of a Login and a Password. You'll use these to sign on each time you go onto the POOT site:



Place Out Of Time

Login:

Password:

## How To Post Your Resume

To post yours, please follow the GUEST LIST tab and you'll be taken to a full listing of all the guests--including you, of course.

**Click on your name** and you will find a place to share your story, and to share a thought about how you might be able to help us decide on a matter of cultural and religious conflict.

Remember that you don't have to do your whole resume in one sitting. If you were to sign on and type a paragraph, then come back another time, sign on and select resume as before, you will see the text you typed previously is there (and "edit-able") in the little posting field. Take it at a pace that suits you.

## Communication at the Alhambra

### Public Communication

Most of the conversations at the Alhambra are public, meant for all the guests to hear:

In the **Foyer**, you can read announcements from the hosts, and you can also read and post **speeches** (where everyone listens, but doesn't respond).

In the **Great Hall**, you can join an interactive conversation about a range of topics (connections to other issues, musings about the integrity of this judge or that one, etc.)

In the **Courtroom**, you can join the **proceedings** where, once again, interactive conversations—this time about the case itself—take place for all to hear and participate in.

### Private Communication

Sometimes, you'll need to have a one-to-one conversation with another guest, out of other people's earshot.

You can send (and receive) private messages through your **Mailbox**. *There's just one catch.* If you want to communicate privately with others, you first need to put people on your **colleague list**.

To do this, follow the **Guest List** button at the top of the POOT page. You'll be taken to a list of all the guests. Click on a name and you'll see their **resume**. Check out their **resume** and, as you do, you can click the button to add them to your **colleague list** so that you can send them private messages. Until you do this, you won't be able to initiate a private communication with another guest.

## Making your way around The Alhambra



### Foyer

The **foyer** is the entrance to The Alhambra, where you will find announcements from the hosts, and formal speeches from other guests.

#### Announcements

Our hosts will be regularly updating the **announcements** (the older ones are retrievable, too) to let everyone know about a variety of important news. Always be sure to stop and check out the **announcement**.

#### Speeches

Speeches are a more formal way for guests to communicate. Imagine that you've called everyone's attention so that you can share your general ideas, whether about the case at hand, or about some of the life lessons you've learned and want to share. If you want to give a speech, you start with the link you'll see at the bottom of the list of posted speeches along the right hand side of the foyer page:

#### [Make a speech?](#)

Follow that link and you'll come to a template (see below) where you can post your speech and its title. Remember that your speech won't become visibly instantly (the way that other postings will) because the hosts reserve the right to approve all speeches before they are broadcast through the Alhambra sound system. Once you click on the **make a speech?** Link, you'll come to template (see below) into which you can type your speech:

**You are about to make a speech. All speeches must be approved by the host. All guests are free to express their views, but all speeches must be well-written and appropriate in manner. Approved speeches will be broadcast to all visitors to the Alhambra and Alhambra authorities.**

**Title of speech:**

**Text of speech:**

Speech goes here

  


## Great Hall

Follow the "Great Hall" link to a space where you'll see different conversations going on...there will be a list of such conversation along the right hand side of the page. Just click on the colored link and you'll both be able to see all of that conversation and add your own contribution. Many **Great Hall** conversations are about issues raised by the case, but guests are encouraged to bring up related topics that may be only tangentially relevant to the case.

## Courtroom

The courtroom is the space where we discuss matters directly related to the case itself, and to the process of offering **votes of confidence** to the justices.

### **Mohammad XI vs. Kingdom of Castille, initiated on 2003-09-28**

[View description](#) | [Join proceedings](#) | [votes of confidence](#)

Justices need at least 5 votes of confidence in order to be able to rule on a hearing. As guests participate in discussions, they acquire votes of confidence, which can then be given to one or more justices. All this can be done through a clearly marked link on the "courtroom" page.

*You may need to do some dealing and compromising with your fellow guests! One recommended way to gain votes of confidence from a colleague is to promise that you will quote or give credit to that colleague in your opinion when you post your vote on the hearing.*

### **Your votes of confidence:**

You may give up to three votes of confidence to the justices in this hearing. Justices need at least 5 votes of confidence before they can vote yes or no on the hearing. When deciding on your votes of confidence, consider the justices' legal philosophies, biographies, and any speeches or statements in the courtroom proceedings. It is customary to send a mail message to each justice that receives a vote of confidence from you.

Roger II ([7 confidence votes](#)) : has not voted  
([view legal philosophy](#))

## Playing a Character

*Last year, students in the Place out of Time simulation discussed the Arab-Israeli Conflict...but NOT as themselves. They learned about important historical and modern-day figures, and then portrayed them during a simulated debated of the issues. For example, here's an exchange between King Ferdinand of Spain and America's own Muhammad Ali about resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict:*

**Muhammad Ali:** First step, get rid of Ariel Sharon. He has been ordering destruction and death and then smiling and saying "Israel wants PEACE" when the international spotlight is turned to him. Second Step, separate Jerusalem with an East-West boundary and draw the other borders for both New Israel and the Republic of Palestine. Final step, International aid and trade to get those countries on their feet. *(played by a student in Germany)*

**What sort of image do you think the student playing Muhammad Ali was trying to project? If you know Muhammad Ali, you know that he was a Muslim, and you might guess that he would be supportive of a fair deal for the Middle Eastern countries where there is an Islamic majority. Maybe you would imagine that he'd also be a little feisty, and that he'd use humor to help make his point.**

**King Ferdinand:** They (Israelis) have suffered many deaths every day now for years. Each day a bomb blows from a suicide bomber from Palestine. Your country needs to keep their pride and Israel has for many years now put up with this. Why should they not take over Palestine? As soon as the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks happened the United States sent out their army. Now are asking Israel to stop their army. There was no protest against them. Israel needs to protect their country and that is why my wife Queen Isabella is right. *(played by a student in South Korea)*

**What is your guess about the beliefs of King Ferdinand—or of someone who is a king, and a believer in royal rule? What kind of image do you think the student portraying the King was trying to project? Maybe it wouldn't be surprising if King Ferdinand saw the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians as one between a sovereign government and insurrectionists who are trying to topple it. Of course, Kind Ferdinand had no great love for Muslims or Jews...what do you think that he would say, and why?**