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Islam

Standard/Objective

- Students will explain how information and experiences may be interpreted by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference. (NCSS)
- Students will learn about the practice of the hajj, the religious pilgrimage to Mecca.

Materials

Copies of both sides of Pilgrimage to Mecca photograph card; Copies of the historical background information (page 22); Copies of the Pronunciation Guide (guide.pdf)

Discussion Questions

- What does the term pilgrimage mean?
- Why are all these people gathered together in the photograph?
- Where do you think this photograph was taken?
- What is in the Qur’an?
- How did a dispute lead to two separate divisions within Islam?
- In what areas of the world is Islam found?

Using the Primary Source

Before class begins, write the following items on the front board: family reunions, summer camp, large sporting events, and patriotic holidays. When the class arrives, form small groups of three to four students. Ask them to review the list on the board and discuss the following questions: Who attends these events and why? Why do people have to travel to these events? What types of experiences do people gain from attending these events?

Next, distribute copies of the photograph card to each group. Have them study the picture carefully and then ask the first three discussion questions above. Tell students that the picture is of an Islamic religious ritual called the hajj, when Muslims make a pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia to participate in religious ceremonies. Then have students read the historical background information (page 22) and discuss the last three discussion questions.

Finally, assign various activities from the back of the photograph card.

Note: Remember to distribute copies of the Pronunciation Guide to students.

Extension Idea

Have students research the religious ritual called the hajj and the activities that occur during this pilgrimage. Have students answer the questions about the hajj that they were asked during the opening activity. Then have them answer the following questions: What do people learn about other cultures by studying rituals like these? How can sharing cultural traditions help overcome stereotypes and misunderstandings about another’s culture?
Islam (cont.)

Historical Background Information

Islam is one of three Abrahamic religions. Judaism and Christianity are the other two. These three religions have many things in common. The most important is their belief in a single deity, or one God. In the holy books of all three religions, God revealed Himself to Abraham. That is why they are called Abrahamic religions. Muslims use the Arabic word *Allah* to refer to God.

Islam began in the seventh century in what is today Saudi Arabia. A merchant, or trader, who lived there began seeing visions. The merchant’s name was Muhammad. He believed that God was speaking to him through the angel Gabriel. He recited everything he heard to his companions. His companions memorized it and recited it back to him. They also wrote it down. These writings are in a book called the *Qur’an*. The Qur’an is like the Bible in Christianity and the Torah in Judaism.

The Qur’an is the holiest book in Islam. It is written in Arabic. It has 114 surahs, or chapters. It contains stories, instructions, and prayers. The Qur’an shares many teachings with Judaism and Christianity. Muslims believe it is the highest form of teaching from Allah. For 14 centuries, Muslims have been memorizing the Qur’an word for word as a way to preserve the oral tradition.

Muhammad died in the year 632 ce. The other leaders of Islam were called *caliphs*. The first three caliphs helped Islam quickly spread throughout the Middle East and beyond. Within 25 years after Muhammad’s death, Islam was the main religion from North Africa to Persia. Traders who were also followers of Islam traveled along the eastern coast of Africa. They spread the teachings of Muhammad as they traded. The religion spread to Sudan where Sudanese merchants converted first. Then, some rulers became followers. The kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai controlled the trade routes across the Sahara Desert for over 1,000 years. These trade routes were also convenient ways for the religion of Islam to spread from northern Africa to southern Africa. Mali’s king, Mansa Musa, was a Muslim. During his reign, the city of Timbuktu became an important center for Islamic culture. The time when Islam was spreading so quickly is called the Golden Age of Islam. Islamic schools in Africa and the Middle East were alive and growing. New knowledge was being produced. The arts and sciences thrived. Common people learned to read and write Arabic.

After the first three caliphs died, there was a fight over who should lead the Muslims. Uthman ibn Affan had been the third caliph, but he had been assassinated. Uthman’s cousin was Mu’awiyah. Mu’awiyah thought Muhammad’s son-in-law, Ali, should bring the people responsible for Uthman’s death to justice. He refused to give allegiance to Ali until Uthman’s murder was avenged. Ali felt that it was more important to first establish the next caliph so the people could have a strong leader. Ali felt this would keep the people unified and avoid a civil war.

This fight led to a split in Islam. Those who sided with Ali are called *Shi’ite Muslims*. Those who sided with Mu’awiyah are called *Sunni Muslims*. Mu’awiyah moved the capital of the Islamic world to Damascus, Syria. From there, Islam spread to Spain in the west and India in the east. There are more Sunni Muslims in the world, but the Shi’ite Muslims have more power in Iran and some parts of Iraq.

There are over one billion Muslims in the world. Islam is the main religion in North Africa, the Middle East, and parts of central and southern Asia. Indonesia has more Muslims than does any other country.
Pilgrimage to Mecca

Historical Background Information

One of the important practices of Islam is the hajj. The hajj is a pilgrimage, or religious journey, to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. Muslims believe the rituals of the hajj came from Abraham and his family. God had revealed himself to Abraham. In time, idolatry and polytheism had corrupted Mecca. Muhammad wanted to cleanse Mecca from polytheism and idolatry. So, he traced the steps of Abraham to Mecca. Nearly two million Muslims of all races, nationalities, and genders come together for one week to worship and honor the one God. It is a religious obligation. Every Muslim who can afford to do so must fulfill this obligation in his or her lifetime. It is an act of faith for every Muslim. During the hajj, large crowds gather in a courtyard of a mosque, a building where Muslims worship. There they circle a small black building called the Kaaba and pray. It is the most sacred site in Islam.

Analyzing History

Knowledge
How did Islam become a religion in Saudi Arabia?

Comprehension
Explain the importance of the Qur’an to the believers of Islam.

Application
On a map of the eastern hemisphere, identify the countries where Islam is the major religion.

Analysis
Imagine you are visiting Mecca during a hajj like the one pictured in the photograph card. Review the photo for details and develop questions to ask your guide about what you see happening.

Synthesis
Review the dispute over the leadership of Islam following the death of Uthman. Tell which of the following people you feel had a stronger claim to lead Islam: Ali, the son-in-law of Muhammad, or Mu’awiyah, the cousin of Uthman. Explain.

Evaluation
Why do you think the religion of Islam spread so fast in the Middle East during the seventh century?

Historical Writing

Fiction
Imagine you are one of the leaders of Islam during the dispute between the Shi’ites and the Sunnis. Summarize the details of the dispute and write a proposal to help avoid a split in the religion.

Nonfiction
Look closely at the picture on this photograph card. Describe in detail what types of problems might occur with a crowd this large.

History Challenge

Find out more about the Kaaba. Who built it and why? Is there anything inside it?
Buddhism

Standard/Objective

- Students will explain and give examples of how language, literature, the arts, architecture, other artifacts, traditions, beliefs, values, and behaviors contribute to the development and transmission of culture. (NCSS)
- Students will examine a Buddhist cave painting, learn about two traditions of Buddhism, and then create a painting that shows a tradition of Buddhism.

Materials

Copy of the facsimile Buddhist Cave Painting; Copies of the historical background information (page 32); Copies of the activity sheet, The Spread of Buddhism (page 33); Copies of Buddhist Cave Painting (page 34); Magnifying glasses; Copies of the Pronunciation Guide (guide.pdf)

Discussion Questions

- What do you see in this painting?
- How can you see Chinese influence in this Buddhist painting?
- In what ways does a culture’s art reflect its belief system?
- What are some ways that art could be used in Buddhism?
- In what ways could art spread the Buddhist religion?

Using the Primary Source

Distribute copies of the primary source Buddhist Cave Painting (page 34) to groups of students. Provide them with magnifying glasses so they can see details of the art. Ask the discussion questions.

Tell students that the image is a Buddhist cave painting from the Mogao Caves in China. It represents a certain tradition in Buddhism. Distribute copies of the historical background information (page 32) and read it aloud as a class. Explain that if they had a larger view of the painting, they would be able to see the mansion in the background, as well as a pond. Dancers and animals would be surrounding the central part of the painting. Knowing this, have students work in their groups to write the words that Buddha would be saying to the others sitting around him. Let students share these ideas with the class.

Next, distribute The Spread of Buddhism (page 33) activity sheet to each student. Read the background information with students and discuss how Buddhism influenced China. Based on this information, how do they think Buddhism influenced other places on the map? Read the directions to the class and let students work individually as they answer the questions about the map.

Note: Remember to distribute copies of the Pronunciation Guide to students.

Extension Ideas

Have students compare statues or paintings of Buddha from India, China, Thailand, Korea, and Japan. How are they alike and how are they different? How is the art influenced by these cultures?

Have students find images that show more of the Mogao Caves. Let them compare these works of art.
Historical Background Information

Beginning in 270 BCE, Asoka rose to the throne as an emperor in India’s Maurya dynasty. He wanted to expand his dynasty, so he went to war to gain more land and people. His army won, but many people died in this war. Asoka was so grieved over these losses that he decided to reject war forever. He decided to follow Buddhism. He wanted to bring about a spiritual, moral, and social rebirth among his people. Buddhism changed how his land was governed. He made peace with other nations. He started projects that helped his people live better. He even sought to encourage all religions, especially Buddhism. Asoka sent out Buddhist missionaries to the northwest of India and also to Ceylon, which we know today as Sri Lanka. Other rulers were influenced by the way he ruled his people and how he interacted with other nations around him. Today, Buddhists remember him for his role of spreading Buddhism throughout India and to other countries.

The missionaries Asoka sent northwest of India influenced the merchants who went there to trade. These merchants accepted Buddhism and helped the missionaries establish cave monasteries along the trade routes. When the Han Dynasty came into power in China, they extended their power into this region of Central Asia. The Chinese learned about Buddhism, and many became Buddhists. The Chinese wanted the Buddhist texts translated into Chinese so they could read them, too. These translations helped spread Buddhism through China. As a result, Buddhist art spread within China. This was especially true during the Tang Dynasty at the beginning of the seventh century.

There are about 400 million Buddhists in the world today. There are different schools, or traditions, of Buddhism. One is called Theravada, or “way of the elders.” People who follow this tradition believe Buddha was a human being who achieved complete enlightenment. This means that he saw the complete truth or reality of life. These followers strive to do the same as he did. Theravada is the oldest tradition of Buddhism still practiced today. It is practiced in Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar.

Another school is Mahayana. It is a more recent tradition, although it is very old. Mahayana focuses on the fact that Buddha attained enlightenment for himself. Then, he spent the rest of his life trying to cure the suffering in other people’s lives. He did this by teaching Dharma. Buddha is often shown as a spiritual doctor who sees the problem. Then he diagnoses the disease. Finally, he provides a cure. Helping others is the focus of Mahayana Buddhism.

Mahayana has more followers than the Theravada school. It functions like traditional religions such as Christianity or Islam. It is practiced in China, Tibet, Nepal, Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and Vietnam. It is the tradition seen most often in the West.

Zen is a religion that has its origins in India over 2,500 years ago. For a long time, it was mostly practiced in East Asia (Korea, China, Japan, and Vietnam) and now is becoming more popular in western countries. Zen is one type of Buddhism; it focuses on meditation and cultivating wisdom and compassion to try to help all living beings. Zen Buddhists chant and read their own religious scriptures. Zen focuses less on written words and concepts and more on direct experiences.
The Spread of Buddhism

Background Information

It is believed that Buddhism began to spread rapidly in China during the Han period (206–220 CE). Buddhism’s influence in China became so great that many temples and pieces of art were created. Chinese artists were inspired to build new kinds of architecture that encouraged worship. They carved unique statues and painted elaborate scenes. From the 4th century to the 14th century, Buddhist sculptures, paintings, and texts were placed in the Mogao Caves. These caves are set into a cliff located in Dunhuang along the Silk Road. Dunhuang was a major gateway into China from the outside world during the Han and Tang dynasties. The primary source painting is from the Mogao Caves in China. It represents the Mahayana Buddhism tradition. Buddha is ruling over the Western Paradise. It is a perfect society. This represents Pure Land Buddhism. Bodhisattvas sit on either side of him.

Directions: Use the map below to answer the questions. Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. According to the dates on the map, where did Buddhism first spread from India?
2. In what ways did the Silk Road play an important part in the spread of Buddhism into China and to other lands?
3. According to this map, what is most surprising about the spread of Buddhism?

Challenge

Find out why the Mogao Caves are also called the Caves of a Thousand Buddhas.
Buddhist Cave Painting
Mapping Christianity Around the World

**Directions:** Study the map carefully. Use the map key to answer the questions about the Christian populations around the world today.

1. What continent has the largest percentage population of Christians?

_______________________________________________________________________________

2. Knowing that Christianity began in the Middle East, what is surprising about this map?

_______________________________________________________________________________

3. In what ways could a Christian missionary use a map like this?

_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________