**Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Introduction to Islam**

Please understand that this information is for educational purposes only. Religion is a major part of cultural geography and is a core component of the geography curriculum. Understanding the main beliefs of major world religions (Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism) is important for helping to understand the cultures around the world and to bridge the cultural gap of those around the world. The goal of this lesson is solely education and informational.

**Basic Information**

* People who practice Islam are called: Muslims
* Islam is practiced in: Mosques
* Islam is approximately: 1,400 years old
* # of followers worldwide: About 1.8 billion
* Places practiced worldwide: Northern Africa, Central Asia, Southwest Asia   
   (Middle East), Indonesia
* Holy book/sacred text: Quran
* Monotheistic or polytheistic: Monotheistic

**History**

In the Middle East during the 6th century, there was a lot of political and social turmoil. Many different rulers and empires fought for control over this region, which was rich from trade and was a center of education. There were many religious beliefs as well. Some people were Jewish, believing in one god. Others were Christian, believing in the same god. Still, others were polytheistic, believing in multiple gods. The region, mainly in Saudi Arabia, was very diverse and each tribe held very different beliefs from the next.

One tribe, the Quraysh, was polytheistic and lived in a city called Mecca. One of the most important jobs of this tribe was to protect a sacred shrine in Mecca called the Kaaba. Around the year 570, a man named Mohammed was born into this tribe in Mecca. He lived a fairly normal life, but he was unhappy with the lack of morals that many religious people had. They prayed to idols and performed many rituals and sacrifices, but did not have true faith or morals.

One day in the year 610 CE, Mohammed went to meditate in a cave and was visited by an angel named Gabriel. Muslims believe that Gabriel ordered Mohammed to recite the words of god, or Allah. Muslims believe that for the rest of his life, Mohammed received revelations from god. Around 613 CE, Mohammed began to preach the words of Allah to anyone who would listen, and encouraged all to devote their lives to god. Those who were convinced became the first Muslims. Mohammed’s wife, Khadija, was one of the first people to convert to Islam, showing that men and women are equal in the eyes of god according to Muslims.

Many liked Mohammed’s views, but some did not. Mohammed was forced to leave Mecca and arrived in Medina to spread his new religion. In Medina, he was welcomed: many liked that Islam was easy to understand and that it made people equal in the eyes of Allah. The journey from Mecca to Medina is known as the Hijra to Muslims. In the year 622 CE, Mohammed returned to Mecca and conquered it. He died in 632 CE.

After Mohammed’s death, there was a conflict over who would lead Muslims. Some Muslims believed that Mohammed’s father-in-law, Abu Bakr, should lead. Others believed it should be Ali, Mohammed’s cousin. This caused a split in Islam and created two branches in the religion – Sunnis believed Abu Bakr should lead and Shiites believed Ali should lead.

**Main Beliefs**

-Islam is monotheistic and believe in one god called Allah

-Muslims believe in the same god as Christians and Jews, but refer to him by a different name

-Islam believes in the same prophets as Christianity and Judaism (Abraham, Jesus)

-Muslims believe that Christians and Jews are special because they all believe in the same god – this is called “People of the Book” or “Brothers of the Book”

-Christians and Jews that live in Muslim countries are supposed to be treated with protection since they are also monotheists – this concept is called dhimmi

-Muslims believe in Jihad – a concept that means a “struggle” to serve god in a perfect way

-The main beliefs of Islam are called the 5 Pillars

**5 Pillars**

1. Monotheism – Muslims believe in having faith in one god, Allah
2. Prayer – Muslims pray 5 times a day facing Mecca
3. Charity – Muslims help those in need
4. Fasting – Muslims fast during the month of Ramadan from sunrise to sunset
5. Pilgrimage – Muslims make a journey called the Hajj to Mecca once in their life

**Main Holidays**

-Islamic holidays follow the lunar calendar, so the dates vary year to year

1. Ramadan – a month in the Islamic calendar that celebrates Muslims’ devotion to god – celebrated with fasting, feasts, donate to charity, and festivals
2. Eid Al-Fitr – “Festival of Breaking the Fast” – at the end of Ramadan, Muslims celebrate no longer having to fast
3. Eid Al-Adha – “Festival of the Sacrifice” – celebrates the sacrifice of Abraham and his obedience to god

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**Main Beliefs**

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-The main beliefs of Islam are called the 5 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**5 Pillars**

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_– Muslims believe in having faith in one god, Allah
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_– Muslims pray 5 times a day facing Mecca
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_– Muslims help those in need
4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_– Muslims fast during the month of Ramadan from sunrise to sunset
5. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_– Muslims make a journey called the Hajj to Mecca once in their life

**Main Holidays**

-Islamic holidays follow the lunar calendar, so the dates vary year to year

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