

ISLAM: THE FIVE PILLARS



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Description

Through the investigation of selected writings and various electronic resources, including primary and secondary sources from across the Islamic world, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain in detail the Five Pillars, how they form the foundation for Islamic life around the world.

Subjects

World History

Grade Level

9-12

Duration

90 minutes

Tour Links

- Islamic Cultural Center, Madrid, Spain
- Mosque of Cordoba, Spain
- Hagia Sophia, Istanbul
- Various Mosques around the world

Essential Questions

- What are the Five Pillars of Islam?
- When were the Five Pillars developed?
- What role do the Five Pillars play in the life of Muslims today?

Academic Summary

The Five Pillars of Islam

1. Shahadah: Profession of Faith

- There is one God, Allah and Muhammad is his prophet.

2. Salah: Prayer

- Praying 5 times per day – dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset and evening
- Always facing Mecca, Islam's holiest city and the city of the Prophet
- Individual has a direct relationship with God, but generally prayers are said in a mosque

3. Zakat: Almsgiving

- Social responsibility to the poor. For most people (and set by law in Islamic countries), this means a 2.5% tax. Most of this money is distributed directly to mosques.

4. Sawm: Fasting during the Holy Month of Ramadan

- Fasting from sun-up to sun-down (no sensual pleasures)
- During Ramadan (Islamic holy month – when Muhammad first received revelations)
- Designed to help people feel the hunger pains of the poor
- Obligatory for those physically able
- Not obligatory for the sick, diabetic, pregnant, breastfeeding, the aged or anyone else who would be harmed by fasting
- Small children are not required to fast, but they often do for ½ day

5. Hajj: Pilgrimage to Mecca

- For Muslims who are physically and financially able, this is a once in a lifetime duty to travel to Mecca
- Most people go during Ramadan
- Spiritual pilgrimage where adherents participate in rituals designed to cleanse the soul

Islam...

It is the fastest growing major religion in the world. Today, over 1.2 billion people, approximately 1/6 of the world's population, adhere to its teachings. It has been around for almost 1400 years, and yet confusion and distrust of the religion permeates many corners of the globe, particularly in western countries like the United States and much of

Europe.

Unfortunately, many westerners today see Islam as a religion of terrorism and repression. Images of fanatics, bombs, planes and towers often cloud the issue, but at its heart Islam is a religion of peace.

First, a few definitions for clarity...

(Note: the words below are written using the most common English spellings, but translations from Arabic to English can produce different spellings of the same words.)

1. Islam – Arabic word for submission
2. Muslim – Arabic word meaning one who submits
3. Allah – Arabic word for the one God
4. Quran – Islam's holy scriptures

Many westerners do not realize that Muslims pray to the same God to which Christians and Jews pray. All three religions share a common heritage, and yet they have also been at odds over the centuries. The problem is how to interpret God's messages to humanity.

According to the Quran, God (Allah) gave his message three different times to humanity. First came Judaism, where God revealed himself to humanity. Jewish prophets of the Old Testament are seen by Muslims then as messengers from God. Second came the message from Jesus. Muslims refer to Jesus 93 separate times in the Quran (never in a bad way), but they see him as a man and a prophet, not God's son. According to Islam, Jesus brought a message of love for one's neighbor and the hope of resurrection according to God's will.

Finally, about 1400 years ago, God decided to send Muhammad, an Arab trader from Mecca, Saudi Arabia, as his final prophet to humanity. Tradition holds that Muhammad, a man whose early life historians and believers know very little about, received a series of revelations from the Archangel Gabriel. Those revelations became the basis for the new faith and were later written down by Muhammad's followers in what became the Quran.

The foundation for Islam is known as the "Five Pillars." These are five basic acts that are mandatory for believers across the Islamic world. The first pillar is a profession of faith. It is whispered in the ear of every newborn and to people as they are dying. Without the profession of faith, nothing else in Islam makes sense. The second pillar is prayer to God five times per day while facing Mecca. The third pillar is almsgiving or charity to the poor, an important consideration in many Muslim countries where some of the world's poorest people live. Although giving alms is often done in Islamic countries by paying a special income tax, even those who cannot pay can still participate by doing good works or volunteering at a mosque. The fourth pillar is a fast during Ramadan (traditionally seen as the month Muhammad received his revelations). This fast is similar in nature to the fast undertaken by some Christians during the Lenten season. The fifth and final pillar is a pilgrimage to Mecca.

Through the investigation of selected writings and various electronic resources, including primary and secondary sources from across the Islamic world, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain in detail the Five Pillars, and how they form the foundation for Islamic life around the world.

Objectives

1. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain each of the Five Pillars of Islam.
2. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain how the Five Pillars of Islam form the foundation for Islamic life around the world.

Procedure

I. Anticipatory Set

- Writing / Question: What do you know or think you know about Islam? (5 min)
- Handouts – Copies of the primary sources and readings from the websites listed below. (5 min)

II. Body of Lesson

- Lecture / PPT – Brief overview of Islam, Mohammad and the Five Pillars. (30 min)
- Video – The Five Pillars (15 min)
- Independent Activity – Students read the primary sources and articles on Islam and the Five Pillars, taking notes as appropriate. (15 min)
- Suggestion: Have the students read some of these articles for homework the night before class to prepare for class discussion.
- Group Activity – Discussion on the Five Pillars of Islam. (15 min)

III. Closure

- Assessment – Short Essay / DBQ: Explain in detail the Five Pillars, how they form the foundation for Islamic life around the world.

Extension

On tour: Islamic Cultural Center, Madrid

While on tour in Madrid, students can visit the Islamic Cultural Center where they can see for themselves the largest such center in Spain. Dedicated to serving the Muslim population in the city and across Iberia, the center hosts a mosque, library, assembly hall and school. The land the center sits on was donated by the city. It was opened in September 1992 and is open to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. There is also an Arabic restaurant on the site, which claims to serve real Arabic meals at “reasonable prices.”

Web Links

Lesson Plan Websites

- www.saudiembassy.net/about/country-information/Islam/five_pillars_of_Islam.aspx
The Five Pillars of Islam (primary source) – from the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia
- www.islam101.com/dawah/pillars.html
The Five Pillars (website)
- www.islamic.net.au/index.htm
Serenity Islamic Research Academy (website) – SIRA, an Islamic research center in Australia, runs this website dedicated to disseminating unbiased information on Islam. Highly recommended for all students, especially those looking for more in-depth explanations.
- <http://qurango.com/english.html>
Quran in the English Language (primary source)
- http://wncre.bangor.ac.uk/Outline%20of%20Islam%20and%20schemes%20of%20work%20_draft%203_.pdf
Islam: A Resource Pack for Teachers (PDF worksheet packet)
- www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/islam08.socst.world.glob.lppillars/the-five-pillars-of-islam/
The Five Pillars of Islam (website) – from PBS, this website contains valuable resources for teaching all aspects of Islam, especially the Five Pillars.
- http://staff.4j.lane.edu/~loo/7thss/five%20pillars.ppt_files/five%20pillars.ppt.ppt
The Five Pillars of Islam (PowerPoint) – from Clarice Acord, Social Studies teacher at Cal Young Middle School in Eugene, Oregon.
- www.slideshare.net/mhutchinson/the-five-pillars-of-islam-1530526
The Five Pillars of Islam (PowerPoint)
- www.teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1
Reading Like a Historian: Primary Source Documents (video). Great 2-minute video on how to incorporate primary sources into the Common Core and history classes. From Shilpa Duvor of Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City, CA. Highly recommended for teachers.
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=TpcbfxtdoI8
Islam, the Quran and the Five Pillars (video) – from Crash Course World History, a DVD series designed to help students and teachers, this 13-minute video works well for most kids.
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mdp3v9feoSA
Inside Islam (video). This 90-minute video, produced by the History Channel shortly after the 9/11 attacks, is probably too long for most in-class showings, but it is worth it. The video does a great job explaining the Five Pillars, the origins of the faith, Muhammad's place and Islam in the world today.

Background Information

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_Pillars_of_Islam
Five Pillars of Islam – Wikipedia article
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam>
Islam – Wikipedia article

Other Relevant Passports Lesson Plans

- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/spain/al-andalus-islamic-spain
Al-Andalus: Islamic Spain
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/spain/reconquista-of-iberia
Reconquista (711-1492)
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/holyland/islam-muhammad-the-prophet
Islam – Muhammad the Prophet
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/holyland/islam-five-pillars
Islam – The Five Pillars
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/turkey/byzantine-istanbul-constantinople-hagia-sophia
Byzantine Empire – Constantinople: Hagia Sophia
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/turkey/byzantine-istanbul-fall-of-constantinople-1453
Byzantine Istanbul – Fall of Constantinople 1453
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/medieval-britain-richard-the-lionheart
Medieval England – Richard the Lionheart

Key Terms

- Allah
- Five Pillars
- Islam
- Mohammad
- Muslim
- Ramadan
- Quran

