

Grade 7 Social Studies Family Update: Islam in Medieval Times

Dear Parents,

We have wrapped up our first unit on Europe and will now begin the study of Islamic empires. I hope you will find the included resources useful; please contact me with any questions or concerns you may have; I look forward to seeing you at the upcoming parent-teacher conferences!

In Partnership,
Dr. Griggs

Unit Description

In this unit, students will first watch a film to learn how the physical geography of the Arabian Peninsula affected daily life in the region and made it a challenging place to settle. Through the examination of various maps, they will see what made the Arabian Peninsula an ideal trading center despite its geographic challenges. Next, students will learn about the life and teachings of the prophet Muhammad. They will explore how his teachings were first met with rejection before becoming widely accepted, and how the scriptures of the Quran spread after his death. Finally, students will analyze how Muslims made an impact on the world in such important areas of study as architecture, science, technology, geography, navigation, mathematics, medicine, literature, art, music, and recreation. Students will observe the many contributions that Muslims made to their societies and to the wider world, and present on a legacy of their choice as part of an Islamic cultural fair.

Unit Overview

Week 1 (November 5-9)

Film: Human Planet: Deserts -- Into the Furnace

Film viewing guide formative

Mural of life in the Arabian peninsula

Week 2 (November 12-16)

The origins and spread of Islam

The story of Muhammad

Formative: letter-writing

Week 3 (November 19-23)

The religion of Islam

Muslim legacies

Week 4 (November 26-30)

Muslim legacies

Islamic cultural fair

Week 5 (December 3-7)

Islamic cultural fair

Revision

Big summative: Islam unit test, tentatively December 7th

Here are some ways that you can help your child learn at home:

Read to Learn More About It--recommended books for you and your child to read together:

"Into the Sands," by Wilfred Thesiger. Between 1945 and 1950, Thesiger made several trips through the Rub-al-Khali. In this book, he describes his trips and the vanishing way of life of his Bedouins guides.

"The Koran Interpreted: A Translation," by A. J. Arberry. For those who don't speak Arabic, Arberry's translation of the Muslim holy book gives insight into the faith of Islam.

"The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization," by Marshall G. S. Hodgson. Hodgson explores the development of Islamic civilization from before the birth of Muhammad to the middle of the 12th century.

"Islam: A Short History," by Karen Armstrong. The author surveys the growth of Islam from its beginnings in the 600s to today.

"Moorish Spain," by Richard Fletcher. This book provides an engaging account of 700 years of Muslim civilization on the Iberian Peninsula.

"Umm El Madayan: An Islamic City Through the Ages," by Abderrahman Ayoub and others. The author traces the history of a fictional city in North Africa.

Talk About It--conversation topics that will help you and your children engage with the course material:

Nomads

In class we will talk about nomads called Bedouins. Have a conversation with your child about the nomadic lifestyle and speculate about what it might be like to live as a nomad today.

Five Pillars of Islam

The Five Pillars of Islam are five duties that all Muslims must perform to show their submission to the will of God. Talk about the Five Pillars with your child.

Problems of succession

Panic swept through the Muslim community after the death of Muhammad because Muhammad had not named a successor. Have a conversation with your child about difficulties your country may have had in choosing a new leader in the past.

Umayyad expansion

Look at the map of Umayyad expansion at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umayyad_Caliphate. Look at an atlas with your child, and make a list of present-day countries that occupy territory that was absorbed during Umayyad expansion.

Baghdad

To be closer to their power base, the Abbasids made Baghdad their new capital in 762. With your child, use the Internet to find information about present-day Baghdad.

Muslims in Spain

Help your child to conduct research on a Spanish city once controlled by Muslims (Seville, for example). Find evidence of Muslim influence in the culture of the city today.

Make It--making things together with your child can be a great learning experience for both of you!

An itinerary

Do more research on the Hajj, the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. Create a brief itinerary that lists and describes the pilgrimage's most important events. Add illustrations or images to make your itinerary more interesting.