

Name _____

Global 1: The Founding of Islam

The ancient Middle East has long been called the “graveyard for empires” because so many powerful civilizations have fallen apart while trying to conquer it. Throughout the Stone Age and Classical Era, the harsh deserts and nomadic tribes of people prevented anything of substance from forming there. That all changed in 570 AD when the religion of **Islam** was founded in the heart of the Middle East.



Looking at the globe to the left, why do you think the Middle East is called the “Middle”?

1. Where was Islam founded? When was it founded? (Answer in complete sentences)

Islam is an **Abrahamic Religion** which means it is **monotheistic** and traces some of its teachings back to the Biblical character of Abraham. Islam copied most of its teachings from the Jewish and Christian faiths but added a whole lot more.

Most monotheistic religions today were based on the teachings of the prophet Abraham. Islam took its basic teachings from him as well.

Could this cultural appropriation be considered plagiarism? Why or why not?



2. Where did the followers of Islam get most of their ideas?

Islam was created by a man named **Muhammad** who lived in the land of **Saudi Arabia** on the Arabian Peninsula about 100 years after the fall of the Roman Empire. By this time, Christianity had spread throughout Europe and many people knew of the teachings of Jesus. Muhammad was a **prophet** or a person who people believe speaks for God and he said that the Bible was incomplete. He preached about new information that Jesus had never mentioned and wrote it down in a new holy book that became known as the **Qur'an**.



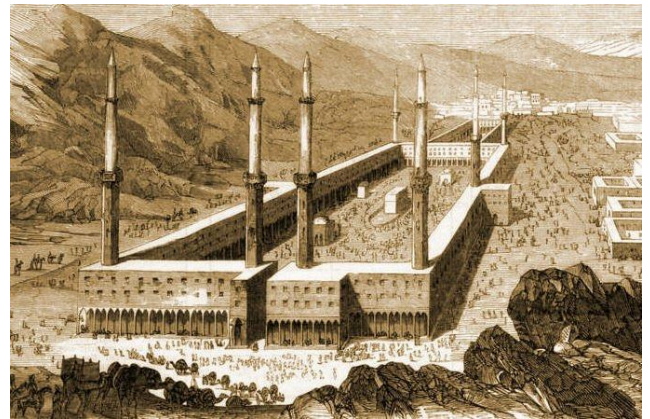
Saudi Arabia was a largely empty place at the time with a few nomadic tribes of camel herders living in camps. Why do you think this is?

3. Who was responsible for the founding of Islam? Where was he from and when did he live?

Muhammad traveled to the Arabian city of **Mecca** and began preaching **monotheism**. He told the Meccans (people of Mecca) that they should only pray to one god that he called **Allah** and that if they didn't then they would go to hell. The upper class citizens of Mecca didn't like Muhammad's message because he called for **social equality** which would include freeing their slaves and hurting their businesses. The **Meccan Elite** tried to have Muhammad arrested so he fled the city and traveled to **Medina**, another city southwest of Mecca.

Mecca was a powerful trading city that controlled the flow of goods and money throughout Saudi Arabia. The rich men who controlled the trade routes didn't want to share their wealth with the everyday citizens of the city and got mad when Muhammad suggested it.

How would you feel if someone told you to give away all your money? Why?



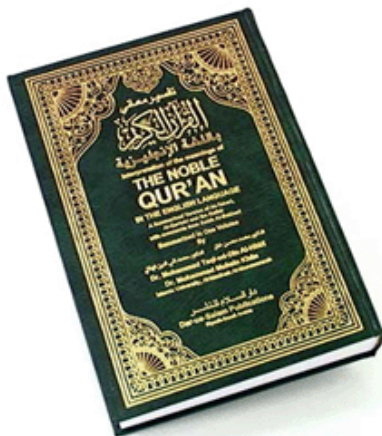
4. Why did Muhammad have to leave the city of Mecca?

During his travels, Muhammad created the **5 Pillars of Islam** for his followers to perform. The 5 pillars were specific behaviors that Muhammad practiced during his life. According to the Qur'an, every person who wants to practice Islam would be called **Muslims** and they had to uphold the 5 pillars if they wanted to get into heaven. The 5 pillars include;

- A. **Testimony:** All Muslims must claim that their god **Allah** is the one and only god and promise only to pray to him. (This was a big deal at the time because many people already had their favorite gods to pray to and convincing them to change to Allah was very difficult)
- B. **Prayer:** Muslims must pray to Allah five times a day by facing the general direction of the city of **Jerusalem**, kneeling down and having personal communication with god.
- C. **Alms giving:** All Muslims must give charity to the poor to support other Muslims who are not as wealthy.
- D. **Fasting:** During the holy month of **Ramadan**, Muslims are not allowed to eat from sunrise to sunset each in order to sacrifice their comfort in the name of Allah
- E. **Pilgrimage:** All Muslims who are able must travel to the city of Mecca at least once in their lives. This trip is called a **hajj** and it symbolized Muhammad's travels between Mecca and Medina.

5. Which Pillar of Islam do you think you would have the hardest time following? Why?

Muslims all over Saudi Arabia agreed to follow the 5 Pillars because they were written in the Qur'an. Muslims believe that the Qur'an holds the words of God himself so they consider it the **final authority** on all matters.



The Qur'an is the sacred religious text of Islam and devout Muslims follow the teachings in it loyally. Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the absolute word of God and no one can argue with its teachings.

What are some other holy texts that other religions read and follow?
