

# RAMADAN

20<sup>TH</sup> JULY – 18<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2012

Ramadan, which means ‘scorching heat’, is a time of joy and prayer for Muslims around the world. It signifies the month in which Mohammed received his first revelations from Allah and is a special time for personal reflection and sacrifice.

During Ramadan, Muslims go without food between dawn and sunset. This is called *sawm* and is one of the Pillars of Islam. Fasting reminds Muslims of the suffering of the poor and hungry.

Muslims eat a meal before dawn and a light snack, sometimes just dried apricots soaked in water, at sunset. The evening meal is called *iftar*. During the daylight hours, Muslims spend part of the day praying, reading the Koran and in meditation.

Muslims believe in one God, Allah, who revealed his will to the Prophet Mohammed, who wrote it down in the sacred book, the Koran.

If you have students from an Islamic background in your class, invite them or a family member to explain how they celebrate Ramadan in their family.

## The Life of Mohammed

Mohammed was born in 570 AD in Mecca, in Saudi Arabia. He lost his parents at a young age and was brought up by an uncle. Mohammed worked as a shepherd and then as a merchant. Travelling from the East to the Mediterranean, he was influenced by both Christianity and Judaism. Retreating to a cave in Mount Hira to reflect on the world around him at the age of 40, he received messages or revelations from God through the angel Gabriel. These messages he wrote down in a book called the Koran.

Mohammed began preaching far and wide and faced initial hostility. He fled to Medina, Saudi Arabia, in 622 AD and it is from this date that the Islamic calendar begins. Many of the tribes in the Arab lands eventually became converts to Islam. Mohammed returned to Mecca in 630 AD and it became the centre of the Islamic empire. He died in 632 AD, aged 62, and was buried in Medina, where a mosque was built over his tomb.

## The Five Pillars of Islam

- The prayer must be recited: ‘There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is His Prophet’.
- Devotional worship must be performed five times a day on a prayer mat facing Mecca, at sunrise, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset and evening.
- *Zakat* or gifts for the poor must be pledged as a percentage of annual income.
- A pilgrimage to Mecca is expected to be made once during every Muslim’s lifetime.
- The rules of fasting during Ramadan must be observed.

## Eid ul-Fitr—19 August 2012 – 21 August 2012

Eid ul-Fitr is a three-day celebration at the end of Ramadan, breaking the fast. In 2012, Eid begins on Sunday, 19 August. The new moon marks the start of Eid ul-Fitr and traditionally foods such as coloured eggs, puddings, pistachio nuts sprinkled with cinnamon, sugared almonds and dates are shared and exchanged as gifts.

Muslims visit their mosques on the morning of Eid to pray and give thanks.

Ask students to look at the image on the reverse of this poster. What does this image show? What mood is conveyed by this image?

Point out and discuss the following:

- Man kneeling and praying on prayer mat facing Mecca
- Decorative door
- Arabic scripts from the Holy Koran on the arch window above the door.

At the mosque, Muslims greet each other and exchange Eid ul-Fitr cards. Some women decorate their hands with henna.

In some parts of the world, such as northern Nigeria, Eid is celebrated by parades. Horses and camels are decorated and people wear colourful robes and are accompanied by musicians, drummers and jugglers. This celebration is known as *Sallah*.

## Islamic Art and Architecture

Study beautiful Islamic designs from art and architecture—including mosques, minarets and interior decoration and mosaics. As a class, research The Great Mosque, Mecca and The Prophet’s Mosque, Medina. Study the art and architecture of one of the world’s great Moorish palaces, the Alhambra in Granada in southern Spain, or the Taj Mahal in India.

### Art and Craft Activities

Download the *Moroccan Geometric Design* blackline master from the Teacher Toolkit for students to colour in.

Download the *Prayer Mat Craft* activity sheet from the Teacher Toolkit. Ask students to make their own prayer mats as a sewing/craft activity.

### Make a Mosque or Minaret

#### What you need

- 3 cardboard cylinders—2 x 15-cm long and 1 x 20-cm long
- Stiff white A4 sheets of cardboard
- Margarine container lid (washed)
- Three white foam balls
- Glue
- White and gold paint.

#### What to do

1. Cut circles out using the margarine lid as a guide, making sure the diameter is larger than the diameter of the cardboard cylinders.
2. Glue the two smaller cylinders onto the lids at the base and then the larger cylinder onto the lid at the base.
3. Using the stiff white cardboard, cut a façade featuring five cut-out arch shapes and glue this to the front of the three cardboard cylinders, which will become the minaret towers. Make sure the taller minaret tower is in the middle of the two shorter ones.
4. Sit the foam balls on top of the open cylinder towers.
5. Paint the minaret white and gold.

For a blackline illustration of the minaret and student instructions for this craft activity, download the *Make a Mosque or Minaret* activity sheet from the Teacher Toolkit.

### Eid Feast

Food is an important part of Eid ul-Fitr as it celebrates the end of a long period of fasting. Prepare a class feast to celebrate Eid. Assign cooking activities to groups in the class. Students are to research recipes for the following and then make and bring them into class for the beginning of Eid:

- Coloured eggs
- Milk pudding with pistachio nuts sprinkled with cinnamon
- Tabouli
- Flat breads or Lebanese bread
- Sugared almonds and candied dates
- Baklava.

### Zakat-ul-Fidr

An important part of Ramadan and Eid is giving. Mohammed ruled that all Muslims should give Zakat-ul-Fitr, the charity of fast-breaking, or the equivalent of the cost of one meal for every person in the household to the poor and hungry.

### The Timing of Ramadan

Ramadan occurs at a different time each year on the Gregorian or Western calendar. It is always on the same day of the Islamic calendar, which is a lunar calendar. The date of Ramadan may also vary from country to country depending on whether the moon has been sighted or not.

### Islam—a World Religion

Muslims are followers of Islam, which is the official state religion of many countries of the world. Approximately one-fifth of the world’s population are practising Muslims, making Islam the second largest religion in the world after Christianity. There are approximately 1.6 billion followers. Muslim regions and countries of the world include:

- The Middle East—Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Bahrain
- Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan
- Pakistan and northern India
- North Africa—Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen
- Nigeria, Niger, parts of Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia
- Southern Europe—Albania, Turkey, Bosnia, parts of Russia
- Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei and parts of China.

Download the *Map of the World* blackline master from the Teacher Toolkit. Ask students to colour in Islamic nations and regions.



## Resources available in the 2012 School Essentials catalogue

- *Kingfisher Knowledge: Wonders of the World* (p 205)
- *Illustrated Stories from Around the World* (p 206)
- *Global Village Craft Paper* (p 206)
- *Festival Fun* (p 206)
- *Around the World Paper Collection* (p 227)
- *Travel Through Time Complete Collection* (p 207)
- *Mineral Mosaics Poster & Art* (p 220)
- *Spectrum Mosaics* (p 223)
- *Petit Pattern Mosaics* (p 223)
- *Gaudi Mosaics* (p 223)
- *Double Colour Mosaic Squares* (p 224)
- *Big Box of Art Supplies* (p 221)

## FREE Teacher Toolkit Resources available at [www.scholastic.co.nz/schools/bookclub](http://www.scholastic.co.nz/schools/bookclub)

- *Moroccan Geometric Design* blackline master
- *Prayer Mat Craft* activity sheet
- *Make a Mosque or Minaret* activity sheet
- *Map of the World* blackline master