

Unit 6 What were the achievements of the Islamic states 600–1600?

About the unit

This unit involves the study of the political and cultural achievements of Islamic states during the early period.

This unit is expected to take 10–15 hours. There is scope to adjust some of the teaching activities to take account of time constraints in different schools.

Where the unit fits in

This unit follows unit 2 ‘Medieval monarchs’, unit 3 ‘Medieval people’, unit 4 ‘Medieval church’, and unit 5 ‘Elizabeth I’. This unit provides an alternative overview of the period from the perspective of a contemporary, but different, culture. It provides contrasts and connections with aspects of British history – specifically with the Crusades and with Henry VIII.

It must be emphasised that this approach to Islam is primarily from an historical point of view and not a religious one. This unit links with unit 7B ‘What’s in a building?’ in the art and design scheme of work.

Expectations

At the end of this unit

most pupils will: demonstrate knowledge of a range of the characteristic features of Islamic civilisation; develop chronological understanding and make links between Islamic civilisation and contemporary developments in western civilisation; produce structured work, using dates and technical terms accurately, when describing aspects of Islamic civilisation; suggest reasons why there can be different interpretations of major individuals such as Salah al-Din; evaluate sources of information that are useful for a study of Islamic civilisation

some pupils will not have made so much progress and will: demonstrate knowledge of some key features of Islamic civilisation; show awareness of some of the ways that Islamic civilisation changed over a thousand years; suggest similarities and differences between leading Islamic and western contemporaries; select and combine information accurately when writing accounts of aspects of Islamic civilisation; identify some differences between interpretations of a major individual such as Salah al-Din; use different sources when producing accounts of Islamic civilisation

some pupils will have progressed further and will: demonstrate knowledge of both the characteristic features and the diversity of medieval Islamic civilisation; establish a chronological framework within which to analyse relationships between features of Islamic civilisation and contemporary developments in western civilisation; deploy relevant information to produce well-structured explanations of aspects of Islamic civilisation; evaluate different interpretations of major individuals such as Salah al-Din; make critical use of a wide range of relevant information sources

Prior learning

It is helpful if pupils have:

- done prior work on Islam in religious education
- visited a mosque
- compared characteristic features of different historical periods
- produced structured work that includes appropriate dates and historical terms
- considered the question of significance

Language for learning

Through the activities in this unit pupils will be able to understand, use and spell correctly words relating to:

- Islamic civilisation, *eg Qur’an, Hadith, caliph, jihad, crusade, mosque, sultan*

Speaking and listening – through the activities pupils could:

- ask questions to gain clarification and further information

Reading – through the activities pupils could:

- spot connections and links between how information is presented in different forms

Writing – through the activities pupils could:

- group sentences into coherent paragraphs, with subheadings as appropriate

Resources

Resources include:

- map of the lands covered by the Islamic empire
- plan and designs of the new city of Baghdad
- pictures of early mosques
- contemporary crusader and Muslim accounts of Salah al-Din
- modern interpretations of Salah al-Din
- websites, *eg* <http://islam.org/mosque>; www.fordham.edu/halsall; <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu>

Out-of-school learning

Pupils could contact local Muslim community members who might be prepared to contribute to the work on the nature of Islamic civilisation. They could also visit a local mosque.

Future learning

Pupils can build upon this unit in many ways. Schools may wish to return to the idea of Islamic civilisation when studying the global expansion of British power 1750–1900 and as part of a world study after 1900. Pupils can use their analysis of the significance of individuals when assessing the role of rulers, scientists and inventors in other units.

What is Islam?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to use their prior knowledge about the life and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and about the fundamental aspects of Muslim beliefs • to communicate their knowledge clearly | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss pupils' prior knowledge of Islam today and the life and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. • Ask pupils to explain in their own words the meaning of the word <i>Islam</i> and the significance for Muslims of the Qur'an, the Hadith and the Five Pillars of Islam. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain some of the central features of Islam as a religion, making accurate use of technical terms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on their background and prior work in RE, many pupils may have a substantial body of prior knowledge. • It would be helpful to cross-refer to the RE schemes of work. • ICT: at appropriate intervals throughout the unit encourage the pupils to add the events and individuals of the Islamic world to the existing computer timeline, <i>eg especially when studying the Crusades</i>. The Moslem calendar and appropriate labelling of 'periods' of Islamic history can be discussed so that pupils develop understanding of the relative nature of labels used in chronology. This could also link with previous units. |
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How did the world of the Middle East change during the life of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the first four caliphs?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how an Islamic empire rapidly established itself during the seventh century • about some of the weaknesses of the enemies of Islam: the Byzantine and Persian empires • to identify and communicate characteristics of a successful leader | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the dramatic spread of Islam during the lifetimes of the Prophet and the first four caliphs. • Pupils plot the expansion of Islam on maps. Ask pupils to use textbooks and other resources to find as many reasons as they can to explain the success of the armies of Islam and the failure of the Persian and Byzantine empires to withstand Arab conquerors. • Show the strengths of Islam and the weaknesses of the old empires in diagrammatic form. • Focus on a particular early caliph such as Umar (634–644) and consider his career. • Tell pupils about the effective use of spies in the Islamic empire. <i>How might a Byzantine spy, who has visited the court of the caliph at Medina, explain why Umar was a particularly successful leader?</i> Pupils write a report to the Byzantine emperor, Heraclius (610–641), describing distinctive features of Umar's rule, explaining how they helped him to control a huge new empire and suggesting ways in which this could be undermined. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify and explain some of the reasons for the rapid spread of Islam in the seventh century • explain the significance of key individuals such as the caliph Umar in the development of the Islamic empire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From a Muslim perspective, one answer to this question may be a religious one: that the spread of Islam was a consequence of divine intervention in human affairs. Teachers may wish to discuss this with pupils, but it should be made clear that in the study of history we confine ourselves to looking at purely historical factors. • The focus of the written task is on explanation, not narrative. Teachers will need to consider ways of helping pupils organise their ideas and structure the writing, <i>eg through a card-sorting activity, use of a writing frame and/or guidance on connectives.</i> • ICT: use of a computer presentation package would encourage pupils to focus on explanation rather than narrative. • Language for learning: pupils could spot connections and links between how information is presented in different forms. |
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A new Islamic city: how did the Abbasid caliphs organise their new capital at Baghdad?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how a new capital city was established by the caliphs in Baghdad • how the layout of the city gives us information about early Islamic civilisation • about daily life in Baghdad • to select and deploy information for a specific form of writing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask pupils to discuss which features they would include in a completely new town. Discuss what this tells us about our values and priorities. • Tell pupils that the Abbasid caliphs who ruled the Islamic world after 749 built a new capital in the 760s at Baghdad. Pupils study the layout and characteristics of the city. Ask pupils to work out what the design of the city tells us about the caliphs. • Provide pupils with a range of sources about the new city of Baghdad. Tell them how the city was organised and how people were expected to behave to avoid trouble with the officers of the caliph. • Ask pupils to provide a guide to merchants wishing to travel to the fabulously wealthy city of Baghdad during its heyday in the eighth century. • Describe how the power of the caliphs of Baghdad fluctuated in the following centuries until the Mongols sacked the city in 1258 and the last caliph was murdered. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe and analyse the layout of the new Islamic capital city of Baghdad • use their analysis of Baghdad to make inferences about the caliphs • select, organise and use sources of information for the purpose of writing a guidebook | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers might wish to draw on pupils' prior knowledge of towns in other periods/locations to make comparisons, <i>eg Roman, Viking, Egyptian, medieval European or Aztec settlements.</i> • Language for learning: pupils could group sentences into coherent paragraphs with subheadings. |
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How did Arab Muslims contribute to the world of mathematics and science during the Middle Ages?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that the Arab Muslims had considerable mathematical and scientific knowledge that influenced developments in Western Europe • to communicate knowledge in an appropriate form for an identified audience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide pupils with jumbled Arabic numbers and a jumbled list of English words of Arabic origin relating to mathematics and science, <i>eg algebra, zero, average, sodium, alkali and chemistry</i>. Ask pupils to sort these words and to use them to make some educated guesses about the subjects that interested the thinkers of early Islamic civilisation. • Pupils could devise questions to structure an investigation into the work of early Islamic mathematicians and scientists, such as Khwarizmi (780–850). Lead a class discussion on the importance of their work. • Ask pupils to choose either science or mathematics and to research how Islamic civilisation contributed to the development of the subject. Produce notes of guidance for secondary-school mathematics and science teachers explaining the importance of Islam in the origins of their subject. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • summarise the ways in which the Arab Muslims influenced Western European ideas about science and mathematics • This is an opportunity to plan an activity with specialist colleagues in mathematics and science departments. • Language for learning: pupils could ask questions to gain clarification and further information. • Key skills: some of these activities may provide opportunities for pupils to demonstrate evidence of application of number. |
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What can we learn from the architecture of Islamic civilisations?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some of the characteristic features of early Islamic architecture • to look in depth at two surviving buildings of this period as sources of information about Islamic civilisation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at pictures of surviving early mosques from different parts of the Islamic world. Identify common features and ask pupils to use correct technical terminology when describing the mosques. • Discuss the Islamic tradition of not decorating religious buildings with representative art and the development of decorative calligraphy. • Ask pupils what we can learn from these buildings about the people who built them. • Tell the story of the rise and fall of Muslim Spain. Focus on two contrasting surviving buildings: the mosque at Cordoba and the Alhambra Palace. Look at pictures of these two buildings. • Ask pupils to draw conclusions from the study of these buildings. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use correct technical terms when describing characteristic features of Islamic architecture • demonstrate inferential thinking and draw appropriate conclusions from the study of two surviving Islamic buildings • When looking at the evidence from Islamic Spain, teachers may wish to get pupils to organise their thinking into 'what we know for certain' and 'educated guesses'. Encourage inferential thinking, <i>eg the buildings as evidence of wealth, the luxurious lifestyle of the ruling classes, the importance of religion, artistic excellence</i>. • Links could be made with unit 5 'Elizabeth I' – specifically with Catherine of Aragon, the first wife of Henry VIII and youngest daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. • Islamic architecture takes on a form that conforms to the Islamic faith: links could be made here to RE. |
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How successful were the crusader attacks on the Islamic world?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • about the clash of culture and religion that took place during the Crusades • that the crusaders failed in the long term to displace Islamic civilisation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the idea of conflict between different faiths by looking at modern news stories that show that there are arguments today about who should control Jerusalem. Discuss the importance of the city to followers of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. • Provide an overview of the Crusades 1095–1291. Ask pupils to create a crusade timeline and to decide for each major event whether it was a victory for the crusaders or for the forces of Islam; events should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the capture of Jerusalem 1099 – the Battle of Hattin 1187 – the Fourth Crusade 1198 – the fall of Acre 1291 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • construct an analytical timeline that correctly categorises different key events in the story of the Crusades | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ‘analytical timeline’ is one that entails not only placing events in the correct chronological order, but also some thinking about and categorising of those events. The timeline will require two columns: one for crusader victories, another for Islamic victories. A timeline computer program might be used. • Links could be made with unit 2 ‘Medieval monarchs’ and specifically with King John and Britain at the time of the Crusades. • Links could be made with unit 4 ‘Medieval church’ and specifically with the section relating to Christian beliefs about Christendom. |
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Why do people disagree about Salah al-Din?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • about the career of the Islamic ruler and statesman Salah al-Din • how Salah al-Din has been interpreted in different ways | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell the story of Salah al-Din. • Brainstorm why he is an important figure in the history of the conflict between crusaders and the forces of Islam. • Pupils study a contemporary crusader and Muslim accounts of Salah al-Din, identifying similarities, differences and indicators of bias. • Pupils then consider different modern interpretations of Salah al-Din. • Pupils compare accounts, identify differences and suggest reasons for differences. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe and explain the significance of Salah al-Din • identify differences between interpretations of Salah al-Din and suggest possible explanations for these differences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The task can be differentiated through the number, range and complexity of sources used. |
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How powerful were the rulers of the Ottoman empire?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how the Ottoman empire spread • some of the characteristic features of the Ottoman empire • to compare the positions of a sultan such as Suleyman the Magnificent and a contemporary such as Henry VIII | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an overview of the rise of the Ottoman dynasty and the significance of the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Use maps to gauge the extent of Ottoman power in the sixteenth century. • Ask pupils to research the power of the sultan in general, and the career of Suleyman the Magnificent in particular. • Provide pupils with summary information on the career of Suleyman’s English contemporary, King Henry VIII. • Pupils produce a comparison of the two monarchs, identifying similarities and differences. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe, using appropriate technical terms, how the Ottoman sultans controlled their vast empire • identify similarities and differences between the position of an Ottoman sultan and a contemporary English monarch | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The design of this activity assumes that pupils have already undertaken work on the Tudor monarchy. It will need modification if this is not the case. • The first activity could be extended by asking pupils to describe distinctive features of Ottoman rule, including the Janissary system. • Pupils’ work in this section could be deepened by using unit 22 ‘The role of the individual’ to investigate the life of Suleyman the Magnificent. |
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What were the achievements of the Islamic states 600–1600?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to produce an overview of key aspects of Islamic civilisation 600–1600 • to consider the significance of the main events, people and changes studied | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell pupils that they have been commissioned by the editors of a new internet encyclopedia to produce several linked web pages devoted to Islamic civilisation 600–1600. The editors say that they want the web pages to describe key features of Islamic civilisation and to explain why this is an important aspect of world history. • Pupils must review their work so far and select and organise relevant and significant information. There is room for only one picture and they must choose a single image that encapsulates the achievement of this huge period in history and justify the choice made. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • select, organise and use relevant information to produce a structured overview account of Islamic civilisation 600–1600 • select and explain significant events, people, changes from Islamic civilisation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This activity can be used to develop ICT abilities. Pupils will need to discuss the aspects of Islamic civilisation they would portray and design the linked web pages appropriately. |
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