



*Arts of the
Islamic World*

A TEACHER'S GUIDE



Smithsonian
*Freer Gallery of Art and
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery*

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Front and back covers: Detail, double-page in a Koran. Iran, Safavid period, dated 1598. Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper; 42.0 x 27.3 x 54.0 cm. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, purchase, F1932.65

Opposite: The central plaque of a lustre *mihrab*. Iran, early 14th century. Glazed clay; 66.0 x 57.0 cm. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1909.319

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Introduction

The Education Department of the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery has designed *Arts of the Islamic World: A Teacher's Guide* in conjunction with its Teacher-Consultants Group, which comprises teachers from the Washington, D.C., area who serve as advisers to the museum. We hope that educators across the country who teach about Asian art, history, culture, and religion will find the guide to be a useful resource for their classrooms.

While the arts of the Islamic world span a vast geographic area and a wide range of media, the following materials highlight three especially important categories of artistic expression: the art of the book, the art of the mosque, and the art of the portable object. Featured here are objects from the museum's historic collection; therefore, the guide explores the history of Islam and not its contemporary manifestations.

However, four interviews with practicing Muslims and an excerpt from a journal kept by a young woman during Ramadan have been included to lend a contemporary voice to this guide.

Overview of Islam



THE RELIGION OF ISLAM WAS FOUNDED ON THE ARABIAN peninsula in the seventh century by **MUHAMMAD**, the prophet whose teachings transformed the politics, economy, and culture of both Arabia and a vast geographic area extending from Morocco and Spain to the islands of Southeast Asia.

Muhammad was born in approximately 570 to a poor family in the city of **MECCA**, in present-day Saudi Arabia. Before his birth, his mother was told that her son would be a ruler and a prophet and that she should name him Muhammad, which means “the illustrious” in Arabic. According to legend, Muhammad’s birth was marked by miraculous signs: a brilliant star illuminated the sky from east to west, and the child was born perfectly clean, with his umbilical cord already severed. Muhammad’s mother died when the boy was very young, so he lived with various relatives throughout his childhood. One well-known legend chronicles a journey Muhammad took with his uncle on a trade caravan when he was twelve years old. When they stopped in Syria to rest, a tree lowered its branches to provide the boy with shade. A monk witnessed this phenomenon and, upon examining the child closely, found a special mark between the boy’s shoulders that he interpreted as the seal of Muhammad’s prophetic office. The monk warned Muhammad’s uncle to return to Arabia and guard this special boy from those who might attempt to do him harm.

Although Muhammad spent his childhood in poverty and received little formal education, he was known for his purity and righteousness. At his uncle’s suggestion, when Muhammad was twenty-five years old he put his trading skills to use by accompanying the caravan of a wealthy woman named **KHADIJA** to Syria. After successfully completing the trade mission, Muhammad accepted the marriage proposal of Khadija, despite the fact that she was fifteen years his senior, and the couple maintained a union for twenty-five years.

Muhammad lived the life of a prosperous trader, but he also enjoyed solitary prayer and contemplation. Once a year he retired to a cave at **MOUNT HIRA**, outside of Mecca, to spend a month in quiet meditation. When Muhammad was forty years old, he experienced

his first revelation during one of his yearly trips to Mount Hira. While in a sleeplike trance near the end of an evening of meditation, he heard a voice instructing him to read or recite. Lacking any formal education, Muhammad assumed he was incapable of carrying out this command, so he resisted until the archangel Gabriel appeared and commanded him to recite. At last Muhammad acquiesced and began to listen and repeat to himself—in order to commit to memory—the first of the series of revelations that together comprise the **KORAN**, the holy text of **ISLAM**. When he returned from the wilderness, Muhammad told the story to his wife, Khadija, who encouraged him to share it with the rest of his family. He later communicated the messages he had received in the cave to the people of Mecca, much to their alarm and anger.

At the time of Muhammad's revelation, religious culture in Arabia centered on a complex and ever-changing group of gods, demons, and heavenly bodies, a system closely tied to family customs and social and economic status. Not surprisingly, when Muhammad began to speak openly of belief in one god, **ALLAH**, whose commandments applied to all people, he was quickly denounced. (The word *Islam* means “submission to Allah” in Arabic.) By 622, Muhammad, his family, and his small group of followers were forced to flee Mecca for **MEDINA** to the north, then in political turmoil. Muhammad's flight to Medina marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar and is known to Muslims as the **HIJRA**, or migration.

In Medina, Muhammad established order by mediating various long-standing conflicts and developing and enforcing a new constitution that directed all peoples to unite. He also forged a network of alliances and new military maneuvers that allowed him to repel the far more substantial forces that had pursued him from Mecca to Medina. After eight years, he and his followers—now much larger in number—finally returned to Mecca. They went to the **KA'BA**, the principal shrine in Mecca, and destroyed the 360 figures of the various **POLYTHEISTIC** Arabian religions that were housed there. This event marked the conversion of Mecca to Islam.

FOCUS ON

The Ka'ba

The Ka'ba is a cubelike structure made of large stone bricks and cloaked in a black cloth bearing embroidered verses of the Koran. It is the focal point of the **HAJJ**, or pilgrimage.

When Muslims arrive on their pilgrimage, they circumambulate (walk in a circle around) the Ka'ba. During prayer, Muslims throughout the world also turn toward the Ka'ba in Mecca.



Muhammad died in 632, only two years after his return to Mecca and ten years after the Hijra. In this short period of time, he had managed to establish a major religious movement and the basis for a new community of believers.

Four major concepts are at the center of Islam: God (Allah), the community (**UMMA**), the divine revelation (Koran), and the law (**SHARI'A**).

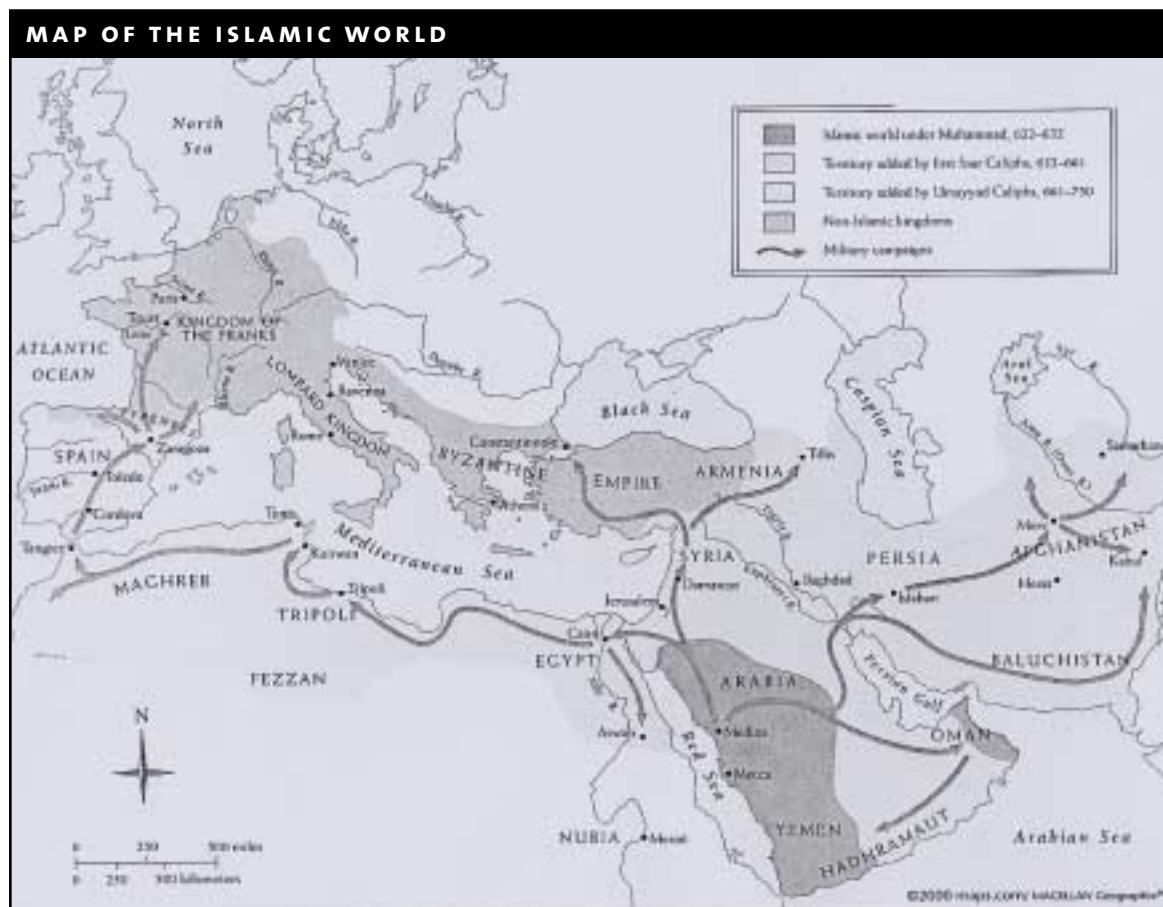
Allah: the Arabic word for *God*; the supreme one. Into a world of polytheistic beliefs and practices, Muhammad brought a universally applicable, **MONOTHEISTIC** faith. In Islam, *Allah* is not simply a name for God; it is a way of describing a universal divine power.

Umma: the Islamic community. Being a Muslim means submitting to one God and becoming a member of the worldwide Islamic community. Although members of this community come from varied backgrounds and cultures, they share belief in Allah, the Prophet Muhammad, and the **FIVE PILLARS** of Islam (see page 10).

Koran (also Qur'an): the body of divine revelations transmitted orally to the Prophet Muhammad and written down by his followers after his death. Muhammad received God's message in Arabic, so it consequently became the language of the Koran. Each verse was considered a sign of God, and its purity and beauty could not be translated into any other language. So revered is the text that to touch it is a powerful ritual, to memorize it is a **PIOUS** task, and to chant or copy it is a sacred profession. Likewise, before entering a **MOSQUE** or before reading or touching the Koran, one must first ritually wash. The Koran is central to all Islamic teachings and practices (see the Koran on page 23).

Shari'a: Islamic religion and law that governs every aspect of a Muslim's life. Before the establishment of Islam, society was based largely on unwritten rules and tribal and family customs, so the introduction of the concept of obeying a common set of religious laws presented a radical shift. Despite varying interpretations of some aspects of Shari'a, Muslims of all backgrounds are united by following the five elements of the Islamic faith, deemed the Five Pillars. In addition to the Koran, the **HADITH**, a compilation of the Prophet's deeds and words as recollected and recorded by his followers, functions as an additional guide for leading a proper Islamic life.

After the Prophet Muhammad's death, Islam spread rapidly from Arabia in much the same way that Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism did: via trade, migration, and religious conquest. Today Islam is the second-largest religion in the world, with between 850 million and one billion followers worldwide, the majority of whom reside in Indonesia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Clear cultural differences exist between the various Islamic countries and among the **SUNNIS** and **SHI'IS**, followers of the two main traditions of Islam (see page 13), but Muslims throughout the world are unified by the religion's daily practices and the Five Pillars of Islam.



The Five Pillars

The unifying principles of the faith by which all Muslims abide are called the Five Pillars.

1. Profession of Faith

All Muslims learn to recite “There is no God but God, and Muhammad is His messenger” to proclaim God’s divinity and omnipotence and to emphasize that an ordinary man was chosen as a vehicle for God’s revelation to humanity. (This phrase appears in the large zigzag pattern of the textile on page 42.)

2. Prayer

Muslims are called to prayer (see below) five times each day: before sunrise, at noon, in the afternoon, after sunset, and at night. When they pray, Muslims must face Mecca and perform a prescribed number of salutations by bowing with their hands near the sides of their heads. They recite the phrase “**ALLAH’U’AKBAR**” (God is great), followed by the opening chapter of the Koran. Islamic prayer may also include more informal, voluntary prayers as the act of conversing with God.

3. Alms

Providing assistance to others in the community is a central element of Islam; according to the Koran, “charity puts out sin as water puts out fire.” The giving of alms is an act of voluntary charity for Muslims but is also considered a form of religious tax that is collected and redistributed. To give as much as 20 percent of a person’s wealth to the poor is considered a loan to Allah that will be repaid many times over. Paying this religious tax symbolizes support for the Muslim community.

4. Fasting

During **RAMADAN**, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar (see page 12), Muslims are not to eat or drink from dawn to dusk. Far from seeming like deprivation, fasting is viewed by Muslims as an opportunity to experience poverty and hunger while at the same time learning dedication and self-discipline. For Muslims, fasting is believed to free individuals from material desires and make them more conscious of the plight of the poor.

5. The Hajj

During the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar, Muslims make a pilgrimage to Mecca in order to pay respect to the most sacred site in the city, known as the Ka’ba (see page 7). Every Muslim who is physically and financially able is required to make this sacred journey at least once in his or her lifetime. Each year thousands of people from around the world converge on this holy site for nine days in order to complete their pilgrimage, or Hajj. When journeying to Mecca, pilgrims wear simple clothes made of two pieces of unstitched white cloth that render all pilgrims equal and symbolize their common intent—to surrender absolutely to Allah. By adopting this common garment, the faithful remove distinctions of class and nationality and are symbolically united in their intent to absolutely surrender to God.



The Call to Prayer

In many Islamic communities, Muslims are reminded of the time to pray by a call. The opening chapter of the Koran follows the initial call, which was historically chanted from a **MINARET**, or tall tower near or attached to a mosque. The call is as follows:

*God is most great. God is most great.
God is most great. God is most great.
I testify that there is no god except God.
I testify that there is no god except God.
I testify that Muhammad is the
messenger of God.
I testify that Muhammad is the
messenger of God.
Come to prayer! Come to prayer!
Come to success (in this life and
the Hereafter)!
Come to success!
God is most great. God is most great.
There is no god except God.*

The first person asked by the Prophet to carry out the call to prayer was a slave named **BALAL**, who was freed by Muhammad and, by virtue of his upstanding character and pure heart, rose very high in spiritual rank.



One Day of Ramadan BY NOORIN ALI

IT IS 4:45 A.M., AND MY MOTHER IS making her rounds to all of the bedrooms. “Come on, Nunu”—my family name—“wake up. You have to eat before sunrise,” she says, reminding me I won’t be able to eat again until after sundown. I tell her I’m not hungry and try to convince her that water is enough, but just when I think I’ve persuaded her, she returns to my room with a breakfast tray of two chocolate-chip waffles caked with butter and syrup, just the way I like them. I scarf down the food as quickly as possible so I can turn off the lights and go back to sleep. However, once I finish breakfast, I realize that it’s time for *fajar*, the morning prayer, so I force myself out of bed for *wadu*, whereby I wash my hands, face, arms, and feet before praying. As I’m getting ready for prayer, I think, “Why do I fast, anyway?” but I know that many people in this world have nothing to eat, and fasting is a way for me to empathize with them. Moreover, through fasting I become appreciative of and thankful for the luxuries that I have.

I go downstairs to the living room, get out the prayer mat, put on my *hijab* (headscarf), and begin to pray. Although it seems like I’m always in a hurry, never once has it crossed my mind to rush my *wadu* or *fajar*, for if I did, there would be no point in praying at all; to me, prayer only counts when I give it my undivided attention. Once I finish my prayer, I crawl back into bed until it’s time to get ready for school.

When I get to school, everyone is drinking coffee or eating donuts, but their breakfasts don’t tempt me at all. Throughout the day I chat with people who are chewing gum or eating chips between classes, and I inhale the home education room’s savory aromas, but still I’m not hungry. Even lunch isn’t too bad: most Muslims in the school sit in the library to avoid being around food, but not me—I meet up with my friends and head to the cafeteria, where I resist their joking attempts to get me to eat. I sit through lunch with roast beef and cheddar cheese to my right, nachos to my left, and a taco salad right in front of me. “You sure you don’t want a bite, Noorin? I won’t tell anyone,” my friend Karen asks, half joking and half serious.

“Nope,” I simply say. I leave lunch a little early to pray *zuhr*, the afternoon prayer, in a room set aside for Muslims during Ramadan, and I finish just as the bell rings, signaling the end of lunch.

The last period goes by quickly until I see a friend of mine drinking bottled water. That’s tough! When you’re fasting the thirst is more difficult to deal with than the hunger, so I quickly occupy myself to take my mind off of fasting. When the bell rings at 2:10, to me it signals not only the end of the school day but also the fact there are only three hours left until I can break my fast. Go home and sleep for three hours? No way—I have to go to work. At 2:30 I show up at the law firm across the street from my school, where I run errands for the associates, file papers, call couriers, and distribute mail, and before I know it, it’s after 4:00 and time to head home.

When I get home after work, I make *asr* (late afternoon) prayer, after which I join my brother in the kitchen. I look at the calendar on the refrigerator to see what time *iftar* (sunset) is today, and it’s in one minute. I quickly set some dates on the table with two glasses of juice and wait for sunset. When my brother announces, “It’s time! It’s time!” we both eat a date and then drink some juice. It seems like we’ve only been eating for five seconds when it’s time for the *maghrib*, the prayer immediately following sunset. My brother leads the prayer, and I follow him. Although the doorbell rings while we’re praying, we don’t answer it because we can’t interrupt the ceremony.

My parents arrive home just as we finish prayer, and we all join in dinner together. After dinner, I continue to eat as I do my homework—chips, cookies, and drinks—not because I’m hungry, but to prepare myself for what awaits me the next day: more fasting. I go to bed just after praying *isha*, the night prayer, and eating a leftover slice of pizza. My last few thoughts before going to sleep are of the mysterious strength I get from praying, or making *wadu*, that helps me endure the fasting. It’s as though every time I pray or make *wadu*, my hunger is relieved a little. I finally fall asleep, ready to continue the cycle for the rest of the month.

Islamic Calendar and Holy Days

Muslims follow the Hijri calendar, so called because it begins on the first day of Muhammad's flight, or Hijra, from Mecca for Medina in 622. Unlike the solar calendar used in the West, the Islamic calendar is lunar, with each new moon marking the beginning of a month. As a result, the months are slightly shorter than in the West's Gregorian calendar, and each year is made up of only 354 days. Certain months are particularly significant to Muslims, such as the first month, Muharram, when fighting is not allowed, and Ramadan, the ninth month, when Muslims fast in order to reflect and achieve spiritual renewal.

Islamic holidays are celebrated according to the lunar calendar, so their dates within the Gregorian calendar change from year to year. The festivals in the following list are three of Islam's

largest and most well-known holidays, but other major holidays and regional religious festivals are celebrated throughout the Islamic world.

EID AL-FITR

To celebrate the last day of Ramadan (see page 11), Muslims clean and decorate their houses and cook elaborate feasts while collecting donations for the poor so that everyone may celebrate the end of fasting. The holiday involves a special prayer, and as the evening approaches, Muslims wait outside for the moon to come into view (see image below). This marks the end of the fast, and Eid al-Fitr can begin with greetings and congratulations. During this holiday, family and friends pay visits and exchange gifts.

Celebration of 'Id. Iran, ca. 1527. Opaque watercolor, ink, and gold on paper. Lent by The Art and History Trust, ILS1995.2.42



EID AL-ADHA

This festival of the sacrifice commemorates the faith of Abraham, who demonstrated his obedience to God's will by agreeing to sacrifice his son when so commanded by God. It takes place during the last month of the Islamic calendar—the same month as the Hajj—and is celebrated by all those who do not participate in the pilgrimage that year. To celebrate the holiday, Muslims conduct special prayers and perform the ritual sacrifice of a cow, lamb, or goat, the meat of which is divided between the family, friends, relatives, and the poor. Feasting is an important part of this holiday and gives Muslims the opportunity to display their hospitality by welcoming friends and family into their homes for a special meal.

MAWLID AL-NABI:

THE BIRTHDAY OF THE PROPHET

Muhammad was born on the twelfth day of the third month of the Islamic calendar, so Muslims commemorate his birth and celebrate his life during this holiday by retelling the story of the Prophet's life and recounting his virtues. Celebrations of Muhammad's birthday vary by country; in India, for instance, Muslims hold lively, colorful public processions to observe the holiday.

FOCUS ON

Sunnism and Shi'ism

Followers of Sunnism and Shi'ism, the two major branches of Islam, agree on the basic tenets of the religion but have developed differences in interpretation and practice since Muhammad's death. Sunnis believe that the community as a whole can rightfully interpret the Koran and select political and religious authorities, known as **CALIPHS**. They believe that Muhammad's successors were given legitimate military and political authority of the Islamic community after the Prophet's death. Sunnis make up 85 percent of the Muslim population, and while they reside in every Islamic country, many followers of this sect can be found in Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Egypt, Syria, and North Africa.

Unlike Sunnis, Shi'is consider Ali, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, and his descendants the only true successors to the Prophet. Ali was also the fourth Sunni caliph. He was not only related to the Prophet by blood but was also believed to have special esoteric knowledge and understanding of Islam. Moreover, Shi'is maintain that a devout and religious teacher, known as **IMAM**, who leads the community in prayer is divinely inspired and has the authority to interpret the Koran. Approximately fifteen percent of Muslims worldwide are Shi'is. While most live in Iran and in Iraq, different Shi'i communities can also be found in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bahrain, and Yemen.

ALTHOUGH ISLAM ORIGINATED in the Arabian Peninsula and its official language is Arabic, the majority of Muslims are not Arabs; instead, Indonesia is home to more Muslims—approximately 160 million—than any other country in the world. As nearly one-fifth of the world’s population is Muslim, followers of Islam can be found on every inhabitable continent. While the religion’s population may be diverse, the core beliefs of Islam and the centrality of the Arabic language to the religion foster a sense of community among all cultures.

The Muslim population in North America is steadily increasing and includes many individuals who were not born Muslims but who converted to Islam. The dissemination of Islam in North America began when Muslims from Spain accompanied settlers bound for Spanish-occupied territories. It is also believed that a significant number of Muslim West Africans were brought to America as slaves.

The following interviews offer the perspectives of four individuals practicing Islam in the United States, detailing the challenges they face and the benefits they reap as Muslims in America.



Youssef Slitine

is originally from Marrakech, Morocco, where he taught English at the American Language Center, Mr. Slitine is now the administrator of the

Muslim Community Center in Silver Spring, Maryland, and the former principal of IAM Muslim Academy. In this interview, Mr. Slitine shares his childhood experiences as a Muslim and describes the similarities he perceives between Islamic and American culture.

Growing up, my religious practice was very basic. In Islam, as a child, you are not really obliged to fast or pray, but it becomes mandatory when you reach puberty. Parents are encouraged to introduce their children to prayer and take them to the mosque, especially on Fridays. As a child I used to take the initiative myself and go to the mosque on Fridays. According to tradition in Morocco, people would bring a meal to the mosque on that day. After they finished their prayers, they would go and eat. It was good to see how people got together and prayed: it created in me a sense of how important it is to be part of a larger community, and it also gave me a sense of the beauty of the universe as God created it with people from all walks of life. They all gathered on Friday—the rich, the poor, the knowledgeable, and the illiterate.

When I was little I looked forward to when I would be just like everyone else—my parents and my elder brothers and sisters—and fast during Ramadan. I used to insist on fasting one or two days in Ramadan just to see how it felt. I still remember that at that time I could only

fast for half a day. It was when I reached puberty that I began performing the five daily prayers and observing the fast during Ramadan.

The most important thing for me as a practicing Muslim is to work toward perfecting myself—to become a better human being. I aim to be good to my neighbors, my friends, my colleagues, and everyone I meet. In the Koran, God says that his Prophet Muhammad was sent as a mercy to mankind. We are supposed to follow the Prophet, so as I aspire to a state in which I am merciful to everyone, I will be a productive member of society wherever I am. Islam is a religion of peace and mercy. When Muslims practice their religion and follow the teachings of the Prophet, their aim is to make where they live a better place to be. This is what I see as my prime objective in my practice of Islam—perfecting myself so the world I live in will benefit.

I see many things in common between Islamic and American culture. For instance, after what happened on September 11, 2001, I was at home with my wife and we were holding hands, leaning against each other, watching the news, and awaiting our fate. We were feeling very disgusted and sad at the loss of precious human life of which God is so protective. I heard a knock on the door, and when I answered it, my neighbor was outside, holding flowers. She said, “I’ve come to check on you to see if you’re all right.” I found her kindness deeply touching, and I remembered the Prophet’s words: “The angel Gabriel comes to me and urges me to take care of my neighbor until I thought he was going to make him my heir.” I realized that our neighbor was

exemplifying exactly the kind of conduct taught by our Prophet.

God says in the Koran, “I have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable in the sight of Allah is he who has righteousness.” The meaning of this verse did not strike me when I lived in Morocco, but when I came to the United States, I saw the reality of these words as it exists nowhere else in the world. The population of the United States is very diverse, but people know each other, work with each other, and check on each other as neighbors. I appeal to the people of the United States to understand that Muslims and Americans have much in common.



Daniel Zainulbhai

is a junior at Georgetown Day School in Washington, D.C. In the following interview, he describes his upbringing as a Muslim and the connection

he feels to his religious community.

Religion has been important to me for as long as I can remember, and I am very proud to be a Muslim. My parents took me to the mosque whenever they went, even when I was only a few years old. When I started grade school I went to *madrasah*, Muslim Sunday school, every week, where I learned about general Islamic rituals and culture and was instructed in praying and reading the Koran.

When I was five years old, I began fasting during Ramadan, the Islamic ritual in which I take the most pride. It takes endurance to not eat from sunrise to sundown every day for a month. The first year I fasted, my father gave me a gold medal to commemorate it. Each year fasting becomes more difficult, but it never becomes less rewarding.

Eid, the celebration to mark the end of Ramadan, is one reason I enjoy the holiday so much. Eid brings presents from my family and friends, and when I was younger, the members of our Muslim community hosted parties each year, serving guests chocolates and sweets.

One year my family and I traveled to Mecca to visit the Ka'ba and the grave of the Prophet Muhammad. The trip to Mecca increased the importance of religion in my life. It was an amazing experience to see the House of God and pray where the prophets of Islam prayed. As well as being affected spiritually by that experience, I was affected physically: I had to shave my head after taking part in the pilgrimage. I can remember when I returned to school after Christmas vacation in third grade, and all of my friends were shocked to see me without hair.

Practicing Islam is important to me because it affords me comfort and escape, and it makes me feel unique. Being Muslim makes me different from my friends, and when I come home from school, my life completely changes. It is important to me to maintain different communities, both within my religion and outside of it.

Islam is also important to me because it provides a close, tightly knit community, and all of its members look out for one another. Those

friends all understand what it is like to be a Muslim in America, and I feel this sense of community wherever I go. When I visit my relatives in India and Dubai, I become part of their communities as well. It is a wonderful feeling.



Aishah Holland

lives in New York City and is a professional calligrapher skilled in a variety of techniques, including Arabic calligraphy. In the following

interview, she shares the aspects of Islam in which she finds meaning and purpose.

I was not born a Muslim; I became Muslim because of an inward call to understand the nature of reality and the intense desire to find meaning in my life. I had the great fortune of stumbling upon an order of Turkish Sufis who invited me to visit Istanbul, a gift I could not refuse. I was impressed by their joy, faith, and devotion to each other and to God.

The most meaningful thing to me as a Muslim is the constant realization that God is One and is the source of everything. Also important is the knowledge that all of the beauty we experience in this life is a gift and a reminder of our Creator's qualities. In Islam, human beings are reminded of who they are in the universe and where they are in the divine order of things. There is so much joy in recognizing this.

I would like other Americans to understand many things about Islam. First, it is important to know that Islam recognizes the Prophets of

the Old Testament as well as Jesus (peace be upon them all), although it is a much younger religion than Judaism or Christianity. Muslims believe that these Prophets were sent by God to all peoples.

Muslims are taught to respect people of all religions. The form of Islam that has been popularized by the media recently is a very modern movement within a much larger tradition. In fact, the religion is much wider and broader than most people realize. Islam has a long history of religious tolerance and intellectual exchange with other cultures and peoples. Muslims come from a wide variety of cultures and backgrounds, although they are united by belief in the Creator.

I would like the American public to reflect on the effects of poverty on people, especially women, in the Islamic world. Poverty is a hidden illness that affects the very soul of a nation if left unchecked. Perhaps we are now seeing the results of this in some of the violence that has reached the United States.

I would also like Americans to understand that despite the intense scrutiny of the treatment of women in Muslim countries, some issues concerning women and their bodies still have not been addressed, even in our so-called free society. The female body is objectified by many societies, including ours, even though we like to think and say we are free.



Noorin Karim Ali

was born in Hyderabad, India, but has lived in the United States for sixteen of her seventeen years. She attends Fairfax High School in Fairfax, Virginia, where she is presi-

dent of the Muslim Students Association, a historian for Model United Nations, a network coordinator for Amnesty International, and an outfielder for the women's softball team.

I was born into the religion of Islam, and my upbringing as a Muslim has been quite liberal. My parents sent me to Sunday school at the local mosque to teach me more about my religion and hired an Arabic teacher who would come to my house twice a week to teach me how to read the Koran. I was taught the fundamentals of Islam, and then the rest was left up to me. After I learned right from wrong and *haram* from *halal* (what is permissible from what is not permissible in Islam), it was left up to me to follow it or not. My parents allowed me to explore Islam and develop my own personal relationship with it rather than simply enforcing rules on me. I felt more deeply attached to my religion when I found my own meaning in it and my own personal attachment to it.

The word *Islam* is derived from the Arab root *slm*, which means, among many other things, “peace, purity, submission, and obedience.” *Islam* literally means “submission to the will of God and obedience to Him.” An obvious relationship exists between the two meanings: it can be concluded that only through submission to the will of God and by obedience to

Him can true peace be achieved. Muslims believe that God is gracious, loving, and merciful, full of wisdom and care for His creatures. His will is a benevolence and goodness, and whatever law He prescribes is in the best interest of all mankind. A person who follows the will of God and obeys His law is a sound and honest person. With God protecting my rights and with genuine respect for the rights of others, I can enjoy responsible freedom. I believe that I gain tremendous freedom from Islam; my mind is freed from superstitions and filled with nothing but the truth. That freedom allows me to strive toward goodness.

Some people refer to Islam as “Muhammadanism” and refer to Muslims as “Muhammadans,” but Muslims reject and protest against the use of these terms. They are serious misinterpretations of Islam because they imply that the religion takes its name after a mortal being. In Islam, Muhammad is a prophet and not a God. When Muslims are referred to as “Muhammadans,” it leads people to believe that Muslims worship Muhammad

or that they believe Muhammad is divine, the same way that Christians, for example, believe in Jesus. These terms might also lead someone to believe that the religion was founded by Muhammad and therefore takes its name from its founder. As you can see, these implications are not in agreement with Islam and its teachings and thus are wrong and misleading.

The followers of Islam worship God alone. Muhammad was only a mortal being commissioned by God to teach His word and lead an exemplary life. Muhammad is our model of the most pious and perfect man, serving as living proof of what man can be and what he can accomplish in the realm of excellence and virtue. Muslims do not believe that Islam was founded by Muhammad, although it was restored by him in the last stage of religious evolution. The founder of Islam and God is no other than God Himself. Furthermore, Islam goes back to the age of Adam; it has existed in one form or another from the beginning of time and will continue to exist until the end of time.

Discussion Questions

1. Youssef Slitine speaks of the similarities he perceives between Islamic and American values. According to Youssef, what are those similarities? Have you ever found something in common with someone you initially believed was very different from you?
2. Daniel Zainulbhai feels strongly about being part of a religious community outside of school. What sorts of challenges might arise from being part of two distinct communities? What would be rewarding about it? Have you ever been a part of two or more separate communities, or groups of family or friends? What were the rewards and challenges for you?
3. Aishah Holland stresses that women have challenges to face in all societies, not just in Muslim societies. What are some of the assumptions that you think people make about women in Muslim countries? Have you learned anything to change those assumptions? What are some of the challenges women face in American society?
4. Noorin Ali points out the problems that arise from the use of “Muhammadanism” in reference to Islam. According to Noorin, why is “Muhammadanism” a misleading term? Can you think of other examples of labels and terms that are misleading or hurtful? In what context did you hear or read them?

Art of the Book



THE WRITTEN WORD BECAME A CENTRAL FEATURE EARLY in the development of Islamic art, spawning the creation of sumptuous manuscripts. Chief among these were copies of the Koran. These were written by the best calligraphers and adorned with chapter headings, verse breaks, and **FRONTISPIECES**, often painted in gold and other precious colors. (See double-page in a Koran on page 23 for an example of an illuminated page.) As figural representation was reserved only for secular (nonreligious) manuscripts, Korans were decorated with abstract floral and geometric designs.

In addition to the Koran, scientific, literary, and historical texts also enjoyed tremendous popularity in the Islamic world. Because of their secular content, these works often included illustrations. For example, the rulers of Ottoman Turkey (1342–1924) favored lengthy accounts of their reigns. In Iran, literary works, such as the **SHAHNAMA** (Book of kings), composed in the eleventh century, were particularly in demand.

Scientific and medical treatises in translation, such as the *Materia Medica*, an image from which is featured on page 24, were some of the earliest illustrated texts in the Arab world. Both religious and secular manuscripts were accessible to all classes of society, but the most elaborate manuscripts were created for the highly literate, wealthy class that had the means to commission them.

The production of manuscripts involved a team of artists who collaborated to create a unified work. After the head of a library designed and supervised the layout of a manuscript, the calligrapher typically copied the text onto pieces of paper and artists added their paintings (see page 25). The manuscript pages were then sewn into covers by binders. The painstaking attention to detail integral to the transcription and illustration of manuscripts is evident in the three examples included in this packet: the Koran on page 23, *Mad Dog Biting Man* on page 24, and *A School Scene* on page 25.

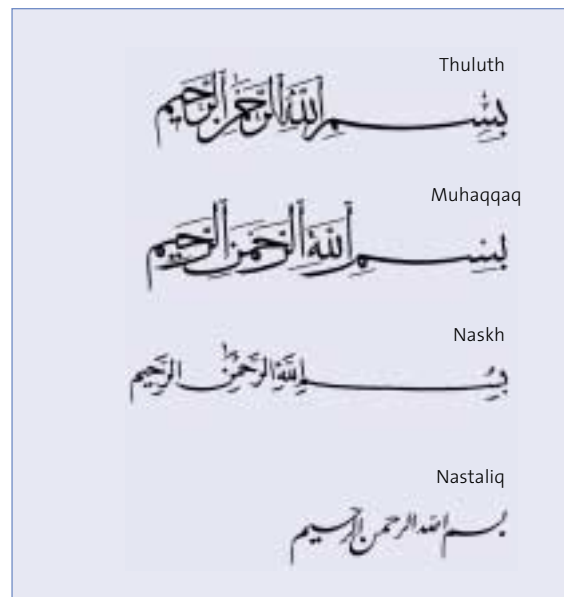
Calligraphy

The divine message (Koran) is visually manifested through the act of writing, which holds an especially honored place in Islamic society. Over time, calligraphy (literally, “beautiful writing”) developed into a complex art form and was valued not only because of the religious and secular messages it conveyed but also because of its decorative qualities. It appears on everything from stone buildings to ceramic vessels, from manuscripts to silk robes. Some inscriptions consist of blessings while others are quotations from the Koran alluding to the purpose of the decorated object; for example, the cenotaph, or coffin cover, featured on page 31 includes a quote from the Koran indicating the proper orientation of a body at burial.

The Arabic alphabet is used for a number of languages, such as Persian, Urdu, and Ottoman Turkish, much as the Roman alphabet is used for many of the Romance languages. Written from right to left, the twenty-eight letters of the Arabic alphabet are made up of seventeen basic forms consisting of simple vertical and horizontal strokes that are modified by dots above and below. The letters can be altered to accommodate any surface or scale; they can also be transformed into intricate, yet still legible, words (see *The Art of Words* on page 66). Until the eleventh century, a rectangular script called **KUFIC**, named after the southern Iraqi city of Kufa, was used to copy the Koran. With the rapid spread of Islam, more easily transcribed forms of Arabic writing were standardized and refined, including several cursive scripts that were used for both religious and secular purposes.



Folio from a Koran, sura 48, verse 15. Near East or North Africa, Abbasid dynasty, 9th century. Ink and color on parchment; 23.7 x 33.3 cm. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, purchase, #1930.61



Four cursive scripts, each reading, “In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate.”

Write a Phrase in Arabic Script



Assalamu alaykum (Peace be with you)

Not everyone familiar with the Arabic script practices traditional calligraphy. Since words, both written and spoken, however, hold special meaning within the Islamic faith, the ability to write well is admired, and the practice of traditional calligraphy is especially revered. Writing in the Arabic script differs from writing in English in several ways.

1. Arabic letters and words are written from right to left, and, consequently, books using the Arabic alphabet read from right to left.
2. When practicing traditional calligraphy, the artist uses a special reed pen that has been cut from a dry bamboo stalk and dipped into black ink. (For this project, you can also use a special black pen or marker.)
3. Calligraphers prefer to write on smooth paper to allow their pens to glide easily across the surface.
4. Before beginning work on your own calligraphy, practice holding a black pen or marker between your thumb and middle finger, gripping it firmly but not tensely (or you will get tired very quickly). Hold the pen vertically and practice rotating it between your thumb and finger as you write so that the letters look smooth. Find some smooth, glossy white paper so the ink from your pen is not absorbed too quickly.

Try writing the Arabic greeting *salam*, which means “peace be with you,” by following the illustration’s numbers and arrows, working slowly from right to left and top to bottom. Practice writing over the copy until you feel comfortable, and then try writing the word on a blank piece of paper.



Neil Greentree

Master calligrapher Mohamed Zakariya practices in his studio.



Double-page in a Koran

Iran, Safavid period, dated 1598

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper;

42.0 x 27.3 x 54.0 cm

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution

Purchase, F1932.65

THE KORAN IS MADE UP OF 114 CHAPTERS, OR SURAS, REVEALED TO Muhammad by the archangel Gabriel at Mecca and Medina in present-day Saudi Arabia. Transcribed for the most part after the Prophet's death in 632, the chapters appear in descending order by length and are divided into thirty relatively equal sections, called *juz*. Each section serves as one day's worth of reading during Ramadan, the month of fasting, when the entire text is recited at the mosque; the Koran is organized into sevenths to correspond to the days of the week for reading during all other months.

The Koran is the principal source of Islamic faith and practice. It deals with subjects that concern life on earth — wisdom, doctrine, worship, and law — by providing guidelines for a just society, proper human conduct, and equitable economic principles. Its primary theme, however, is the relationship between God and all living things.

Because the Koran plays such a central role in the Islamic faith, no effort was spared to enhance the visual beauty of the text. This Koran, written in elegant *naskh* script, is illuminated throughout with elaborate designs in gold and brilliant blue. The pages displayed here are the concluding chapters of the Koran and were signed by the scribe Ahmad Sayri, stating that he completed the manuscript on the tenth day of the month of Jumada II, A.H. 1006, which corresponds to January 18, 1598, in the Gregorian calendar.

The interlacing lines of this type of repeated geometric design are based on a grid and create shapes that can continue infinitely and without overlapping. This type of repeated geometric design based on a grid is called **TESSELLATION**, a word derived from the Greek *tessera*, meaning “four.”



Mad Dog Biting Man

from a manuscript of the *Materia Medica*

Iraq, 1224

Opaque color and gold on paper

33.2 x 25.0 cm

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution

Purchase, F1953.91

THE *MATERIA MEDICA* WAS WRITTEN BY A GREEK PHYSICIAN named Dioscorides (ca. 40 C.E. – ca. 90 C.E.) in the first century. It is one of the first scientific texts translated into Arabic in the ninth century. The text is divided into five chapters that describe the origin, habitat, and pharmaceutical use of some five hundred plants. Such Arabic translations became the basis of scientific knowledge in medieval Europe.

This particular passage of the text discusses the symptoms of a dog suffering from rabies and the predicament of a person bitten by such a diseased animal. It suggests that an infected person may begin to bark like a dog and grow fearful of light. The author has also included a section detailing the affliction of several personages with rabies and the remedies that cured them.

In the accompanying illustration, an emaciated dog is about to bite the leg of a man. The suffering dog's red eyes have glazed over, and his tongue hangs out of his foaming mouth. The victim recoils in horror and tries to ward off the attack with a stick while an onlooker with a sword gestures helplessly, as if commenting on the scene.

The illustration provides a typical example of the manner in which early Arab painters dramatize the text. Rather than providing the reader with a dry medical explanation, the artist created a lively and highly expressive composition.

FOCUS ON

Human Imagery

Contrary to the assumption that the Koran prohibits figural representation, it only warns against the creation and worship of idols to prevent idolatry. Fueled by more orthodox interpretations of Islam, however, religious disapproval of figural representation took hold shortly after the Prophet's death in 632. In

general, figural imagery is excluded from works of art and architecture made in the service of the faith, such as Korans, religious structures, and the furnishings for these spaces. On the other hand, private buildings, objects, and manuscripts created for personal use and enjoyment were frequently embellished with figurative forms.



A School Scene

Iran, 1530–1550

Opaque watercolor, ink, and gold on paper

37.2 x 23.9 cm

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

Purchase—Smithsonian Unrestricted Trust Funds, Smithsonian Collections

Acquisition Program, and Dr. Arthur M. Sackler, 51986.221

THIS PAINTING ILLUSTRATES A NUMBER OF FINELY DETAILED SCENES that take place in a *madrasa* (school), including a master teaching his students, a group of students copying text, a craftsman making paper, and several men cooking. The inscription on the rug is an especially appropriate phrase to accompany an image of an educational environment. Composed by the fourteenth-century Persian poet Hafiz, it reads, “Rely not upon the place of great men, unless you have prepared the quality of greatness in yourself.” The school scenes take place in a mosque because a **MIHRAB** — a prayer niche in a mosque — is clearly visible in the enclosure on the left, and someone is calling for prayer from the top of the minaret.

The creation of a manuscript involved many steps, several of which are illustrated in this piece. First, artists needed to make paper, a process depicted in figure 1. After it had dried, the paper was dyed and then burnished and polished with a hard stone, like the one held by the youth in the center of figure 2, to create a very smooth surface, after which the paper was sometimes flecked with gold. Lines were then pressed into the paper to establish the areas in which the text was to be copied by calligraphers in the manner of the scribe in the bottom left-hand corner of figure 2. If the page were to include illuminations and paintings, once the text was transcribed it was passed on to artists who created elaborate decorations around the text, after which the finished pages were gathered together, bound into protective covers, and trimmed to size. The entire process was supervised by a librarian in charge of coordinating each phase of production and ensuring that the manuscripts were fully and properly copied. Several completed manuscripts can be seen on the carpets in the upper part of the painting.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

Art of the Mosque



WITHIN ISLAM, THE MOSQUE—DERIVED FROM THE WORD **MASJID**, which means “place of prostration,” a posture of submission to God—serves as the place for Muslims to fulfill one of the Five Pillars of faith: prayer. Because of the importance of mosques, great attention has always been paid to their architectural design and their external and internal ornamentation.

Architecture and Objects of the Mosque

Purpose

Five times a day, Muslims engage in prayer, an activity that can be performed anywhere—at home, work, or wherever they are at the prescribed time of day. However, on Fridays at midday, all men are expected to assemble at their community’s main mosque, known as the Friday mosque, to pray together and hear a sermon. A Friday mosque is generally the largest mosque in a city, and in large urban areas, several Friday mosques are usually built in different neighborhoods. There are other mosques where sermons are not generally delivered, but Muslims can offer prayers there at any time. According to Islamic beliefs, the very first mosque was the courtyard of Muhammad’s home, and the idea of having a large, open space for prayer remains central to the architectural style of mosques.

Function

Historically, the mosque served not only as a religious site but also as a community meeting area. While in modern times the mosque has become primarily a place for prayer and devotion, it also serves as a meeting place.

Architectural Elements

An important element of mosque architecture is the minaret, a tall tower from which the call to prayer was often made. Some scholars believe that minarets were originally designed



to be seen from a great distance so that they could guide travelers to the house of prayer. It has also been proposed that early minarets were built as watchtowers or monuments, and only later were they built in close proximity to the mosque and associated with the call to prayer.

By the eleventh century, the needs of the community had grown, and other institutions, such as schools (*madrassa*), hospitals, and hospices were built as part of the mosque complex, a natural evolution of the mosque's original function as a communal center, especially for prayer and education.

Decoration

Islamic prohibition of figural images in religious settings meant that mosques and other religious structures were decorated with calligraphy as well as **VEGETAL** and geometric designs. The most ornate decoration in a mosque is generally found around the prayer niche, or *mihrab*, which literally translates to a “place of struggle” where the individual fights to overcome attachments to earthly things through prayer. The *mihrab* is situated on the **QIBLA**, or wall facing Mecca, as an indication of the direction Muslims should face during prayer. Often, the arch of the *mihrab* and the wall around it are decorated with colored marble, stucco, or, in Iran, elaborate tile. The central plaque of a lustre mihrab on page 32 is an example of a mihrab from a mosque in Iran.



Interior of the Blue Mosque, Istanbul, Turkey

In Islam as in Christianity, Judaism, and Buddhism, light carries a profound symbolic meaning. Chapter 24, verse 35 of the Koran, known as the “light verse,” gives a sense of the importance of this element:

*God is the Light of the heavens and the earth;
the likeness of His light is as a niche
wherein is a lamp
(the lamp in a glass,
the glass as it were a glittering star)
kindled from the Blessed Tree. . . .*

Lamps used to light the interior of mosques were often decorated with verses specially selected, such as the “light verse” (see the mosque lamp on page 30). Sometimes, hundreds of gilded lamps hanging by chains from the roof beams were used to light a mosque. Aside from these lamps and a pulpit used by religious leaders in or near the *mihrab* during Friday prayers, very little furniture can be found in a mosque, as no furniture is necessary for praying.

Architectural Patronage

Throughout the Islamic world, rulers and wealthy individuals contributed to the building and upkeep of mosques and other religious institutions. While the architects and artists of buildings often went unacknowledged, the patrons were often known. One of the earliest results of religious patronage is the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, built in the late 680s with the support of the Umayyad dynasty caliph ‘Abd al-Malik (reigned 685–705).

Another example of royal religious patronage is the Great Mosque in Cordoba, Spain, luxuriously renovated by Al-Hakam II (reigned 961–76) to the chagrin of his subjects, who were upset by his lavish architectural investments. In response to their objections, he included an inscription on the building giving thanks to God for helping him build a more spacious mosque to fulfill his wishes as well as those of his subjects.

In 1601, Sultan Ahmet, the ruler of the Ottoman dynasty of Turkey, set out to build a mosque more majestic than the Christian church of Hagia Sophia, which had reigned as the largest religious structure of Istanbul for centuries. Decorated with blue tiles and flanked by tall minarets, the mosque is called the Sultan Ahmet Camii, or Mosque of Sultan Ahmet, but it is known in the English-speaking world as the Blue Mosque.

Textiles: Science, Math, and Technology

Beautifully woven textiles in precious colored silks began to emerge from China in the fourth century B.C.E. Silk technology moved west along the Silk Road to Iran and Byzantium, where manufacturing centers, under Muslim rule, expanded and flourished with the trade and development of typical patterns inspired by arts of the Islamic world. Islamic calligraphy and designs derived from plants, geometry, and symbolic animal imagery were blended into beautiful, costly fabrics prized all around the Mediterranean, into Africa and Central Asia.

The weaver/artist was compelled to create a design different from that of a painter. Instead of pigment brushed on in strokes, a textile was built out of a series of tiny squares—the over-under pattern of at least two different-colored threads. Weavers could build their designs on graph paper, coloring in every other square for the simplest pattern, or using combinations of the over-under pattern to gradually form a complex, repeating pattern or picture. Repeating motifs, borders, letters, and words could be built

out of these “pixels,” just as computer programs can form an image. From the sixteenth to the twentieth century, advances in these brocade looms led to early forms of calculating engines and, finally, computers. The need for speed in weaving brocades—due to the high demand for these silks by consumers—led to Jacquard looms with punch-card systems for pattern weaving. Wide rolls of punched paper ran through notches each time the weaver threw the shuttle, raising and lowering the individual threads to form the complex patterns, row by row.

Using fine graph paper, you can build a two-, three-, or four-color design or pattern that can be woven on a loom. Sketch the pattern or use an image you’ve found, then “digitize” your pattern by breaking it down into small, colored squares. To get an idea of how this works, open a file of a simple image on your computer graphics program and zoom in on the image until the pattern of pixels appears enlarged.



Mosque lamp

Egypt, 1360

Glass

33.6 x 30.5 cm

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution

Purchase, \$1957.19

FAMOUS FOR THEIR PRODUCTION OF GLASS VESSELS, ARTISTS OF fourteenth-century Egypt and Syria created lamps to illuminate the interior of mosques and other religious establishments. Sultan Hasan (reigned 1347–51, 1354–61) ordered hundreds of these colorful lamps, including this example, for his celebrated mosque complex, built in Cairo from 1356 to 1362.

This particular lamp has a high neck and bulbous body with six suspension handles on the lower bulb to which chains were attached so it could hang from the ceiling. On its neck is inscribed a verse from chapter 24, verse 35 of the Koran comparing divine revelation to the light of a lamp:

*God is the Light of the heavens and the earth;
the likeness of His light is as a niche
wherein is a lamp
(the lamp in a glass,
the glass as it were a glittering star).*

Once lit, the lamp serves as a reminder of heavenly radiance and God's presence. Additional inscriptions set in medallions give the name of the patron, indicating the man who commissioned this work:

*Glory to our Lord, Sultan,
The King al-Nasir u'l-Hasan*

The braided decoration on the center of the lamp is not an inscription and has no meaning.



Cenotaph cover

Turkey, 17th–18th century

Silk-satin, lampas weave

189.0 x 133.0 cm

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

Purchase, s1996.62.1–2

DURING THE RULE OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE (1492–1640), MOST textiles were used for costumes, furnishings, and other secular purposes; however, the brocaded silk-satin depicted here bears an inscription attesting to its religious association. It was intended as a cover for a coffin or cenotaph.

The Arabic inscriptions on this textile, brocaded in white silk on a red silk-satin background, are arranged in a zigzag pattern of alternating wide and narrow bands. One of the wider bands bears the Islamic profession of faith — “There is no God but Allah; Muhammad is His Prophet” — in large, bold letters, and the narrow band immediately below the profession praises Allah as well: “Glory be to God and his Muhammad; glory be to the Almighty God.” The second wide band, in between the two narrow bands, contains two kinds of circular designs with writing inside. Two of the ovals (one right side up and the other upside down) resemble mosque lamps and are inscribed with the words “O Beneficent One!” and “O Compassionate One!” A pair of smaller circles in between bear the invocations “O Divine One!” and “O Sovereign One!” Finally, the second narrow band, below the wide band with the circular shapes and above the profession of faith, is inscribed with chapter 2, verse 144 of the Koran:

*We see the turning of thy face (for guidance) to the heavens;
now shall we turn thee to a qibla that shall please thee.
Turn then thy face in the direction of the sacred mosque.*

The inscription confirms an important Muslim funerary rite: the placement of the coffin parallel to the *qibla* and the deceased facing the sacred mosque in Mecca.



The central plaque of a lustre mihrab

Iran, early 14th century

Glazed clay; 66.0 x 57.0 cm

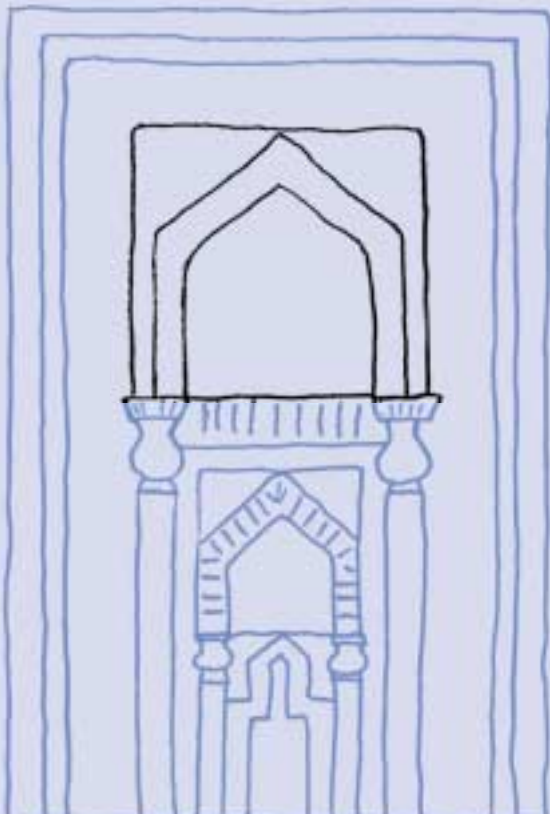
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution

Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1909.319

ONE OF THE PROMINENT FEATURES OF ISLAMIC MOSQUES, MADRASA (religious schools), and mausoleums is the *mihrab* on the *qibla* wall to indicate the direction of prayer toward Mecca. As *mihrabs* often resemble entranceways in shape, they are also said to symbolize the door through which God's divine grace descends from heaven.

This panel once formed part of a much larger *mihrab* and was probably made in Kashan, a city in central Iran celebrated for its ceramic design and production. Notably, this object's spirals, blossoms, and leaves design contrasts sharply with its white background, and its wide band of raised inscription encircling the recessed gable employs an identical background motif. The inscription on the tile is from chapter 11, verse 116 of the Koran:

*In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate,
perform prayer morning and evening, and in the watches of the night.
Behold! Good works drive away evils.*



The dark outline indicates where this tile was placed within the mihrab.

Art of the Portable Object



Everyday Objects in Trade and Culture

While some three-dimensional works of art in the Islamic world were reserved for special social or religious occasions, many were intended for such daily activities as eating, drinking, writing, or storage. Most were portable and could be easily moved from one place to another.

Working in various media, including glass, metal, stone, wood, cloth, and clay, artists skillfully transformed ordinary objects into elaborate works of art. As primary vehicles for artistic expression, these objects played a central role in the social, economic, and material life of the peoples of the Islamic world and provided a constant source of visual and intellectual pleasure and gratification. Objects also served as valuable economic commodities and became known throughout Europe and Asia by way of trade and exchange. Their presence even had a linguistic effect: the words *blouse*, *chiffon*, *cotton*, *damask*, *mohair*, *muslin*, and *satin* are all derived from Arabic words. Particularly prized in Europe were Islamic metalwork, carpets, and textiles, and calligraphy and patterns from these artistic traditions can be found in Western art dating from the Renaissance on.

The Silk Road



Contrary to its name, this ancient trade route actually encompassed several regularly frequented routes between China, India, Iran, and Italy. Because the road was not one continuous artery, very few people actually traveled the entire way from Rome to China; instead, most traders journeyed only from one trading depot to the next, where they exchanged goods with other merchants who would then take the merchandise to the next trading post.

Although earliest records of the road date to the first century B.C.E., its peak of economic, cultural, and artistic activity was from the seventh through the tenth century. By the fourteenth century, China was under the rule of the more insular Ming dynasty and Europe was suffering from war, revolt, and plague; thus,

maritime trade took the place of the more arduous land routes, which ceased operation for the most part. Using the **ASTROLABE** and other inventions to guide their travel, Muslims became known as highly skilled navigators and maritime traders.

The trading route owes its modern name to silk, the commodity most sought by Europeans eager to trade with the Chinese; other items traded included gold, ivory, tea, and exotic plants and animals. In addition to serving as a means of trade, the route also became a major conduit for religious and cultural exchange, and as a result, Buddhism was transmitted along the Silk Road from India to East Asia. Centuries later, Islam also found its way from West Asia to the Far East along these ancient roads.

The shape and design for the ceramic flask on the right from fifteenth-century China were based on the Syrian canteen crafted in the thirteenth century on the left. The flask clearly shows the influence of Islamic design on Chinese art and illustrates the far-reaching cultural exchange between Asian countries.

Canteen. Probably Syria, mid-13th century. Brass inlaid with silver; 45.2 x 36.7 x 21.5 cm. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, purchase, F1941.10

Flask. China, early 15th century. Ceramic; 47.5 x 41.8 x 21.3 cm. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, purchase, F1958.2

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

Many similarities exist between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The God to which Muslims pray is the same one worshiped by Christians and Jews—He who sent Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad as messengers to the world. Moreover, all three faiths trace their history back to the patriarch Abraham, as Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and others are all believed to be descendants of Abraham’s sons—

Moses and Jesus from Isaac, and Muhammad from Ishmael. Additionally, in Islam the first man, Adam, is also considered a prophet.

Muslims particularly respect and revere Jesus, whom they consider one of the greatest of God’s prophets and messengers and refer to as “Jesus, peace be upon him.” The Koran confirms his virgin birth and honors his mother, the Virgin Mary, in a special chapter named for her.

Clothing, Dignity, and Authority

Fabrics played a special role in Islamic society, as they did in many other societies during the medieval and early modern periods. The well-known modesty of Islamic dress for both men and women translated into multiple layers and various articles of clothing. Islamic society was a textile civilization, as it produced various types of fabrics, many of which are still known by names related to their origin, such as muslin (from Mosul), damask (from Damascus), and calico (from Calicut). At a time when fabric was woven, dyed, and decorated by hand, luxury fabrics out of the reach of ordinary people expressed power, authority, and esteem. In

many cultures, political and religious figures were endowed—or endowed themselves—with rich garments to be worn on official occasions, such as meetings among dignitaries, public processions, and religious services. Ceremonial robes expressed the wealth of an entire society and the ruler’s authority over it, whereas a judge’s or scholar’s robe spoke of dignity and knowledge. Garments of honor were bestowed to welcome, to reward outstanding achievement, or to recognize status and to mark admittance into elite circles and service. Ruling groups maintained their own state factories to supply the court with fabrics for use and gifts.

The Role of Women in Islam

Throughout the history of Islam, which spans some fifteen hundred years, women rose to power in diverse regions, acting as regents and rulers who gave audiences, received petitions, signed edicts, made administrative policies, and even commanded armies. They minted coins bearing their titles and decreed that their names be proclaimed in Friday prayers (*khutba*), thereby legitimizing their right to rule according to Islamic law. Some of these rulers were of slave origin, purchased for the masters of the **HAREM**, while others were of royal descent, born to kings and queens. Imperial wives, daughters, and mothers also sat in on the meetings of the council of minister, served as ambassadors, and negotiated diplomatic treaties.

Powerful Muslim women made their appearance at the dawn of the Islamic era. Khadija (died 632), Muhammad's first wife, was a wealthy woman engaged in trade and an avid supporter of the Prophet's movement, as was the second wife, Aisha (died 678), who shared his revelations, held council, and even commanded

an army, leading soldiers from her camel. The Prophet's daughter Fatima, wife of the fourth caliph, Ali, and mother of the martyrs Hasan and Husayn, presented the eulogy when her father died, and one of her descendants founded the Fatimids, the dynasty named for her.

According to the Koran, men and women are equal before god, and both sexes share equal rights and responsibilities within the faith. Islam sees a woman, whether single or married, as an individual who reserves the right to own and dispose of her own property and earnings, and she is permitted to either keep her family name or adopt her husband's when she marries. Both men and women are expected to dress in a simple, modest, and dignified manner, but the dress in some Islamic countries reflects local customs more than it does religious principle. Likewise, the treatment of women in some areas of the Islamic world reflects cultural practices that are inconsistent with, if not contrary to, authentic Islamic teachings.



Bowl. Iran, late 12th–early 13th century. Stone paste painted under and over glaze; 8.8 x 23.0 cm. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, purchase, F1938.12



Basin

Syria, ca. 1240

Brass, inlaid with silver

Height 23.3 cm

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution

Purchase, F1955.10

THIS LARGE BRASS BASIN INLAID WITH SILVER IS DECORATED with both Islamic and Christian themes. Like many works of art created in the Islamic world, it carries a blessing for the person who probably commissioned it: an inscription on the upper portion of the exterior (not visible in the image) reads, “Glory to our master, the sultan, al-Malik al-Salih, the lord, the illustrious, the learned, the efficient, the defender, the warrior, the supported, the victor.” The wide band just beneath the rim is punctuated by medallions with details of five scenes from the life of Jesus, the Christian leader, including the annunciation by the archangel Gabriel of the birth of Jesus to his mother, the Virgin Mary; the Virgin Mary and Jesus enthroned; the miracle of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead; Jesus’ entry into the holy city of Jerusalem; and what is possibly Jesus’ last supper with his disciples. Just below is another band, which features a lively game of polo and medallions with scrolls composed of human and animal heads, both typical Islamic motifs. A third, much narrower band includes twenty-five running animals divided into groups of five by roundels that enclose a group of seated musicians.

This basin was commissioned during the reign the Sultan al-Malik al-Salih, a member of the Ayyubid dynasty who ruled in parts of Syria and Egypt during the 1230s and 1240s. The combination of Muslim and Christian themes on this royal commission suggests the Ayyubids’ awareness of and curiosity about other religion and cultures — Christianity in particular. This basin was probably originally intended for washing hands, but when it came into the possession of a French noble family, it was used as a baptismal font in a church.



Tankard with angular handle

Turkey, late 16th century

Stone paste painted under glaze

21.0 x 12.0 cm

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution

Purchase, F1968.68

THE UNUSUAL DECORATION OF THIS LARGE DRINKING MUG, OR tankard, depicts sailboats cruising around small islands, each of which houses a tower or castle surrounded by tall, thin cypress trees. A large bird perching in the center of the islands transforms the nautical arrangement into a fantastical setting. The islands on the rim are drawn upside down, possibly to fill the space between the boats, and bold black lines outlining the curvature of the sails and the contours of the islands help to create a fluid movement that encircles the tankard in three uneven registers. A band adorned with dots encircles both the rim and foot, while dots and leaves decorate the angular handle.

The maplike depiction of the scene bears a resemblance to Ottoman Turkish manuscript illustrations of the second quarter of the sixteenth century, when cities and ports were drawn in great detail. The creation of this object, which depicts both land and sea masses, coincided with the development of global maritime trade and the diminishing importance of overland silk routes as a conduit for trade and exchange.



Bowl

Iran, late 12th–early 13th century

Stone paste painted under and over glaze

8.8 x 23.0 cm

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution

Purchase, F1938.12

THIS BOWL'S EXQUISITELY DETAILED IMAGE DEPICTS A LAVISHLY clad royal couple against a plain gold, partially deteriorated background. Both figures wear ornate clothing, and flaming halos hover around their heads. Their facial features and halos are clearly inspired by Chinese and Central Asian art. Such imagery was found on textiles and other luxury goods imported via the Silk Road. The figure on the right is probably a woman of high rank, as suggested by the jeweled headdress attached to her head by fluttering ribbons, and she wears an elaborate ensemble of long looped earrings, an anklet, and a garment composed of panels depicting seated figures. She holds a stemmed cup in one hand and gestures toward her companion with the other.

The male figure playing the **LYRE** wears a garment adorned with abstract designs. He wears a cap with a high portion in the center, often interpreted as a jeweled, ornamental crown on the turbans of princes. A wide blue band with diamonds encircles the interior of the bowl.

The theme of a seated couple recurs in several ceramic pieces from the same era and executed in this style; however, what sets this piece apart from its contemporaries is that it is the only example of a female outranking a male — he is clearly entertaining the queen.



Bowl

Iran, Samanid dynasty (819–1005)

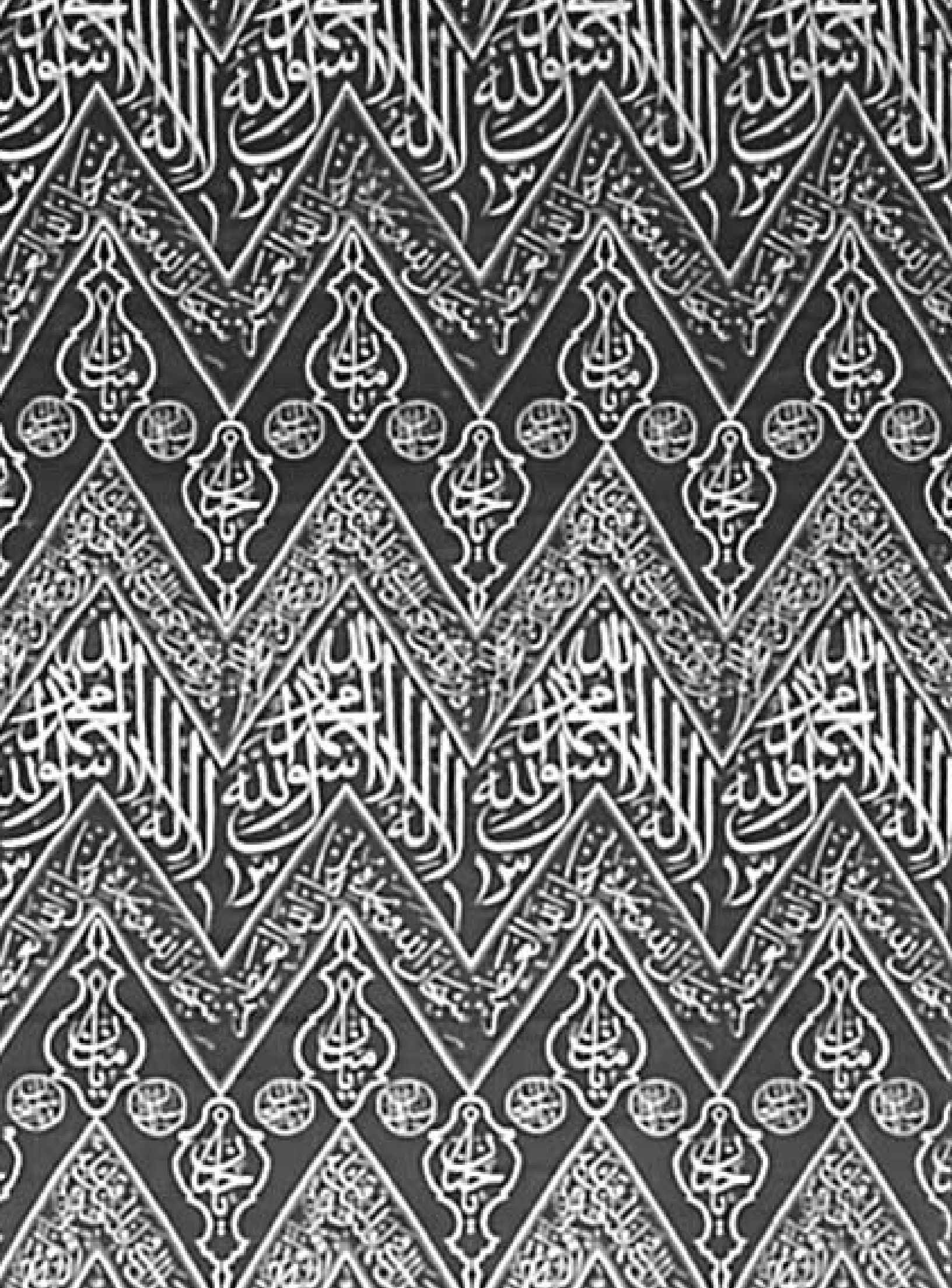
Earthenware painted over glaze

6.6 x 21.8 cm

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution

Purchase, F1956.1

IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD, MANY WORKS OF ART BEAR NO OTHER form of decoration but calligraphy. The inherent flexibility of Arabic letters allowed their application to many different media, including textiles, ceramics, and architecture (see Calligraphy on page 21). Artists were able to render the words in circles, squares, straight lines, and interlaced patterns. Individual letters could be embellished with leaf forms or braided into knots. Calligraphers sometimes drew human or animal forms within the letters, which could be expanded or contracted to fit the space allotted. For example, the Arabic word for “blessing” inscribed on this bowl forms the breast of a bird, an example of **ZOOMORPHIC** calligraphy.



Lesson Plans

On the following pages you will find five lesson plans written by teachers using the material in this guide. Each lesson was implemented in the classroom, and examples of student work are included.

Vocabulary



ALLAH [a-láh] the supreme, and only, god, according to Islamic belief.

“ALLAH’U’AKBAR” the opening phrase of the Muslim daily prayer, performed five times each day. The phrase means “God is great” in Arabic.
[a-lah oo ahk-bar]

ASTROLABE an instrument used to calculate the positions of stars and planets.

BALAL [bal-el] the first follower of Muhammad to recite the call to prayer.

CALIPH [cah-leef] a deputy or commander of the Islamic community whose role combines both religious and political functions.

FIVE PILLARS the five basic duties of a Muslim: professing belief, praying, giving alms, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and making a pilgrimage to Mecca (see The Five Pillars on 10).

FRONTISPIECE an illustration usually facing a book’s title page.

HADITH [ha-deéth] a compilation of the Prophet Muhammad’s words, used as a guide in Islam for proper living.

HAJJ [hahj] the pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca. Hajj takes place during the last month of the Islamic calendar and involves special prayer and dress and abstention from certain behavior. It is the largest pilgrimage in the world, and hundreds of thousands of Muslims participate annually.

- HAREM** a group of women attached to one man, living in separate quarters from the rest of the household.
- HIJRA** [héej-rah] Muhammad's flight from Mecca to the northern city of Medina in 622, which marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar.
- IDOL** a representation or symbol of an object of worship.
- IMAM** [ee-máhm] a religious official and learned teacher who leads the community in prayer.
- ISLAM** [is-láhm] the religious system revealed to Muhammad that entails the complete acceptance of the wisdom of Allah (God). The word *Islam* is derived from the Arabic root word for "peace."
- KA'BA** [káh-bah] the most sacred place in the Islamic world. Located in Mecca, this first house ever built for the worship of Allah surrounds a black stone that was present when Muhammad rid Mecca of its idols in 630. The Ka'ba is the focal point for the annual Muslim pilgrimage ritual to Mecca.
- KHADIJA** [kha-dée-jeh] Muhammad's wife, a successful businesswoman who was fifteen years his senior.
- KORAN** [kor-án] the holy book of Islam. Revealed to Muhammad over a period of twenty-three years, beginning when he was visited by the archangel Gabriel in a cave while praying, it was recorded by his followers during his lifetime and within a few decades of his death. The Koran commands belief in Allah alone as the one true god, forbids injustice of any kind, warns of punishment for those who do not follow its commands, and rewards those who obey. *Koran* is derived from the Arabic word for "to recite."
- KUFIC** [kóo-fic] an early form of Arabic calligraphy that is rectangular in shape and originated in the Iraqi city of Al-Kufa.
- LYRE** a stringed instrument in the harp family played to accompany song and recitation.
- MADRASA** [mah-drás-ah] a school attached to a mosque complex.
- MASJID** [máhs-jeehd] small neighborhood mosques where individual prayers, as opposed to communal prayers, are offered. The term literally means "places of prostration."

- MECCA** [méh-kah] a city in southwestern Saudi Arabia and the Prophet Muhammad’s birth-place. It is considered the holiest Islamic city and is the pilgrimage destination for Muslims from all over the world.
- MEDINA** [meh-dée-neh] a city in the northern part of present-day Saudi Arabia to which Muhammad fled from Mecca in 622 after meeting with opposition to his new system of belief.
- MINARET** a tower built as part of a mosque. It is the traditional place from which the call to prayer is made five times each day.
- MIHRAB** [meeh-ráhb] a prayer niche in a mosque that generally faces Mecca (see the central plaque of a lustre mihrab on page 32).
- MONOTHEISM** the belief in one god.
- MOSQUE** [mosk] the place where Muslims perform regular prayer rituals and worship together. The term literally means “place of prostration” in Arabic.
- MOUNT HIRA** a place outside of Mecca, where Muhammad used to go to pray and meditate. It was in a cave near this mountain that the Koran was first revealed to him.
- MUHAMMAD** [moh-hah-med] the founder and Prophet of Islam. Born in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, he received his revelation at the age of forty and spent his remaining years teaching his new religion throughout the Arabian Peninsula, until he died in 632.
- PIOUS** showing reverence for God and devotion to the divine.
- POLYTHEISM** the belief in many gods.
- QIBLA** [gheb-leh] the direction toward which Muslims pray so that they are facing Mecca and the Ka’ba. The term literally means “point of adoration” in Arabic.
- RAMADAN** [ráh-mah-dahn] the ninth month of the Muslim calendar, when all Muslims fast during the daylight hours in an attempt to think constantly of Allah and be obedient to His laws.
- SHAHNAMA** [shah-náh-meh] the Persian *Book of Kings*, an epic poem written around the year 1010 by the poet Firdawsi. It describes in rhymed verse the history and legends of pre-Islamic Iran.

- SHARI'A** [shar-ée-ah] the Islamic religion and law that governs every aspect of a Muslim's life; at its center are the Five Pillars. The term literally means "the straight path" in Arabic.
- SHI'I** [shee-ai] one of the two main traditions of Islam. The Shi'i sect maintains that Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad, was the first true spiritual leader after the Prophet's death. Approximately 15 percent of Muslims practice in the Shi'i tradition; the Muslims in Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and Yemen are predominantly Shi'i (see Sunnism and Shi'ism on page 13).
- SULTAN** the title for the political leader of certain Islamic states, specifically those under Turkish control.
- SUNNI** [soo-nee] one of two main traditions of Islam, Sunnis believe that after Muhammad died, the leadership of Islam rightfully passed to three caliphs (religious and political leaders), who were followed by Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad. Sunnis comprise approximately 85 percent of Muslims and practice traditional ways of Islam, as taught by orthodox scholars; the other main tradition of Islam is the Shi'i tradition (see Sunnism and Shi'ism on page 13).
- TESSELLATION** a repeating pattern of geometric shapes.
- UMMA** [oo-mah] the Islamic community.
- VEGETAL** relating to a motif of stylized flowers and plants in a geometric pattern, often found on textiles, ceramics, glassworks, metalwork, and mosaics of the Islamic world.
- ZOOMORPHIC** relating to a deity conceived of in animal form or with animal attributes.

1

Images, Words, and Ancient Knowledge

CONTRIBUTED BY ZOY CALOMIRIS, ART TEACHER,
BETHESDA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, BETHESDA, MARYLAND

SUBJECTS:
**ART, LANGUAGE ARTS,
AND SOCIAL STUDIES**

GRADE LEVEL:
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

TIME NEEDED:
THREE CLASS PERIODS

Goal

To learn about Islamic manuscript transcription and illustration and to gain insight into the tradition of scientific and historical documentation, after which students will illustrate two pages of a class album

Objectives

- Students will learn about the transcription of ancient text from around the world that took place within the Islamic academies responsible for the transmission of global knowledge during their time.
- Students will identify basic design motifs and analyze the visual components and characteristics of Islamic manuscripts.
- Students will learn about the technique of manuscript illustration.
- Students will make connections between written and visual forms of communication.

Vocabulary

FOLIO a page of a book or manuscript.

HERB a plant whose parts are used to make medicine and cosmetics or to flavor food.

ILLUMINATION colorful illustration, often including gold or silver, that decorates manuscripts.

MANUSCRIPT a book or text written by hand.

MEDICAL TREATISE a written work that systematically describes and explains medical issues.

MOTIF a theme or visual image repeatedly employed in a work.

REMEDY a treatment that heals wounds, cures sicknesses, or corrects problems.

SEQUENCE a state in which one thing follows another in a particular order.

STYLIZATION a natural form altered to emphasize visual aspects, such as color and shapes.

VISUAL UNITY a state in which all parts of a work of art form a coherent whole.

Motivation and Discussion



Present *Mad Dog Biting Man* from the *Materia Medica* and use the following questions as a foundation for class discussion.

IDENTIFY

What things do you see in this image? Do you see people, words, or something else?

DESCRIBE

How would you describe the setting? Is it naturalistic or stylized?

Describe the main characters. How are they dressed? What are their expressions?

Describe the action or event. What are the characters doing?

Describe the text in terms of placement, rhythm, color, and movement.

ANALYZE

How does the artist use gesture and expression to convey meaning and drama?

What element does the artist repeat? How does the repetition help to form a sense of visual unity on the pages of the manuscript?

How does the text relate to the illustration?

INTERPRET

What was the purpose of the medical treatise? What can historians and modern scientists gain by looking at old medical journals?

What is the purpose of this illustration?

In what way does the artist expand the illustration to fit his personal vision or interest?

*Activity***MATERIALS**

7" x 10" sheets of white drawing paper (two pieces per student), 18" x 24" sheets of construction paper, fine-tip black markers, colored pencils, gold tempera paint or metallic pens and markers, small brushes, glue, books, and visual aids about herbs and plants

DAY ONE

Have the students examine *Mad Dog Biting Man* in terms of its visual characteristics, historical significance, and dramatic potential (see Motivation and Discussion).

Instruct the students to select an herb on the basis of its healing properties, to create an illustration of the plant based on their observations and personal interpretations, and to create text naming and describing the plant.

DAY TWO

Have the students write a whimsical paragraph based on the usage and healing properties of the herb.

DAY THREE

Have the students illustrate their short story or paragraph and glue both of their illustrations to a horizontal 18" x 24" piece of construction paper, leaving a two-inch border around each side. They can then use gold paint to create a decorative motif around the borders. Once glued to sheets of construction paper, the illustrations can be stitched together to create a class-illustrated album of herbal remedies.

Assessment and Evaluation

Did the student participate in the group discussion?

Did the student create an illustration of an herb?

Did the student write and illustrate a story involving the usage of this herb?

Do the text and visual elements in the student's illustrations work together?

Variations

Have students create their own manuscript as a means of recording information or a series of events. Possible topics include the changing of the seasons, a trip they have taken, or the growth of a plant or their own bodies.

Instruct students to create their own illustration of a rabid dog biting a man and to write their own interpretation of the incident. Allow them to write the narrative from the point of view of the man, the dog, or the doctor.

Help students develop a medical treatise by reflecting on their personal experiences with such health issues as falls, bites, illnesses, dental problems, and sports injuries.

Lesson Extensions

HEALTH HISTORY

One of the ways doctors gain knowledge about patients is from their medical histories. Students can illustrate events from their own medical histories, such as broken bones, chicken pox, poison ivy, skinned knees, or dental work, in the form of scenes telling how and where it happened, how the symptoms looked, and what treatments they received. Together, the scenes can form a tableau, a storyboard, or a book with individual pages for each episode. Teachers should use discretion in dealing with more serious aspects of some students' medical conditions, accidents, or illnesses.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Prepare a household first-aid guide with illustrations of which products, such as bandages and ice packs, to use for which ailments.

For Further Reference

Bremness, Lesley, et al. *Herbs*. New York: Dorling Kindersley, 1994.



Student artwork



Student artwork



Student artwork

2

The Beauty of Light: Mosque Lamps of Islam

CONTRIBUTED BY CYNTHIA HICKS, ART TEACHER,
ASHLAWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

SUBJECT:
ART

GRADE LEVEL:
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

TIME NEEDED:
TWO FORTY-FIVE-MINUTE
CLASS PERIODS

Goal

To incorporate patterns, letterforms, and calligraphy to create structures resembling Islamic mosque lamps

Objectives

- Students will learn about the special lamps used to illuminate the interior of mosques and create their own version of a lamp based on Islamic designs.
- Students will become aware of the significant role played by the Islamic world in the development of trade and the resulting wealth it amassed, as evidenced by the architecture and embellishment of its mosques.
- Students will understand the meaning of the “light verse” with regard to Islamic beliefs.

Vocabulary

ENAMEL a glossy, decorative surface created by applying mineral substances of various colors to an object’s surface and then adhering it through a heating process.

GILT gold covering.

Motivation and Discussion

Review with the class the information about the Art of the Mosque on pages 26–33 and present the mosque lamp, discussing the following questions.

**IDENTIFY**

What is this object, and what might its purpose be?

DESCRIBE

What is this object made of?

How has this object been decorated?

How did it function as a lamp?

ANALYZE

How is the decoration distributed?

INTERPRET

Since plain glass would have functioned just as well to illuminate the mosque, why has this lamp been decorated?

Why does the name of the sultan appear on the lamp?

What is the significance of the “light verse” appearing on a lamp to be used in a mosque?

What is the significance of the patterned design decorating the body of the lamp?

*Activity***MATERIALS**

A map showing the spread of Islam, photographs of interior and exterior views of a mosque, examples of Islamic calligraphy

For the studio activity: 12" x 18" sheets of dark construction paper, gel pens or light-colored crayons, scissors, 12" x 18" sheets of colored cellophane or tissue paper, glue

DAY ONE

Review with students the development of the Islamic faith and world, introducing the image of the mosque lamp and conducting a discussion using the resources suggested in the Motivation and Discussion section.

Instruct students to fold a 12" x 18" sheet of construction paper lengthwise into quarters and cut decorative or symbolic shapes into the two folded edges.

DAY TWO

Have students use gel pens to embellish the areas surrounding the cut patterns with designs or written messages. Instruct them to place cellophane or tissue paper on the back of their cut and drawn creations, which can then be placed on windows so that the sun's rays will illuminate the classroom with colored light. They can also be rolled into cylinders and suspended from the classroom ceiling like mosque lamps.

Assessment and Evaluation

Did the student participate in the analysis of the mosque lamp?

Did the student complete the project by folding, cutting, and drawing to create infinite, nonfigural patterns?

Did the student use colored cellophane or tissue paper to back the cut paper design so that the object resembled a mosque lamp?

*Lesson Extensions***LANGUAGE AND IMAGERY**

Because of the object's size and distance from the viewer, the artisans of mosque lamps utilized only a fraction of the famous Koranic "light verse." The full citation is only one numbered verse in the Koran chapter entitled *Nur* (The light) and is as follows:

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His Light is as if there were a Niche and within it a lamp: the Lamp enclosed in Glass: the glass as it were a brilliant star: lit from a blessed Tree, an Olive neither of the East nor of the West whose Oil is well-nigh luminous though fire scarce touched it: Light upon Light! Allah doth guide whom He will to His Light. Allah sets forth Parables for men: and Allah doth know all things.
(Koran chapter 24, "The Light," verse 35, Yusuf Ali translation)

Poets and Sufis — Muslims who follow mystical practices to achieve spiritual union with God — have pondered the deeper meaning of the "light verse." Write a paragraph on the layers of imagery in this verse and what they might mean about light as a metaphor for faith, knowledge, or the

spiritual journey to enlightenment. Instead of an essay, you may write a poem or draw or paint a picture inspired by this image.

Compare this complex metaphor of light from the Koran to poetic or scriptural descriptions of light and darkness in other cultures and religions and the symbolic meanings related to good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, and the seen and the unseen.

HISTORY OF TECHNOLOGY

Using an encyclopedia, find out what raw materials are needed to make glass and what substances are added to the glass in order to make the colors red, blue, green, black, and yellow for enamel and stained glass. How is heat related to glassmaking and colored glass? What world cultures produced glass, and when did they do so?

GEOGRAPHY OF GLASSMAKING

Use dictionaries, atlases, encyclopedias, and online resources to find the answers to these questions:

- What is faience and which civilization first produced it?
- How long has glass been made in Syria?
- What are rose windows and how are they similar to Islamic geometric designs?
- What Muslim scholar traveled to India and wrote about recipes for staining glass, making steel, and even creating artificial rubies in an oven?
- Why were glassmakers isolated on an island, and where did the Murano glass factory begin?
- Where is Chartres and what does it have to do with glass?
- Why is West Virginia important for traditional glassmaking?
Hint: Have you lost your marbles?
- What is high-tech glass, and what are some of its uses?

For Further Reference

Bloom, Jonathan, and Sheila Blair. *Islamic Arts*. London: Phaidon Press, 1997

MacDonald, Fiona, and Mark Bergin. *A Sixteenth-Century Mosque*. New York: P. Bedrick Books, 1994.



Student artwork



Student artwork

3

Blessings That Gleam: Designs and Messages in Islamic Metalwork

CONTRIBUTED BY ZOY CALOMIRIS, ART TEACHER, BETHESDA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, BETHESDA, MARYLAND; AND PATTI CONNELL, ART TEACHER, RACHEL CARSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

SUBJECT:
ART

GRADE LEVEL:
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

TIME NEEDED:
TWO CLASS PERIODS

Goal

To create a relief panel related to the study of Islamic metalwork

Objectives

- Students will develop an understanding of the geography, economy, and natural and human resources of Islam during the thirteenth century.
- Students will develop an appreciation of Islamic metalwork and decorative themes and will consider the use of good wishes that appear as integral to many of the design motifs.

Vocabulary

- DECORATIVE** beautiful and pleasing to the eye; for ornamentation.
- EMBOSS** to raise selected parts of the surface of an object.
- FLORAL** of or relating to flowers.
- GEOMETRIC** containing lines, angles, circles, triangles, squares, and other similar shapes.
- INLAY** to place one material onto another, often by pressing it into crevices on the surface of the object.
- INSCRIPTION** words marked or carved into a surface.
- RELIEF** a kind of sculpture in which the images depicted are raised from a flat surface.
- REPOUSSÉ** shaped or ornamented with patterns in relief made by hammering or pressing on the reverse side of an object.

Motivation and Discussion

Present the basin on page 38 and use the following questions as a foundation for class discussion.

IDENTIFY

What is the object, and what is its function?

DESCRIBE

What materials are used to create this object?

What are its recurring patterns, designs, and motifs?

How are the designs organized?

Is there a point of interest, and, if so, how has the artist created it?

Are the motifs purely decorative, or are they representational as well?

ANALYZE

What part of the world does this object come from?

Who might have owned it, and how or where might it have been purchased?

INTERPRET

What type of blessing, inscription, or symbol would be attractive to a prospective buyer?

What are some good wishes or blessings that we use in our own culture?

Activity

MATERIALS



Paper, pencil, erasers, magnifying glass, image of basin on page 38, styrofoam trays or several pieces of newspaper, roll of thin-gauge tin or heavy-duty aluminum foil, embossing instruments (wooden stylus, clay tools, dull pencils, india ink, sponge, paper towels)

DAY ONE

Using the map on page 9, lead the students in locating Islamic regions and discussing the resources used to create metalwork. Introduce the basin and lead a discussion of the designs characteristic of Islamic metalwork (see Motivation and Discussion). Referring to blessings that might be associated with the artifact, discuss how good wishes in our culture are expressed — for instance, through greeting cards and songs.

Instructing the students to choose a blessing or good wish they would like to share, examine the basin and lead them in designing similar horizontal bands that might convey the sentiment of their selected blessings.

Have the students select their most successful pattern and copy it twice across the top and bottom of a narrow, horizontal sheet of paper, and then instruct them to draw a larger design in the area between the two bands.

DAY TWO

Have the students transfer their final designs to a piece of tin with a marker. Demonstrate the technique of embossing with a wooden stylus or another dull tool. To do so, place the tin on a styrofoam tray or a thick mat of newspaper, pressing over the design to create indentations and concave areas. Create protruding lines and convex areas by turning the work over and pressing into the reverse side of the metal sheet (*repoussé*) — the greater the pressure, the higher the relief. Embellish patterns with more details to fill in the empty space with lines and shapes. When the design is complete, dab india ink all over the relief, particularly into the indentations. Allow it to dry and then wipe off any excess ink, leaving a small amount in the indentations to emphasize the designs.

Assessment and Evaluation

Did the student participate in the group discussion and analysis of the artifact?

Did the student create a sketch depicting patterns with two identical bands on the top and bottom and a central design in the center?

Did the student create a blessing reflective of the work?

Lesson Extensions

CALLIGRAPHY AND ANIMATION

Around the basin runs an animated inscription, or saying, in which horses' and people's bodies form the strokes of Arabic letters. Animate a word or a phrase using relevant objects or animals in the shape of letters. The project might be done on paper or as a computer animation.

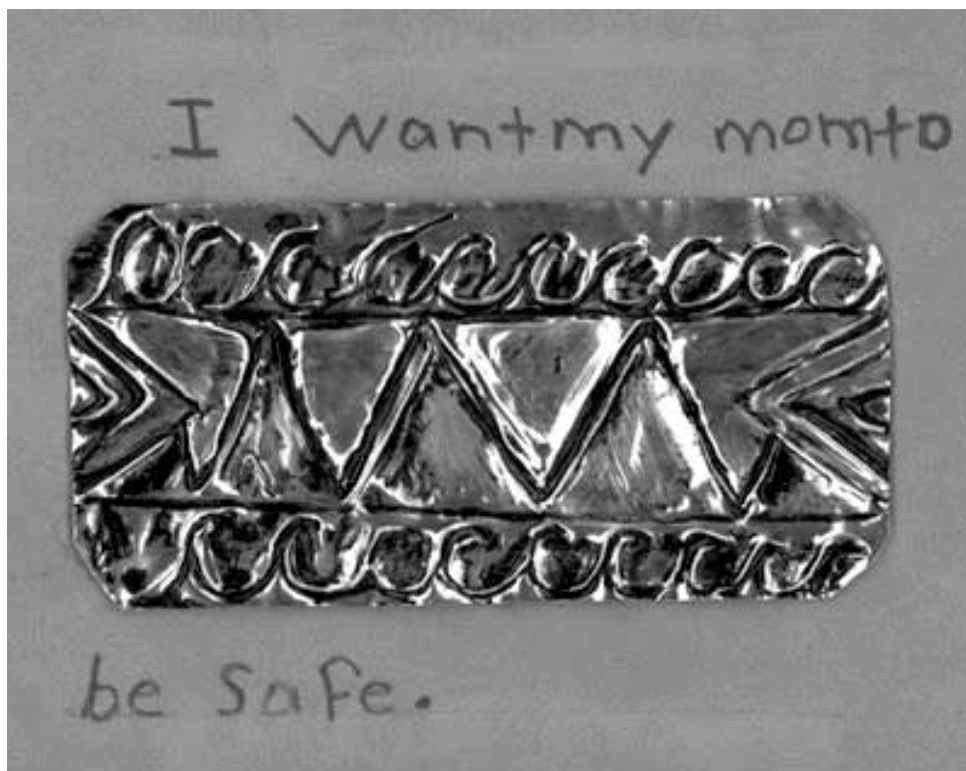
COMPARATIVE CULTURES AND RELIGIONS

Whether the basin was produced for a Muslim or a Christian patron, themes from both Islam and Christianity are depicted on the object. This mixture shows the diversity of the society in which the object was crafted and tells a story about the ability of different groups to live cooperatively and peacefully enough to create objects with mixed and common themes.

- Identify characteristics of the design and decoration that seem related to Islam, and those associated with Christianity. Which are secular? Which may be related to other religious or folk traditions?
- Which religious themes on the canteen overlap between Islam and Christianity?

GEOGRAPHY

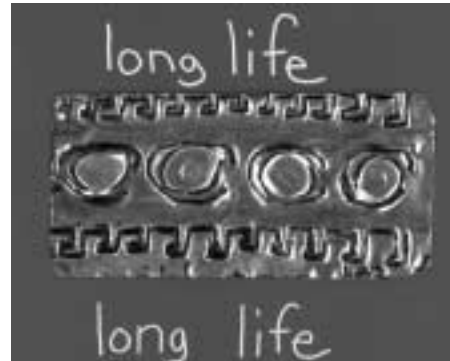
List the natural resources needed to produce the inlaid metalwork canteen and similar pieces, such as candlesticks, basins, and ewers. Locate Iran, Iraq, and Syria/Palestine on a map. Find a resource map in an atlas and locate sources of these raw materials in the Mediterranean and Central Asian regions. How might these metals have arrived at the metalworking centers via trade routes and ports? Which of the materials was available locally—within fifty miles?



Student artwork



Student artwork



Student artwork



Student artwork

4

The Art of Words

CONTRIBUTED BY PATRICIA BOCOCK, ART TEACHER, LAUREL HIGH SCHOOL, LAUREL, MARYLAND; AND SUZANNE OWENS, ART TEACHER, SEVERNA PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, SEVERN, MARYLAND.

SUBJECT:
ART

GRADE LEVEL:
ALL

TIME NEEDED:
TWO CLASS PERIODS

Goal

To create a design composed of letters based on the study of the use of text in Islamic art

Objectives

- Students will study Islamic culture in order to understand the written word's relevance and its reflection of cultural values.
- Students will study the images on pages 31 and 41 to identify how script was used in the objects' design and to analyze the objects' elements and composition.
- Students will discuss how the use of letters enhances the design or the purpose of the object.

Vocabulary

NEGATIVE SPACE the space remaining outside of an object depicted in a visual composition.

PICTOGRAM a stylized drawing of an object or living thing. Pictograms are the earliest basis for all writing systems.

SYMMETRY a state in which one side of a visual image is a mirror image of the other.

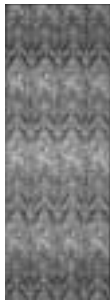
ZOOMORPHIC in the shape of an animal.

Motivation and Discussion

Review this guide's information about the importance of Arabic calligraphy in Islamic culture (pages 21–22).



Present the image of the bird bowl on page 41 and the cenotaph cover on page 31 and lead a discussion using the questions below, adapting them as necessary for each grade level.



DESCRIBE

How would you describe what you see in this image? What kinds of lines, colors, shapes, textures, forms, values, and spaces do you see?

IDENTIFY

What characteristics identify this work of art as part of Islamic culture?
Where is Arabic script employed as part of this object's decoration?

ANALYZE

Does this object have a focal point, and if so, how did the artist emphasize it?

Where and how does the artist lead your eye?

How has repetition been used in the object's design, and how does variation add interest?

What adds harmony to this work of art?

INTERPRET

Why do you think the artist created this object?

How do you think the artist intended the viewer to respond, and why?

Did the artist include or omit anything that makes you think so?

Aesthetic Response

What was your initial reaction to this work? Did you find it aesthetically pleasing? Why or why not?

Did your response to the object change after the discussion, and if so, why?

Do you think you would react differently if you were from another culture?

Elementary-Level Activity

MATERIALS

For sketch: paper, pencil, brush, black tempera paint or ink

For painted tile: 4" x 4" white ceramic glazed tile, glossy paint, oven

Introduce the students to the art of calligraphy and discuss the bird bowl from page 41 that can serve as an example of a finished tile. Model brush-stroke techniques to create Arabic letters, using the example on page 22 as a guide, and allow students to practice various letters.

Have the students make contour drawings of an animal or natural form of their choice. Within the form's interior, instruct them to use either Arabic or English letters to create patterns and/or texture in the image.

Instruct the students to transfer their designs onto the tiles via carbon paper or a pencil-rubbing transfer, after which they may paint designs onto their tiles.

Bake the tiles in the oven so that the paint will set.

Assessment and Evaluation

Have the students write a paragraph answering one of the following questions for placement next to their tiles as artists' statements:

What do you feel is the most successful part of your artwork, and why?

or

How was the zoomorphic design of your tile influenced by any of the works of art you viewed at the beginning of this lesson?

Display the students' artwork together and hold a group critique.

For Further Reference

THE ART OF CALLIGRAPHY

www.suite101.com/article.cfm/arabic_islamic_architecture/28162

Arabic Calligraphy <www.islamicart.com/main/calligraphy>

Aramco World (March/April 1997)

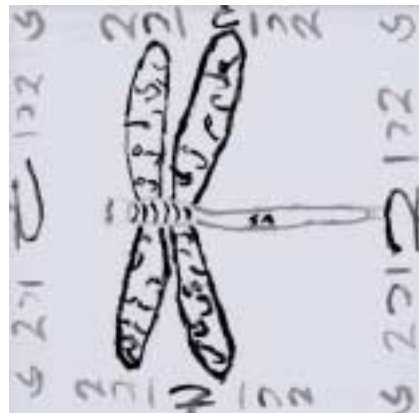
Aramco World (May/June 2000)

Art at the Getty <www.getty.edu>

Mittler, Gene, and Rosalind Ragans. *Exploring Art*. New York: Glencoe/MacMillan McGraw Hill, 2000.



Student artwork



Student artwork

High School–Level Activity

MATERIALS

9" x 12" sheets of white drawing paper, pencils, erasers, rulers, markers, colored pencils, colored ink, or tempera paint

Instruct students to develop a design using the letters of a name or a familiar phrase, employing such concepts as mirror images, word repetition, interwoven letters, or a combination of methods (see examples of student work on pages 74–75).

Display your own project in addition to student examples, when available. Lead the class in brainstorming possible words, phrases, or terms that could be used, and have students develop a series of thumbnail sketches of possible designs.

Approve the students' design selection and work with them to develop several variations of it. Once they have selected one variation, instruct them to enlarge the image and transfer it to a sheet of 9" x 12" drawing paper, after which the students will complete the design using ink and color.

ALTERNATIVES

Have the students select from a book of fonts or personally create a letter style and choose a variety of words for which the style of the lettering matches the definitions of the words.

Instruct students to develop an alphabet of their own design.

Allow students to use letters in order to develop pictograms.

EXTRA CREDIT: RESEARCH PAPER OR PRESENTATION

Compare and contrast Islamic calligraphy and medieval European illuminations, describing how each technique was influenced by the culture in which it developed.

Assessment and Evaluation

Have the students complete a written analysis of their work based on the project criteria outlined in the grading rubric and answering the following questions:

What do you think was most successful about this project and why?

What, if anything, would you do differently and why? If you would not do anything differently, why not?

Grading Rubric

LINEAR VARIATION (LINES SHOULD VARY IN LENGTH AND WIDTH)	20%
SPACE VARIATION (POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE AREAS SHOULD VARY IN SIZE AND SHAPE)	20%
PROPORTION AND BALANCE	10%
REPETITION WITH VARIATION	10%
PLACEMENT ON PAGE	10%
USE OF COLOR AND/OR VALUE	10%
NEATNESS	10%
ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION	10%
GROUP CRITIQUES OF PROJECTS (PRESENTED ANONYMOUSLY)	

Lesson Extensions

RESEARCH OR PRESENTATION ON MANUSCRIPT ILLUMINATIONS

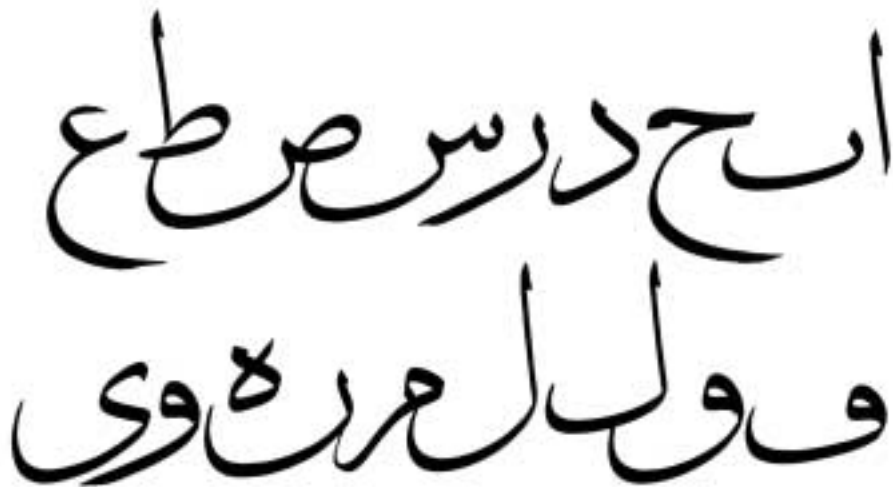
Compare and contrast medieval European manuscript illuminations like the *Book of Kells* with Koranic pages like the one described above.

Demonstrate how each was influenced by the religion and culture for which it was created in regard to its text, style, and elements of decoration.

GEOMETRY AND CALLIGRAPHY

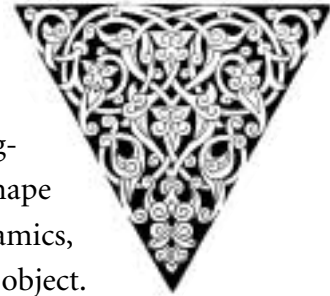
Write a sentence or your full name on lined paper, using your best handwriting, either printed or cursive. Using a ruler marked with centimeters, measure your tall, medium, and short letters to see how far they extend above the line. Measure how far some letters, like *p*, *g*, and *j*, extend below the line. Using a calculator, compare the ratio of your letters to see how regularly proportioned your handwriting is.

Calligraphers and makers of fonts have always paid special attention to the proportions of letters and the length of certain strokes above or below the baseline. In Arabic calligraphy, the traditional unit of measure of letter height is the number of dots, or diacritical marks, made by a pen (see page XX), and geometry was used to determine the proportioning of the basic Arabic letter shapes (see page XX). The renowned German Renaissance artist and draftsman Albrecht Dürer wrote and illustrated a book on Latin letters called *The Just Shaping of Letters* as a guide for drawing and proportioning lettering (see page XX). Using pens, rulers, and dividers, practice forming some of the letters in the Latin alphabet and shaping the basic forms of Arabic letters, remembering to work from right to left.



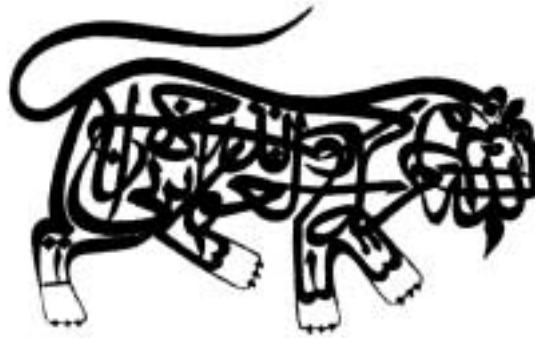
Student artwork

Stylized designs on dishes, medallions, and other objects reflect the problems of making a design fit into and harmonize with a confined space or shape. Plates and bowls with Arabic calligraphy are a good example of how artists use the shape of objects to their advantage. In many Islamic ceramics, *kufic* lettering forms a rim around the edge of the object. Using a compass or ruler, or tracing around a shape, form a word or phrase in lettering that fits inside the shape and makes use of its qualities.



ANIMAL LOGOS

In zoomorphic designs, the lettering is often formed into the shape of an animal (see figures below). Using the Latin alphabet, form a design in the shape of an object or animal, using a word or phrase related to that animal.



For Further Reference

Khatibi, Abdelkebir, and Mohammed Sijelmassi. *The Splendor of Islamic Calligraphy*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1996.



Student artwork



Student artwork

5

Royal Couples and Islamic Culture

CONTRIBUTED BY SUSAN S. DENNIS, WORLD HISTORY TEACHER, ANACOSTIA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL, WASHINGTON, D.C.

SUBJECT:
WORLD HISTORY

GRADE LEVEL:
HIGH SCHOOL

TIME NEEDED:
THREE FORTY-FIVE-MINUTE
CLASS PERIODS

Goal

To understand the physical and human characteristics of places and regions that have encompassed the spread of Islam and to show the patterns and consequences of its development

Objective

- The students will analyze the regional development of countries in the Eastern Hemisphere with respect to economic, social, political, religious, and cultural systems.
- The students will gain awareness of and respect for aspects of the Islamic culture by studying the bowl on page 40.

Vocabulary

CALIPH a deputy or commander of the Islamic community whose role combines both religious and political functions.

TESSELLATIONS repeating patterns of geometric shapes.

LYRE a stringed instrument in the harp family played to accompany song and recitation.

SULTAN the political leader of some Islamic states, specifically those under Turkish control.

Motivation and Discussion

Present information about twelfth- and thirteenth-century Iran, leading a discussion about the ceramic bowl from Iran on page 40 that features a man and a woman. The following questions will help students look thoroughly and think critically about this artwork.

IDENTIFY

What do you see in the image?

ANALYZE

What are the two characters doing, and what are they wearing?

INTERPRET

What can you guess about these people based on their activity and clothing?

Can you determine the status of the individuals based on their dress, activity, and positions in the composition?

*Activity***MATERIALS**

Map of the world, map of the spread of Islam, reproduction of the ceramic bowl, list of books and web sites for student research

Assign students to teams and have them select Project A or Project B. Instruct them to study the development of Iran from the late twelfth to early thirteenth century by researching materials from the resource list and looking at historical maps. Have students focus their research on elements depicted in the ceramic bowl, such as jewelry, musical instruments, gender roles, and clothing and textiles. Students may also draw a contemporary dish that features a modern-day “royal” couple and write a paragraph describing why these people are important in today’s society (see example on page 80).

PROJECT A (ART PROJECT)

Instruct the teams to label separate sheets of paper “Male” and “Female.” Have the students draw a replica of each figure, paying close attention to clothing, jewelry, and headdresses, and write a description of the image’s clothing and accessories below the drawing.

PROJECT B (DRAMATIC PROJECT)

Divide the students into groups of three and allow each member to select the role of narrator, male figure, or female figure in the scene displayed in the bowl. Instruct the students to give a five-minute presentation including the following:

A narrator, who sets the scene for the development of the region during the late twelfth and early thirteenth century. This student must describe the event depicted on the bowl and provide a theory for why the bowl was created in this manner.

A female figure, who describes her attire and the jewelry and object she holds in her hand. She must make clear that she outranks the male in the scene and explain how this is made clear in the work of art.

A male figure, who describes his attire and explains its implications regarding his social status. He must also identify the musical instrument his character is playing in the scene and its significance in Islamic culture.

The narrator should close the presentation by introducing a modern-day couple esteemed in contemporary culture that has been chosen or created by the group. This couple will be featured on a similar artistic work (see example on page 80).

Assessment and Evaluation

Did the student participate in the class discussion of the ceramic bowl?

Did the student display an understanding of the historical facts?

Did the student adhere to interview guidelines for the narrator and female and male figures?

Did the student create a new artistic work featuring a modern-day couple?

Lesson Extension

ADVERTISING AND POPULAR MEDIA

Today's fashion, entertainment, and women's magazines often feature vignettes that reveal messages and expectations about status, class, and relationships between men and women. Working in groups, use a variety of contemporary magazines to identify photographs of both actual people in the news and imaginary couples in advertisements. Compare the couples' dress, behavior, and position in the photos. How do these characteristics differ between serious pictures of politicians or similar figures and those with a less serious purpose, such as images of entertainers or athletes? How do these in turn differ from commercial photographs intended to sell the viewer something? How are the products for sale related to the views about relationships and ideals projected in these commercial portraits, and how do they help sell the products?

For Further Reference

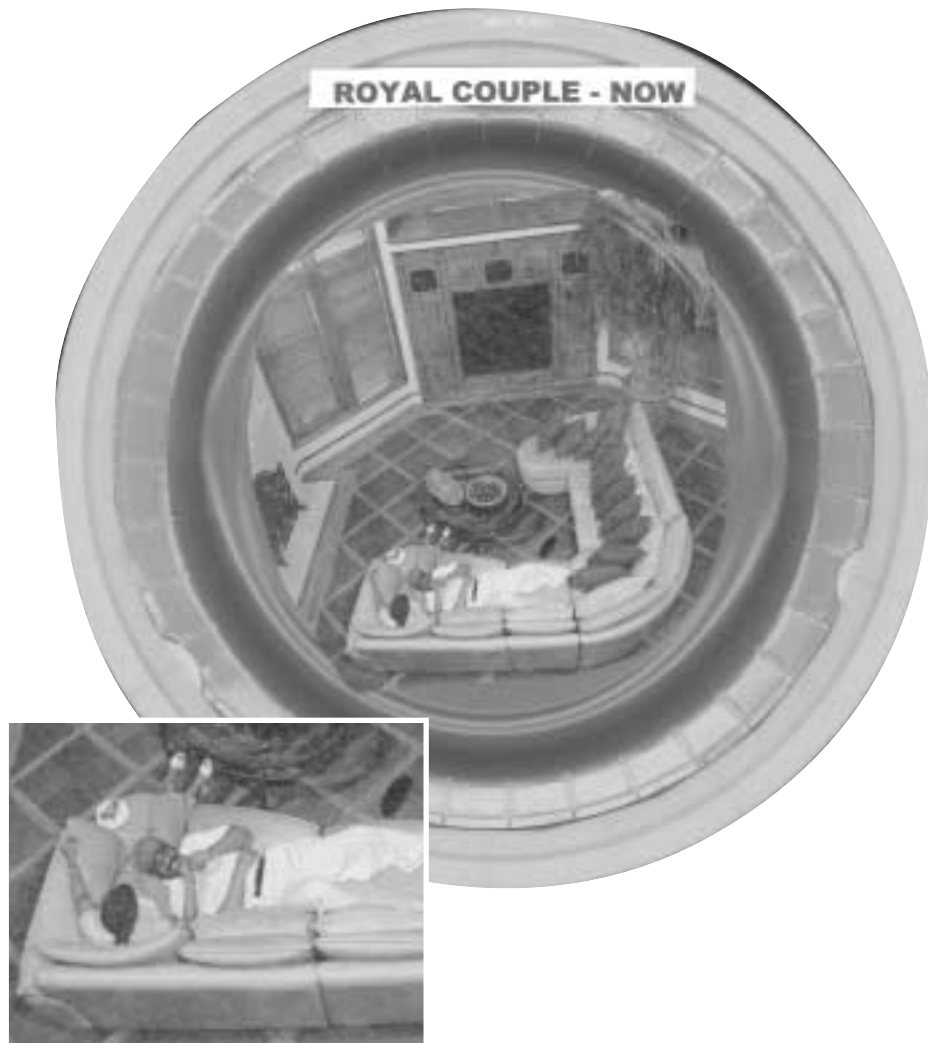
Images of Ancient Iran Tehran <stanford.edu/Images/Ancient/ancient.html>

Iran: The Society and Its Environments <<http://www.cyberiran.com>>

Baerwald, Thomas J., and Celeste Fraser. *Prentice Hall World Geography*. Needham, Mass.: Prentice Hall, 1993.

Fernea, Elizabeth Warnock, and Basima Qattan Bezirgan, eds. *Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak*. Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1977.

Perry, M., A. Scholl, D. Davis, J. Harris, and T. Von Laue. *History of the World*. Evanston, Ill.: McDougal Littell, 1995.



Mary playfully feeds Steve grapes as they lounge on a leather sofa. They are royal because they want to build the King Love Center and Foundation, which combines the name of Steve's idol, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and his nickname, Wonder Love. Together Mary and Steve will teach children how to set goals and dream.

Student artwork



Student artwork



Student artwork

Resources



Books

For Children

Ahsan, M. M. *Muslim Festivals*. Vero Beach, Fl.: Rourke Enterprises, 1987.

This book introduces Islam and Islamic festivals from all over the world, providing contextual photographs that bring the descriptions of Islamic practices and celebrations to life.

Child, John. *The Rise of Islam*. New York, N.Y.: P. Bedrick Books, 1995.

This clear and straightforward introduction to the history of Islam provides middle school students with particularly engaging timelines, pictures, photographs, and charts.

Ghazi, Suhaib Hamid. *Ramadan*. New York: Holiday House, 1996.

This beautifully illustrated book describes Ramadan and follows the main character, Hakeem, and his family through their month of fasting.

Gordon, Matthew S. *Islam*. New York, N.Y.: Facts on File, 1991.

Appropriate for middle school and high school students, this book provides information on Islam, its history, and the issues affecting the Islamic world in recent history.

Husain, Shahrukh. *What Do We Know about Islam?* New York, N.Y.: P. Bedrick Books, 1995.

This lively and colorful guide to Islam touches on a variety of topics, including festivals, calligraphy, stories, and the Hajj.

Matthews, Mary. *Magid Fast for Ramadan*. New York, N.Y.: Clarion Books, 1996.

This charming story of Magid, a young boy who wishes to fast for Ramadan, will engage young readers and give them a better understanding of this Islamic holiday.

For Adults

Bloom, Jonathan, and Sheila Blair. *Islamic Arts*. London: Phaidon Press, 1997.

Canby, Sheila R. *Persian Painting*. New York, N.Y.: Thames and Hudson, 1993.

Douglass, Susan L. *Beyond a Thousand and One Nights: A Sampler of Literature from Muslim Civilization*. Fountain Valley, Calif: Council on Islamic Education, 2000.

This teacher resource on various forms of Islamic literature includes poetry, travel accounts, biography, science, folktales, and epithets from the Prophet. Its lessons are appropriate for junior high and high school students.

Douglass, Susan L., and Karima Diane Alavi. *The Emergence of Renaissance: Cultural Interactions between Europeans and Muslims*. Fountain Valley, Calif: Council on Islamic Education, 1999.

This teacher resource on the multicultural nature of the Renaissance includes information on commerce, travel, education, science, and the visual arts. Its lessons are appropriate for junior high and high school students.

Irwin, Robert. *Islamic Art in Context: Art, Architecture, and the Literary World*. New York, N.Y.: Harry N. Abrams, 1997.

Teaching about Islam and Muslims in the Public School Classroom: A Handbook for Educators. Fountain Valley, Calif.: Council on Islamic Education, 1995.

This straightforward guide to basic information on Islam and the Islamic world also offers information useful for teachers who have Muslim students.

Magazine

Aramco World

This bimonthly magazine, free of charge to educators, covers a variety of topics related to the Arab world. Write to *Aramco World*, P.O. Box 3725, Escondido, CA 92033-3725.

For a more comprehensive list of written resources on Islam, see the resource list that accompanies *Teaching about Islam and Muslims in the Public School Classroom: A Handbook for Educators*.

Films and Videos

Please note that these films and videos have not been previewed or evaluated by the staff or curators of the Freer and Sackler galleries. Contact information for film distributors may be found on pages 87–88.

Overviews of Islam

The Arabs: A Living History

Made up of ten parts, each written and narrated by a prominent Arab intellectual, this series illuminates the many facets of Arab culture and history, exploring both historical and contemporary issues. 1986. Video; ten 50-minute episodes. Available for rent or purchase. Arab Film Distribution.

Beyond the Veil: The Many Faces of Islam

Part one of the series, “The Born-Again Muslims,” profiles a wide range of attitudes and practices in the Islamic world, including liberals in Turkey, moderates in North Africa, and hard-line conservatives in Iran. Part two, “The Holy Warriors,” examines radical interpretations of the Koran in Algeria, Palestine, Jordan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan that function as attempts to escape the pervasive influence of the Western world. Part three, “The New Cold War?” asks whether a widening gap is opening between Westerners and moderate Muslims and looks at possible foundations for dialogue about democracy and human rights. 1999. Video; three 52-minute episodes. Available for rent or purchase. Filmmakers Library.

The Gift of Islam

This video introduces the Islamic world’s cultural achievements and contributions to the West in the fields of literature, crafts, philosophy, architecture, astronomy, engineering, geography, mathematics, navigation, and medicine. 1970. Film or video; 28 minutes. Available for rent. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Islam (Smithsonian World)

Historian David McCullough hosts this introduction to Islam that pays special attention to negating common stereotypes and common misperceptions. 1987. Video; 60 minutes. Available for rent. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Islam: Empire of Faith

This ambitious PBS documentary covers the spread of Islam from the birth of Muhammad to the spread of the Ottoman Empire and explores Islam’s contributions to world culture via reenactments of important events, displays of art and architecture, and interviews with scholars from around the world. 2001. Video; three episodes, 150 minutes total. Available for purchase. PBS and Astrolabe Islamic Media.

Ramadan

This interactive educational video intended for grades K–4 explores the meaning of the various rituals of Ramadan, the holy month of fasting. 1997. Video; 25 minutes. Available for purchase. Astrolabe Islamic Media.

Saints and Spirits

Documenting an aspect of Islam that few outsiders see, this film records three religious events in Morocco: an annual renewal of contact with spirits in Marrakech, a pilgrimage to the shrine of Sidi Chamharouch in the Atlas Mountains, and the veneration of a new saint's shrine. 1979. Film or video; 30 minutes. Available for rent or purchase. First Run/Icarus Films.

The Traditional World of Islam

Designed as an introduction to Islam's 1,300-year legacy of culture and civilization, this six-part series focuses on the classical Islamic empire and its lingering influence on Africa, Indonesia, and West Asia. 1998. Video; six 25-minute episodes. Available for rent or purchase. Arab Film Distribution.

The Wonders of Islamic Science

This documentary describes the achievements of Muslim scientists in astronomy, medicine, mathematics, geography, botany, and other fields and provides insight into the Koran's role in inspiring these efforts. 1994. Video; 27 minutes. Available for purchase. Sound Vision.

Art of the Islamic World

Art and the Islamic World

Images of calligraphy, carpets, ceramics, architecture, miniature paintings, scientific drawings, and metalwork provide insight into the varied world of Islam's artistic tradition. 1993. Video; 33 minutes. Available for purchase. Middle East Institute.

Islam: A Civilization and Its Art

This video features commentaries from leading Islamic art historians on the development of Islamic civilization as expressed via its art. 1987. Video; 60 minutes. Available for rent. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Islam: A Pictorial Essay in Four Parts

Broadly outlining Islam as a faith and a foundation for Muslim civilization in four parts—"The Doctrine," "The Life of the Prophet and the Faith," "The History and Culture," and "The Arts and Sciences"—this video includes images of over three hundred items of Islamic art and architecture. 1986. Video; 90 minutes. Available for purchase. Islamic Texts Society.

Islamic Art

This program discusses the art of the garden, the architecture and sculpture of mosques and Koranic schools, the illumination and calligraphy of ancient texts, and the influence of Islamic decorative style on Western art. Video; 30 minutes. Available for rent or purchase. Films for the Humanities and Sciences.

Contemporary Islam

ABC News Nightline: The Hajj

This video provides an insider's view of the journey of American Muslim and ABC News correspondent Michael Wolfe as he performs his pilgrimage to Mecca. 1997. Video; 23 minutes. Available for purchase. Astrolabe Islamic Media.

Islam in America

This video explores the history of Islam in America and provides a glimpse into the lives of several Muslims in America. 1992. Video. Christian Science Monitor Video.

Living Islam

A project initiated by renowned Muslim scholar Akbar S. Ahmed and produced by the BBC, this six-part exploration of Islamic faith and practice contains glimpses of life in nineteen different countries as well as interviews with leading Muslim scholars. 1993. Video; six 60-minute segments. Available for purchase. Ambrose Video.

Not without My Veil: Amongst the Women of Oman

This film introduces the viewer to educated, independent women who wear the veil in modern Oman and consider it a symbol of their origins rather than oppression, focusing on a woman who was raised in England and returned to Oman to pursue a career in banking. 1995. Video; 29 minutes. Available for rent or purchase. Filmmakers Library.

The Peoples of Islam

This film emphasizes the geographical extent of the Islamic world, from Nigeria to Indonesia, with a particular emphasis on how contemporary Muslims adopt Islam's ancient heritage in their daily lives. 1982. Video; 20 minutes. Available for rent. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Feature Films

A Door to the Sky

This Moroccan feature tells the story of a young woman who adopts Islam while visiting her dying father as she strives to maintain her cultural and religious identity. 1989. Film or video; 107 minutes. Available for rent or purchase. Arab Film Distribution.

Malcolm X

Director Spike Lee's film explores Malcolm X's life and embrace of Islam, featuring an authentic depiction of the Hajj. 1993. Film or video; 194 minutes. Available for rent or purchase. Warner Brothers.

The Message

Filmed in Libya and Morocco, this epic production starring Anthony Quinn and Irene Papas depicts the revelation of Islam to Muhammad and the subsequent founding of the first Muslim community. 1976. Film or video; 177 minutes. Available for rent or purchase.

Contact Information for Films and Videos

Arab Film Distribution
2417 10th Ave. E
Seattle, WA 98102
TEL (206) 322-0882
FAX (206) 322-4586
www.arabfilm.com

Astrolabe Islamic Media
TEL (800) 392-7876, ext. 4
info@astrolabepictures.com
www.astrolabepictures.com

Filmmakers Library
124 East 40th Street
New York, NY 10016
TEL (212) 808-4980
FAX (212) 808-4983
www.filmmakers.com
info@filmmakers.com

Films for the Humanities and Sciences
P.O. Box 2053
Princeton, NJ 08543-2053
TEL (800) 257-5126
www.films.com

First Run/Icarus Films
153 Waverly Place
Sixth Floor
New York, NY 10014
TEL (212) 727-1711 or (800) 876-1710
FAX (212) 255-7923
www.frif.com

Islamic Texts Society
22A Brooklands Avenue
Cambridge CB2 2DQ
United Kingdom
TEL 44 (0) 1223 314387
FAX 44 (0) 1223 324342
U.S. FAX: (503) 280-8832
mail@its.org.uk
www.its.org.uk

The Middle East Institute
1761 N Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036-2882
TEL (202) 785-1141
www.mideasti.org

PBS
www.shop.pbs.org/cust/cdeploy
teacher.shop.pbs.org

Sound Vision Foundation
9056 South Harlem Avenue
Bridgeview, IL 60455
TEL (708) 430-1255
FAX (708) 430-1346
info@soundvision.com
www.soundvision.com

University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill
Nonprint Materials Collection
CB#3942, R.B. House Library
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3942
TEL (919) 962-2559

Local Islamic Centers and Mosques

All Dulles Area Muslim Society,
Adams Center
Herndon, VA
TEL (703) 318-0529
zsaleem@erols.com
www.wdn.com/adams

Islamic Community Center of
Northern Virginia
Annandale, VA
TEL (703) 569-7913
FAX (703) 541-2043

Islamic Education Center
Potomac, MD
TEL (301) 340-2070
FAX (301) 340-7399

Islamic Center
Washington, D.C.
TEL (202) 332-8343
FAX (202) 234-5035

Islamic Community Center of Laurel
Laurel, MD
TEL (301) 317-4584
FAX (301) 725-8762
islam.org/hic/iccl

Muslim Community Center
Silver Spring, MD
TEL (301) 384-3454
FAX (301) 384-6281
www.mccmd.org

Embassies and Consulates

The countries of the embassies and consulates listed below are primarily Muslim or have significant Muslim populations. This list is not comprehensive, and it focuses on the countries represented in the collections of the Freer and Sackler galleries.

Embassy of the Republic of Afghanistan
2341 Wyoming Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20008
TEL (202) 234-3770
FAX (202) 328-3516

Embassy of the People's
Republic of Bangladesh
3510 International Dr., N.W.
Washington, DC 20007
TEL (202) 244-2745
FAX (202) 244-5366
bdeng@bangladoot.org
www.bangladoot.org

Embassy of the People's
Republic of China
2300 Connecticut Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20008
TEL (202) 328-2500
FAX (202) 588-0032
www.china-embassy.org

Embassy of India
2107 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20008
TEL (202) 939-7000
FAX (202) 265-4351
www.indianembassy.org

Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia
2020 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20036
TEL (202) 775-5200
FAX (202) 775-5365

Iraqi Interests Section
1801 P St., NW
Washington, DC 20036
TEL (202) 483-7500
FAX (202) 462-5066

Interests Section of the Islamic
Republic of Iran
2209 Wisconsin Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20007
TEL (202) 965-4990
FAX (202) 965-1073
www.daftar.org/default_eng.htm

Embassy of the Hashemite
Kingdom of Jordan
3405 International Dr., NW
Washington, DC 20008
TEL (202) 966-2664
FAX (202) 966-3110
HKJEmbassyDC@aol.com
www.jordanembassyus.org

Embassy of Lebanon
2560 28th St., NW
Washington, DC 20008
TEL (202) 939-6300
FAX (202) 939-6324
info@lebanonembassy.org
www.lebanonembassy.org

Embassy of Malaysia
2401 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20008
TEL (202) 328-2700
FAX (202) 483-7661

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
2315 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20008
TEL (202) 939-6200
FAX (202) 387-0484
info@pakistan-embassy.com
www.pakistan-embassy.com

Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia
601 New Hampshire Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20037
TEL (202) 337-4076
FAX (202) 944-5983
www.saudiembassy.net

Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic
2215 Wyoming Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20008
TEL (202) 232-6313
FAX (202) 234-9548
info@saudiembassy.net

Embassy of the Republic of Turkey
2525 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20008
TEL (202) 612-6700
FAX (202) 612-6744
info@turkey.org
www.turkey.org

Embassy of the United Arab Emirates
1255 22nd St., NW
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20037
TEL (202) 243-2400
FAX (202) 243-2432

Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan
1746 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20036
TEL (202) 887-5300
FAX (202) 293-6804
www.uzbekistan.org

National Educational Resources

AMIDEAST
1730 M St., NW
Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20035-4505
TEL (202) 776-9600
FAX (202) 776-3196
inquiries@amideast.org
www.amideast.org

Arab World and Islamic Resources and
School Services (AWAIR)
1865 Euclid Ave., Suite 4
Berkeley, CA 94709
TEL (510) 704-0517
awair@igc.apc.org
www.dnai.com/~gui/awairproductinfo.html

Asia Society
Education Department
725 Park Ave.
New York, NY 10021
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