

ISLAM'S GOLDEN AGE

At its height under the Abbassids, the Muslim world was composed of people from many cultures, including Arabs, Persians, Egyptians, and Europeans. Muslims absorbed and blended customs and traditions from many of the peoples they ruled. The glory of the empires was reflected in their emphasis on learning, achievements in the arts and sciences, and flourishing economies based on trade.

Preservation of Greco-Roman Culture

Muslim scholars translated the works of many of the Greek scholars. Muslim advances in mathematics, astronomy, and medicine were also based partly on their study of Greek and Indian knowledge.

Education

The prophet Muhammad taught a respect for learning that continued to characterize Muslim culture throughout the ages. The Muslim empires included dazzling centers of learning such as Baghdad, Cairo, and Cordoba. The vast libraries and universities of these cities attracted a large and diverse number of well-paid and highly respected scholars.

Art and Architecture

MOSQUES AND PALACES Muslim architects were influenced by Byzantine domes and arches. The walls and ceilings of mosques and palaces were decorated with elaborate abstract and geometric patterns. Muslim religious leaders forbade artists to portray God or human figures in religious art.

CALLIGRAPHY Muslim artists were highly skilled in calligraphy, or artistic writing. Calligraphy decorated buildings and pieces of art. Often, Muslim calligraphers used verses from the Quran.

DRAWINGS AND PAINTINGS In nonreligious art, some Muslim artists portrayed animal or human figures, although this was usually discouraged. Persian and Turkish artists adorned books with beautiful miniature paintings.

KEY THEMES AND CONCEPTS

Culture and Intellectual Life Education was an important part of Muslim culture. Cities such as Baghdad, Cairo, and Cordoba were powerful centers of learning.

KEY THEMES AND CONCEPTS

Belief Systems Muslim religious art rarely depicted God or human figures because the Quran prohibited the worship of idols.

Literature and Philosophy

POETRY A wide variety of themes dominated written Muslim poetry, from praise of important leaders to contemplation of the joys and sorrows of love. In addition, because the Quran was the most important piece of Muslim literature, many writers wrote poems based on this holy book.

TALES Muslim storytellers adapted stories from Greek, Indian, Jewish, and Egyptian culture, as well as others. The most famous collection of Muslim stories is *The Thousand and One Nights*, which includes fables, romances, and humorous anecdotes.

PHILOSOPHY Muslim scholars translated the philosophical works of Greek, Indian, and Chinese writers. In fact, the scholar Ibn Rushd, who was known in Europe as **Averröes**, strongly influenced medieval Christian scholars with his writings on Aristotle. The Jewish rabbi Maimonides influenced Christian scholars of the Middle Ages in much the same way.

Mathematics and Science

ALGEBRA Muslims studied Indian and Greek mathematics before making their own contributions. Muslims pioneered the study of algebra. Eventually, the works of some Muslim mathematicians were translated into Latin and studied in Europe.

ASTRONOMY Greek and Indian astronomical discoveries resulted in Muslim development of astronomical tables. Muslim astronomers also observed the Earth's rotation and calculated the circumference of the Earth within a few thousand feet.

MEDICINE Muslim medicine was remarkably advanced. Doctors were required to pass difficult tests before they could practice. Hospitals were set up. Physicians studied various diseases and wrote books that became standard texts in Europe.

KEY THEMES AND CONCEPTS

Culture and Intellectual Life Modern mathematics and science can trace many of their roots to the achievements of Islamic civilization.

Economic Achievements

The Muslim world developed a prosperous economy. Muslims had an extensive trade network and encouraged manufacturing. Agriculture also flourished.

TRADE Merchants were honored in Muslim society. From 750 to 1350, Muslims established a large trade network across their empire. Traders not only exchanged goods but spread religious belief, culture, and technology as well.

Trading and a money economy allowed Muslims to take the lead in new business practices. They established partnerships, sold goods on credit, and formed banks to exchange different kinds of currency.

MANUFACTURING Guilds organized manufacturing in the Muslim world. Heads of guilds regulated prices, weights, and measurements, and they monitored product quality. Muslim craftworkers produced steel swords in Damascus, leather goods in Cordoba, and carpets in Persia.

AGRICULTURE Muslim farmers grew crops such as sugarcane, cotton, medicinal herbs, fruits, and vegetables. These products were purchased and sold in many world markets.



List two islamic achievements in each of the following areas.

Mathematics:


Art:

Literature:

Medicine:

Economics:

The Golden Age of Muslim Civilization

<p style="text-align: center;">Art</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use beautiful writing and patterns to decorate buildings and art • Adapt Byzantine domes and arches • Paint people and animals in nonreligious art 	<p style="text-align: center;">Literature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider Quran most important piece of Arabic literature • Chant oral poetry • Collect stories from other people
	
<p style="text-align: center;">Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translate writings of Greek philosophers • Develop algebra • Observe Earth turning and measure its circumference 	<p style="text-align: center;">Medicine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require doctors to pass difficult tests • Set up hospitals with emergency rooms • Study diseases and write medical books

CHRISTIAN EUROPE ENRICHED BY ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION

The advances of the Muslim world gradually reached Christian Europe through Spain and Sicily. The Crusades also encouraged cultural diffusion.

Muslim Spain

Spain became a magnificent Muslim cultural center. Muslim princes encouraged poetry, the arts, and learning. In Spain, the Muslims continued their policy of toleration, hiring Jewish officials and encouraging Christian students to study Greek thought.

Muslim Sicily

During the early Middle Ages, Arabs gained control of Sicily and other Mediterranean islands. The island was soon regained by Europeans, but a Muslim presence remained. Muslim officials provided effective government, and Arab merchants and farmers helped the economy to grow. Muslim culture graced the courts of the Christian kings.

KEY THEMES AND CONCEPTS

Interdependence It was through Muslim Spain and Sicily, as well as through the Crusades and the Muslim trading network, that the achievements of Islam's golden age reached European society.