

Name:

Date:

Class:

Block #:

Islamic Achievements

EQ: What were the most important Islamic achievements?

EQ: Why were the Muslims able to make such great contributions?

EQ: How did these contributions impact or influence the world?

Document 1

This excerpt, from the textbook *World History: Patterns of Interaction* (Beck, Black, Naylor, Shabaka. Evanston, IL. McDougal Littell, 1999), explains why Muslims both preserved existing knowledge and extended it.

“Muslims had practical reasons for supporting the achievements of science. Rulers wanted qualified physicians treating their ills. The faithful ... relied on mathematicians and astronomers to calculate the times for prayer and the direction of Mecca ... Their attitude reflected a deep-seated curiosity about the world and a quest for truth that reached back to ... Muhammad himself. After the fall of Rome in AD 476, Europe entered a period of upheaval and chaos, an era in which scholarship suffered.... In the early 800’s, ... the House of Wisdom opened in Baghdad. There, scholars of different cultures and beliefs worked ... translating texts from Greece, India, Persia, and elsewhere into Arabic.”

1. Who is the author of this piece, what is the source, and is it a primary or secondary source? _____

2. What were the reasons for Muslims interest in learning? _____

3. How does this document help to answer and/or support the EQs?

Document 2

A contemporary as the “jewel of the world” described the Islamic capital of Cordova. European scholars such as Abelard and Roger Bacon preferred the Islamic schools and universities. Philip Hitti describes Cordova in *Capital Cities of Arab Islam* [University of Minnesota Press, 1973]. What follows is Document 2.

Besides the university library, Arab statisticians assure us the city boasted 37 libraries, numberless bookstores, 800 public schools ... and a total population of 30,000. Its people enjoyed a high standard of living and refinement and walked on paved roads ...--all this at a time when hardly a town in Europe. Constantinople excepted, counted more than a few thousand inhabitants. Parisians and Londoners were still trudging on muddy, dark alleys....

4. Who is the author of this piece, what is the source, and is it a primary or secondary source? _____

5. What conditions in Cordova does this author cite as evidence of the high level of Islamic scholarship? _____

6. How does this document help to answer and/or support the EQs? _____

Document 3

Physician al-Razi wrote a medicine reference encyclopedia, the *Comprehensive Book and Treatise on Smallpox and Measles*. Ibn (Avicenna) wrote the five-volume *The Canon of Medicine*. These books were translated into Latin and other languages and influenced doctors in Europe. The explanation from the textbook *World History: Patterns of Interaction* shows the level of medicine expertise of Islamic doctors.

Medical Reference Books

When Europeans learned that Muslims had preserved important medical texts, they wanted to translate the texts into Latin. In the eleventh century, scholars traveled to libraries in places such as Toledo, Spain, where they began translating --- but only after they learned to read Arabic.

Though this process, European medical schools gained access to vital reference sources such as al-Razi's Comprehensive Book and Ibn Sina's The Canon of Medicine. Ibn Sina's five-volume encyclopedia gained doctors of Europe and Southwest Asia for six centuries. For nearly 500 years, al Qasim's work, The Method, which contained original drawings of some 200 medical tools, was the foremost textbook on surgery in Europe.

7. Who is the author of this piece, what is the source, and is it a primary or secondary source? _____

8. What does this document tell you about Muslim medical knowledge? _____

9. How did it influence Western (European) civilization? _____

Document 4

Al-Khwarizmi, a Muslim mathematician, studies Indian sources and wrote a textbook in the 800's about *al-jabr* (the Arabic word for algebra), which was later translated into Latin and used throughout Europe. Muslim mathematicians also adopted Arabic numerals from the Indians and used them in a place-value system.

$$\text{III} + \text{III} + \text{III} + \text{III} + \text{III} = \text{XV}$$

Roman Numerals

$$x = 15$$

Arabic Form

$$135$$

$$+ 20$$

$$155$$

10. Who is the author of this piece, what is the source, and is it a primary or secondary source? _____

11. What is the importance of these mathematical advances? _____

12. How did these developments influence development of Western ways of calculations?

Document 5

Between 750 and 1350, the Muslim merchants built a trade network throughout their empire, as this excerpt from *The Gates of India* by T.H. Holdich (London: McMillan, 1910) explains.

Masters of the sea, even as of the land, the Arabs spread throughout the geographical area. The whole world was theirs to explore...their ships sailed across the seas even as they moved across the land [Sahara Desert into West Africa]. The might of the sword of Islam carved the way for the slave-owner and the merchants to follow.

13. Who is the author of this piece, what is the source, and is it a primary or secondary source? _____

14. Why and where were the Muslims able to establish a trading empire? _____

15. How does this document help to answer and/or support the EQs?

Document 6

Historian J.H. Kramers describes the benefits that Europeans received from Muslim industry in the *Legacy of Islam*. (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1931)

First should be mentioned the textiles products imported from Islamic countries: muslins...damask...gauze, cotton, and satin. Natural products, which by their nature indicates they were imported from Islamic countries---fruits, like oranges, lemons, and apricots; vegetables, like spinach, artichokes, and saffron. ... Finally our commercial vocabulary itself has preserved...proofs that there was a time when Islamic trade and trade customs exercised a deep influence on the commercial development of Christian countries---such words a “traffic” [derived from Arabic tafriq], which means distribution.

16. Who is the author of this piece, what is the source, and is it a primary or secondary source? _____

17. What were the trade benefits that Europeans gained from Islamic commerce and industry?

18. How does this document help to answer and/or support the EQs?

Reflection

1. In your opinion, what were the most important Islamic achievements?

2. Why were the Muslims able to make such great contributions?

3. How did these contributions impact or influence the world?