

# Islamic Art

## ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

- Cultural exchanges on a vast scale take place in West Asia.
- Islam is the dominant religion in North Africa, West Asia, and Spain.
- The use of figural art varies in the Islamic tradition.
- Islamic art specializes in ceramics, book illumination, textiles and metalwork.

## ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

- The Silk Road connected distant lands culturally and economically. Intercultural exchanges cause a rich diversity of expression combining European, Asian, and Islamic sources.
- Islamic art dominates West Asia and South Europe
- Patrons were royal and religious figures.
- Islam unites a diverse region.
- Islamic architecture includes mosques, tombs, and monuments.
- Islamic art is spread through pilgrimages.
- Religious art contains no figures, but uses tessellations, calligraphy, and arabesques.
- Figural art flourishes in secular writings in Persia.
- Islamic art tends to avoid perspective, be two-dimensional, and have arabesque and geometric designs.
- Ceramics were created for useful and decorative purposes.
- Metalwork was used for sculptures, armor, and utilitarian items.
- Carpets and tapestries are particularly prized examples of Islamic textiles.
- Islamic art excels in manuscript decoration, as well as wall paintings.

## IDEAS AND CONCEPTS

1. The life and teachings of Muhammad.
2. The location and context of the Alhambra?
3. The purpose and stylistic characteristics of the Taj Mahal.
4. A simple understanding of the Quran.
5. The renaming of Constantinople, and why.
6. The effects of the religious beliefs and practices of Islam on Islamic art.
7. The influences Islam had on the Western Europe.
8. The chief building for Muslim worship is the mosque, which direct the worshipper's attention to Mecca through a niche called a Mihrab.
9. Calligraphy is the most prized art form, and appears on most Islamic works of art.
10. Both figural and nonfigural works incorporate calligraphy with arabesque and tessellations.
11. Islamic textiles are particularly treasured as great works of woven art.

## VOCABULARY

Abbasids	luster ware	qibla
Alhambra	madrasa	Qur'an
arabesque	Maghrib	Selimiye Cami
caliph	mausoleum	Shah Jahan
calligraphy	mihrab	Sinan the
caravansary	minaret	Great
Fatimids	minbar	Taj Mahal
horror vacui	muezzin	Umayyads
imam	Muhammad	
Islam	muqarnas	
Jihad	decoration	
Kaaba	Muslim	

## RESOURCES

- Islamic History:  
<http://islamichistory.org/chronology/>
- John Green's Crash Course Islam  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tpcbfxtdol8&v=I=en>
- The 5 Pillars of Islam  
<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/cultures-religions-ap-arhistory/a/the-five-pillars-of-islam>

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## JOURNAL

*Mosque of Cordoba (3.1, 2.2, 3.5)*  
*Taj Mahal (3.1, 1.4, 3.2)*

## CONTEXT

Islamic religion, which began in Arabia, and culture spread rapidly across the Near East and the Southern Mediterranean in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, introducing a style of art that was based on complex geometric and abstract designs. Islam rivaled Christianity in its popularity, and several Christian churches were appropriated for Islamic use. Islam had a strong influence on the medieval period. The Islamic religion did not allow artists to describe human beings or the Muslim God, Allah, in religious art or architecture. Instead they created resplendent environments solely from non-figurative forms.

The prophet Muhammad's powerful religious message resonated deeply with the Arabs in the seventh century, and so by the end of the Umayyad Dynasty in 750 BCE, North Africa, the Middle East and parts of Spain, India, and Central Asia were converted to Islam or were under the control of Islamic dynasties. The Islamic world expanded under the Abbasid Caliphate, which ruled a vast empire from the capital in Baghdad. After the mongol sack of Baghdad in 1258, the Islamic world split into two great cultural divisions, the East, consisting of South and Central Asia, Iran, and Turkey; and the West, which included the Near East and the Arabic peninsula, North Africa, parts of Sicily and Spain.

Islam exists in two principal divisions, Shiite and Sunni, each based on a differing claim of leadership after Muhammad's death. Even though millions practice and continue to share a similar faith, there is a great diversity in Islamic religious and artistic traditions.



## WORKS OF ART

- Buddha (Bamiyan) 400-800
- The Kaaba 631-632
- The Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem 691-692
- Great Mosque of Isfahan, Iran 700-20th cent.
- The Mosque of Cordoba 785-786
- Folio from a Qur'an 8th-9th century
- Ivory casket (pyxis) of al-Mughira 968
- Basin, Baptistere de St. Louis 1320-1340
- Bahram Gur fights the Karg, folio from the Great Il'Khanid 1330-1340
- Alhambra Palace and plan, Court of the Lions, Hall of the Two Sisters 1354-1391
- The Court of Gayumars, folio from Shah Tamasp's Shahnama 1522-1525
- The Ardabil Carpet, Maqsurud of Kashan 1539-1540
- The Mosque of Selim II 1568-1575
- The Taj Mahal, India (Mausoleum) 1632-1653

## ASSIGNMENTS

- Read Gardner's pages 287-309
- Complete homework packet
- Write journal
- Fill in flashcards
- Write Museum/Gallery Review #1

**HOMWORK DUE:** \_\_\_\_\_