



FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

Subject Category (circle one): Religion/Ceremony Celebration History Prayer
Gathas **Comparative Religion** Shahnameh

Age Group (circle one): PreK-K Grades 1-3 Grades 4-5 Grades 6-8 **Grades 9-12**

Lesson # (if applicable): 7

Subject of the Lesson: Islam

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

ISLAM

Islam, which in Arabic language means ‘submission to God’, is a religion founded by Prophet Muhammad. Founded in the 7th century, Islam is the youngest of the monotheistic world religions. A follower of Islam is a Muslim (in Arabic it means ‘one who submits’).

At the core of Islam is the Qur'an (their holy book), believed to be the final revelation by a transcendent Allah [Arab. = the God] to Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam. Since the Divine Word was revealed in Arabic, this language is used in Islamic religious practices worldwide. Muslims believe in final reward and punishment, and the unity of the *umma*, the "nation" of Islam.

Muslims submit to Allah through *arkan ad-din*, the five basic requirements or "pillars":

1. *shahadah*, the affirmation that "there is no god but God and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God"
2. *salah*, the five daily ritual prayers (see liturgy, Islamic)
3. zakat, the giving of alms, also known as a religious tax.
4. *Sawm*, the dawn-to-sunset fast during the lunar month of Ramadan
5. hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca. The importance of the *hajj* can hardly be overestimated: this great annual pilgrimage unites Islam and its believers from around the world.

The ethos of Islam is in its attitude toward Allah: to His will Muslims submit; Him they praise and glorify; and in Him alone they hope. However, in popular or folk forms of Islam, Muslims ask for the intercession of the saints, prophets, and angels, while preserving the distinction between Creator and creature.

Islam views the Message of Muhammad as the continuation and the fulfillment of a lineage of Prophecy that includes figures from the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, notably Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus. Islamic law reserves a communal entity status for the *ahl al-kitab*, People of the Book, i.e., those with revealed religions, including Jews and Christians. Islam also recognizes a number of extra-biblical prophets, such as Hud, Salih, Shuayb, and others of more obscure origin. The chief angels are Gabriel and Michael; devils are the evil jinn.



Other Islamic obligations include the duty to "commend good and reprimand evil," injunctions against usury and gambling, and prohibitions of alcohol and pork. Meat is permitted, if the animal was ritually slaughtered; it is then called *halal*.

Jihad, the exertion of efforts for the cause of God, is a duty satisfied at the communal and the individual level. At the individual level, it denotes the personal struggle to be righteous and follow the path ordained by God. Communally, it involves both encouraging what is good and correcting what is not and waging war against enemies of Islam.

In Islam, religion and social membership are inseparable: the ruler of the community (caliph; see caliphate) has both a religious and a political status. The unitary nature of Islam, as a system governing relations between a person and God, and a person and society, has contributed to the appeal and success of Islam.

The evolution of Islamic mysticism into organizational structures in the form of Sufi orders was, from the 13th century onwards, one of the driving forces in the spread of Islam (see Sufism; fakir). Sufi orders were instrumental in expanding the realm of Islam to trans-Saharan Africa, stabilizing its commercial and cultural links with the Mediterranean and the Middle East, and to SE Asia.

Holidays and Honorifics

The original feasts of Islam are:

1. *id al-fitr*, corresponding to the breaking of the fast of Ramadan.
2. *id al-adha*, coinciding with the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Shiite Islam also celebrates *id al-ghadir*, the anniversary of Muhammad's declaration of Ali as his successor.

Other Islamic holidays include:

1. *al-mawlid al-nabawwi*, Muhammad's birthday
2. *al-isra wa-l-miraj*, the anniversary of his miraculous journey to Jerusalem to pray with Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and other prophets and ascension to Heaven where God imposes on him the five daily prayers of Islam.

Among the Islamic religious honorifics are *shaykh*, a generic term referring to a religious scholar or a mystic master; *qadi*, a religious judge (handling particular cases); *mufti*, a religious authority who issues general legal opinions; and *mullah*, a synonym of *shaykh* used in the Persian-speaking world.

Interpretation of the Qur'an

The revealed word of Islam, the Qur'an, in a formal Arabic which became more archaic with time, required explication. A complement to the Qur'an is the Sunna, the spoken and acted example of the Prophet, collectively known as hadith.



The Sunna is almost as important to Islam as the Qur'an, for in it lie the elaborations of Qur'anic teaching essential to the firm establishment of a world religion. There are serious disagreements in the *hadith*, and interpretations of the Qur'an and the Sunna have varied so much as to be contradictory. These situations are resolved by reference to one of the most important of the sayings attributed to the Prophet, "My community will never agree in an error." This leeway also allowed Islam to expand by incorporating social, tribal, and ethnic traditions. For example, with the exception of inheritance and witness laws, Islamic rights and obligations apply equally to men and women. The actual situation of women is more a function of particular social traditions predating Islam than of theoretical positions. For more information on Islamic law, see [sharia](#); for discussions of the major branches of Islamic theology, see [Shiite](#), [Sunni](#).

Shiite and Sunni Islam:

How do the Shiites and Sunnis differ?

The divide between Shiite and Sunni Islam can be traced to 632 CE, when the Islamic Prophet Muhammad died, and a debate emerged about who should be his successor.

1. The Shiites felt that someone from his bloodline should be his successor and others felt a pious individual who would follow the Prophet's customs was acceptable.
2. Sunnis have a less elaborate religious hierarchy.
3. Their interpretation of Islam's schools of law is different.
4. Shiites give human beings the exalted status that is given only to prophets in Quran often venerating clerics as saints, whereas Sunnis do not.

"The original schism between Islam's two largest sects was not over religious doctrine. It was over political leadership," Robin Wright, a joint fellow at the non-partisan U.S. Institute of Peace and the Woodrow Wilson Center, said.

What do the Shiite and Sunni have in common?

1. Both read the Quran and believe in Prophet Muhammad as the messenger of Allah
2. Both follow the five tenets of Islam.
3. Their prayer rituals are nearly identical, with slight variations: For example, Shiites will stand with their hands at their sides, Sunnis will put their hands on their stomachs.
4. They both believe in Islamic law but have different applications for it.

How many Shiites and Sunnis are there in relation to one another?

The great majority (85-90%) of world's Muslims are Sunni. The Shiite Muslims are concentrated in Iran, Iraq, and a sizable population in Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen.

There are more than 1 billion Muslims worldwide, less than one fifth of whom are Arab. Islam is the principal religion of much of Asia, including Indonesia (which has the world's largest Muslim



population), Malaysia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, the Arabian Peninsula states, and Turkey. India also has one of the world's largest Muslim populations, although Islam is not the principal religion there. In Africa, Islam is the principal religion in Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Djibouti, Gambia, Guinea, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Somalia, and Sudan, with sizable populations also in Chad, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Tanzania (where the island of Zanzibar is predominantly Muslim), and Nigeria.

In Europe, Albania is predominantly Muslim, and, historically, Bulgaria, Bosnia, Macedonia, and Georgia have had Muslim populations. Elsewhere in Europe, significant immigrant communities of Muslims from N Africa, Turkey, and Asia exist in France, Germany, Great Britain, and other nations. In the Americas the Islamic population has substantially increased in recent years, both from conversions and the immigration of adherents from other parts of the world. In the United States, the number of Muslims has been variably estimated at 2—6 million; 20% of the population of Suriname is Muslim.

Summary of Muhammad's early biography and his revelation as a messenger of God according to Islamic tradition:

Muhammad (his full name: Abu al-Qasim Muhammad ibn Abd Allah ibn Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim) the founder of Islam is traditionally said to have been born in 570 CE in Mecca and to have died in Medina, Saudi Arabia.

He was born a member of the tribe of Quraysh and the clan of Hashim. His hometown of Mecca houses an ancient and famous pilgrimage sanctuary, the Ka'bah. Although founded by Abraham, worship there had over time become dominated by polytheism and idolatry.

Muhammad's father passed away before his birth, leaving him in the care of his paternal grandfather, Abd al-Muttalib. He lost his mother Aminah at 6 years of age and at 8 years old he lost his grandfather. His care was given to his uncle Abu Talib from the clan of Hashim. He accompanied his uncle on trading journeys to neighboring countries.

At the age of 25, Muhammad was employed by a rich woman, Khadijah, to oversee the transportation of her merchandise to Syria. Khadijah offered Muhammad marriage, and they were blessed with four daughters, the best known of them was Fatimah, the future wife of Muhammad's cousin Ali whom Shi'i Muslims regard as Muhammad's true successor.

Muhammad's prophetic initiation occurred at the age of 40. During a period of devotional withdrawal atop one of the mountains in the vicinity of Mecca, the Angel Gabriel appeared to him and taught him the opening verses of surah 96 of Quran: "Recite in the name of your Lord who creates man from clot! Recite for your Lord is most generous...." Muhammad continued to receive revelations. For three years he spoke about them only in private until God commanded him to take up public preaching. He



encountered opposition when he denied the existence of gods except for Allah thereby attacking the religious beliefs and practices of the Quraysh tribe.

For the full biography visit:

(<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Muhammad/Biography-according-to-the-Islamic-tradition>)

Lesson for students:

1. Make a PowerPoint of the Material for teacher. Use PowerPoint to teach the lesson and to stop at appropriate sections to start a discussion.
2. Make a printout of the Material for teacher for each student or use a projector to display it on classroom wall (in a virtual class share screen the information). Have each student read a section before discussing it as a class.
3. Enhance the lesson by following up with a YouTube video.
 - a. Timeline of Islam in different countries
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIGSNRCTkQI>
 - b. Sects of Islam
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aiohhligZ0A>
 - c. Difference between Shia and Sunni
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UjYFVTXIEQQ>

The video can be stopped at different sections to discuss with the class a summarization of points said and comparing it to Zoroastrian beliefs and practices.

Activities for Students:

1. Fill out the comparative religion chart for Islam and discuss the results with the class. Using the chart compare each section with Zoroastrianism.
2. Plan a field day to a Mosque close to your center.
3. Plan an interfaith half day event with your local Mosque's community.
4. Invite a representative of Islamic faith to your virtual or in person class to share information about the religion. Have each student have a question ready to ask the representative.
5. Have each student write one thing they found interesting about Islam on a small sheet of paper along with their name, fold it, and place it in a jar. Then have each student take out one of the folded sheets of paper, read the content, and ask the person whose name is on the sheet of paper why they found what they have written interesting and discuss with class.
6. How can we use Muhammad's teachings today to improve ourselves and our world? Give current event examples when possible.
7. Visit the Teacher's Guide section of fezana.org/education and get ideas for in class and virtual activities by using "Activity Menu" and "Virtual Class ideas".



Sources:

1. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/mideast/what-are-differences-between-sunni-shiite-muslims-n489951>
2. <https://www.whyislam.org/muslims/sunnishia/>
3. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Muhammad>

Bibliography:

See F. Rahman, *Islam* (1966); M. Jameelah, *Islam and Modernism* (1968); P. K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (10th ed. 1970); P. M. Holt, ed., *Cambridge History of Islam* (2 vol., 1970); M. G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (3 vol., 1974); C. Glassé, *Concise Encyclopedia of Islam* (1991); J. L. Esposito, *Islam* (rev. ed. 1992) and *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (2003); A. Schimmel, *Islam* (1992); D. Waines, *An Introduction to Islam* (1995); J. I. Smith, *Islam in America* (1999).

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