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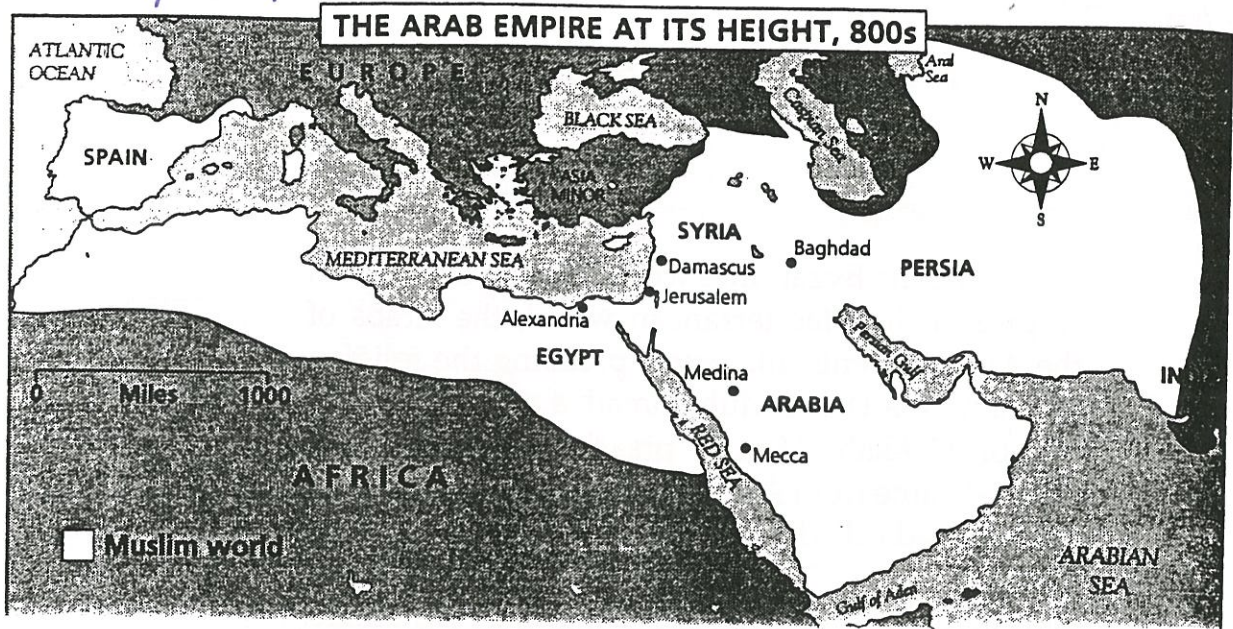
Islamic Civilization

While the Byzantines were building a Christian empire in the Mediterranean world, the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula were spreading the religion of Islam. In A.D. 610 Muhammad, a merchant in the city of Makkah (Mecca), preached a message he claimed came from Allah (the Arabic name for God). Muhammad called for devotion to one God and for moral reform. From his revelations came the Quran, the holy book of Islam, and the Five Pillars: faith, prayer, ~~alm~~giving, fasting, and pilgrimage to Makkah.

Initially suffering persecution, Muhammad and other Muslims, or followers of Islam, finally created an Islamic state that placed divine law above local, tribal laws. After Muhammad's death, Islam divided into two separate groups, the Sunnis and the Shiites. However, the caliphs, or successors of Muhammad, spread Islam through a series of military victories over the Byzantine and Persian Empires. The Umayyad caliphs (A.D. 661-750) carried Islam eastward to India and China, as well as to North Africa and parts of southern Europe. They based their rule in Syria and created an Islamic empire that embraced many different peoples. Later, in the A.D. 800s, the Abbasid caliphs shifted the empire's center of power eastward to Iraq, where they set up Baghdad as the capital.

During the period of the Islamic empire, Muslim scholars preserved Greek philosophy and made advances in mathematics, astronomy, geometry, and medicine. Muslim artists, architects, and writers also made many contributions. In later centuries, western Europe, Africa, and parts of Asia would benefit from Islamic scientific and cultural achievements.

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Arabs absorbed the cultural achievements of the Greeks, Persians, Romans, Jews, and Byzantines. They also controlled a vast trading area — larger than the old Roman empire. The Islamic empire, like Byzantium before it, became a crossroads of trade. Goods from India, China, Africa, Spain, and the Mediterranean criss-crossed Arab territories.

<p>Preserved Greek and Roman Culture. Islamic scholars copied ancient Greek and Roman texts and translated them into Arabic.</p>	<p>Arts and Crafts. Mohammed forbade making images of God. Arabic art emphasized geometric designs, flowers, and stars. Their textiles, leather goods, and rugs were prized.</p>	
<p>ARAB CULTURAL ACHIEVEMENTS</p>		
<p>Mathematics. Arab scholars borrowed the concept of zero from India and developed Arabic numerals, later adopted world-wide. This led to advances in algebra and geometry.</p>	<p>Architecture. Muslim rulers built beautiful palaces and mosques, richly decorated with mosaics, calligraphy and geometrical designs.</p>	<p>Medicine. Arab doctors discovered that blood moves to and from the heart. They learned to diagnose many diseases, including measles and smallpox.</p>

