

Medina to Mecca

By Amy Cummings for Blue Ridge Public Television (WBRA, WMSY, WSBN)
Franklin County High School, Rocky Mount, VA

Grade Levels: 9

Time Allotment: Two 90-minute class periods and half of a third class period

Overview:

Students will work in teams to create posters that cover information regarding some aspect of the Islamic faith and its impact on the world. Students will gain perspective on the issues that surround Islam and Muslims, particularly the misconceptions and stereotypes about the religion. Students will study the origin of Islam and basic beliefs, the geography, history and the scientific and cultural contributions of Islam.

Subject Matter: Social Studies

Learning Objectives:

Students will demonstrate knowledge of Islamic civilization from about 600 to 1000 A.D. by:

- a. describing the origin, beliefs, traditions, customs, and spread of Islam,
- b. assessing the influence of geography on Islamic economic, social, and political development, including the impact of conquest and trade,
- c. citing cultural and scientific contributions of Islamic civilizations

Standards:

Virginia Standards for History/Social Studies courses

<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Superintendent/Sols/home.shtml>

WHI.8 a, b, and d Islamic civilization

Media Components:

Video

United Streaming <http://www.unitedstreaming.com> video United Learning, "Religions of the World: Islam"

Internet

Bartleby.com article on Islam

This article comes from Bartleby's edition of the Columbia Encyclopedia Online.

<http://www.bartleby.com/65/is/Islam.html>

Encarta article on Islam

MSN's Encarta Encyclopedia's Islam articles includes color photographs and drawings.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761579171/Islam.html

Mr. Dowling's Electronic Passport

This excellent teacher-created site is a valuable resource for unbiased information on Islam and other world religions.

<http://www.mrdowling.com/605-islam.html>

Religious Tolerance.org

This thorough site offers in-depth information on topics in Islam as well as other religions. The site is excellent for its own information and its links to other reliable sources of information.

<http://www.religioustolerance.org/islam.htm>

The Religion of Islam

This site is rich in basic information about Islam.

<http://www.iad.org/>

Materials:

- A world map to point out locations of nations that practice Islam
- A computer with Internet access and word processing software for each student
- One disk for each student to save pictures or text to add to the posters from the Internet or scanned material from books.
- A scanner in case students wish to include pictures from library books in presentations
- Library books on Islam and world religions for supplemental research
- Posters for each group
- Scissors, tape, glue, markers, and colored pencils for students to create posters
- Windows Media player for showing United Streaming clip
- Desktop computer or laptop computer with Windows 98 or better connected to an LCD projector or television equipped with a presentation device in order to show the United Streaming video.
- A computer for each student or group

Prep for Teachers:

- Download the United Streaming <http://www.unitedstreaming.com> video "Religions of the World: Islam" to the desktop of the computer or burned onto a disk. Cue the video to 04:00.
- Connect the computer showing the video to a presentation device.
- Schedule Library time to use computers and books, or schedule time in a computer lab and have the Library send appropriate books to that location.
- When using media, provide students with a Focus for Media Interaction, a specific task to complete and/or information to identify during or after viewing of video segments, Web sites or other multimedia elements.

Introductory Activity:

1. Ask students to brainstorm the countries they think of when they think of where Muslims, the people who practice the religion of Islam, live. Accept all responses and write them on the board.
2. Go through the list of responses and discuss each country's relationship to Islam and point each one out on a world map. Most likely the majority of the responses will suggest Middle Eastern countries like Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Point out to students that one of the major Muslim nations is Indonesia, which is not even located in the Middle East. Discuss that this is one of many misconceptions about Islam.
3. Tell students that in this lesson we will learn more about Islam and its history so that we can know the difference between the truth and the many misconceptions and stereotypes about this religion and the people who practice it.

Learning Activity:

1. Explain to students that there are many misconceptions about Islam, mostly caused because people don't understand that Islam is not just a religion, but a way of life for Muslims. Many of their customs and practices seem strange to us because we don't understand the significance the customs have to Muslims. **Provide students with a focus for media interaction** by saying, "In the first clip that we will watch of the "Religions of the World: Islam" video, listen for three practices of Muslims that seem strange to Westerners."

Play (04:00) Audio: "Many of the laws and customs of Islam..."
Visual: a mosque's spire

Stop (05:37) Audio: "They should cover so they could be known but not abused."
Visual: the girl is talking

Ask students, "What are the three customs that Westerners find strange or extreme?" Students should respond that Westerners find prayer five times a day, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and the covering of women strange or extreme. It is important to point out to the students that the reasons for Muslims doing these things comes from the Koran.

2. Tell students, "Islam has several key characteristics that are important to know in order to understand the faith." **Provide students with a focus for media interaction** by saying, "In this next clip, listen for three characteristics of Islam."

Play (08:00) Audio: "The central belief of Islam is that there is no god but Allah."
Visual: the man is walking away

Stop (09:30) Audio: "Islam provides guidance for every phase of the Muslim's life."
Visual: the man buying things in the market

Ask students, "What are some of the characteristics of Islam that you heard in the

clip?” Answers may include the central belief that there is no god but Allah, unity among Muslims throughout the world, humane faith, belief in a final judgement day, giving alms to the poor, rules for family and business from the Koran.

3. Tell students, “Islam began in the nation today known as Saudi Arabia, where it is still strong today. However, over the years it has grown tremendously.” **Provide students with a focus for media interaction** by saying, “In this last clip, listen for what percentage of the known civilized world once was under the influence of Islam, and which modern countries that included.”

Play (13:10) Audio: “Following the death of Mohammed...”

Visual: artwork

Stop (13:50) Audio: “...including Spain and China was in the hands of Muslims.”

Visual: map

Ask students what percentage this included, and they should be able to say “50%.” Students should be able to respond that modern-day Spain and China were included in the Islamic sphere of influence, but may have difficulty with others. **Pause** the video on the map and compare it with the world map in the classroom to elicit more responses.

Culminating Activity:

1. Tell students that they will now do some research to learn more about the characteristics of Islam and its history. Explain that the class will be broken into four groups, and each group will create a poster display. Each group will be assigned a topic in Islam to cover. The topics will be
 - a. Origin of Islam and basic beliefs: should include the five pillars of Islam and additional information found.
 - b. Geography of Islam: where Islam originated and where it has spread today. What has been the impact on people in the areas conquered? There should be at least two maps on this display.
 - c. History of Islam: How did the religion get started, what conflicts arose, the origin of permanent division in the religion after Mohammed’s death.
 - d. Scientific and cultural contributions of Islam
2. Tell students that each poster should include text, pictures, maps, and drawings, if desired. Provide students with a **focus for media interaction** by telling them that they should use the following Web sites in addition to Library books in order to find the information requested in step 1:
 - Bartleby.com article on Islam
<http://www.bartleby.com/65/is/Islam.html>
 - Encarta article on Islam
http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761579171/Islam.html

- Mr. Dowling's Electronic Passport
<http://www.mrdowling.com/605-islam.html>
 - Religious Tolerance.org
<http://www.religioustolerance.org/islam.htm>
 - The Religion of Islam
<http://www.iad.org/>
3. Students should have time to begin their research on the first day. Students should finish their posters by the end of the second day. Each group will have ten minutes to present the information from their poster at the beginning of the class on the third day.

Cross-Curricular Extensions:

1. Calligraphy of the Arabic text is an essential component of Islamic art. Have an art teacher experienced in calligraphy work with students to create sayings in Arabic calligraphy on posters and decorate the borders with the intertwining geometric shapes that are characteristic of Islamic art.
2. Early Islamic civilization made great contributions to math and science. Have students do research to examine the specific contributions of Islamic society to math, including specific examples that they have used.

Community Connections:

Check to see if a representative from a local Islamic Center can come to your school to allow students to ask specific questions about Islam. In some localities, it may be some students' first contact with a Muslim person. This experience would allow that contact to be extremely positive, thus combating stereotypes and misconceptions.