One of the important ways that we learn about other groups and cultures is by making generalizations, “reasoning from detailed facts to general principles” (Answers.com*).* We may notice that the little boys we see are often playing with trucks while the girls often play with dolls. We learn from observation that first graders often need help crossing the road, while seniors in high school rarely need help getting across. And we learn that most Middle Easterners practice Islam while most people in the U.S. are Christian. Generalizations help us to learn about other people, places and cultures, but they risk becoming stereotypes. A stereotype is an oversimplified, exaggerated, and often offensive generalization about a culture or group. We may make a generalization that boys tend to like trucks based on our observations, but if we assume that ALL boys like trucks or that girls DON’T like trucks, we have internalized a stereotype. The mass media (television, movies, songs, etc.) often give stereotypical messages, particularly about minority groups and other cultures. Few stereotypes exist for dominant groups in a society since they are often depicted in many different ways in media. For instance, few Americans stereotype white people since there are so many different images of white people in the U.S. media. People of color are at a much greater risk of being stereotyped. The limited representations of Muslim, Arab and Middle Eastern people in the media often reinforce stereotypes. When we have little direct experience with a people or culture we are particularly vulnerable to internalizing stereotypes.

Most of us have grown up watching Disney movies, and they often hold a special, even “magical” place in our childhood memories. Because of this, it is particularly challenging, and particularly important, to analyze these films for stereotypical messages. We are going to watch the 3-minute introduction to the Disney film, Aladdin (1992). *(The clip is a YouTube link posted on the website.)* The movie received two Academy Awards, and was one of Disney’s most profitable films ever. As you watch the clip, note any stereotypes about Arab people you see or hear. They could be in **the images, the lyrics, the spoken words, the music, or the character portrayal**. You will be asked to give evidence from the clip to back up your answers. **Be ready to explain why you think they are stereotypes (exaggerated, oversimplified or offensive) rather than merely cultural generalizations.**

**For example:** What are the messages in this clip about the character of Arab people? (What does the clip suggest about Arab people?) GIVE EVIDENCE!

What are the messages in this clip about the appearance of Arab people? (What does the clip suggest about how Arab people dress?) GIVE EVIDENCE!

**It is very likely that you will need to watch the clip several times to accurately and adequately find the stereotypes.**

"The Magic of Stereotypes." *Media Construction of the Middle East*. Ed. Project Look Sharp. Ithaca College, 2005. Web. 31 July 2012. <http://www.ithaca.edu/looksharp/Books\_MiddleEast/U1L2guide.pdf>.