

10.

Significant Islamic Scholars

Read the information carefully and then answer the comprehension questions in as much detail as you can.

Muslim scholars from the early Islamic Empire are responsible for the discovery and development of a wide range of inventions that we now take for granted in our daily lives.

Work by these scholars helped lead the Renaissance in Europe which began in the 14th century - several centuries behind the 'golden age of Islam'.

During the early Islamic civilisation many talented doctors contributed to the development of medicine and surgery.

Muhammad ibn Zakariya Razi

Razi was born in AD 854 and died, aged 71, in AD 925. He made a significant contribution to the history of medicine.

During his work in medicine Razi worked out the difference between smallpox and measles and how best to treat them as two separate diseases.

In his work as a chemist Razi invented a range of phials, flasks and spatulas – items which were used in pharmacies for centuries afterwards.

Razi led studies in the field of ophthalmology (the study and treatment of eyes) and he developed a range of ointments to treat different eye conditions.

Razi is regarded as 'the father of paediatrics' due to his acknowledgement that children need to be treated differently to adults.

Razi believed that everybody had the right to good medical care. He wrote a book called 'A medical adviser for the general public' (Man la Yahduruhu Al-Tabib) which described how people could treat their own medical problems.

Abu al-Qasim Khalaf ibn al-Abbas Al-Zahrawi

Al-Zahrawi was born in AD 936 and died, aged 77, in AD 1013. He was a doctor and surgeon who is regarded as 'the father of surgery'. He developed many surgical techniques and invented many surgical tools. Al-Zahrawi gave up his whole life to help develop new medicines and surgical procedures.

Al-Zahrawi's special achievements include the development of cauterisation and his use of catgut in stitches. Both techniques are still used today.

Al-Zahrawi's book 'Al-Tasrif' was used by European doctors for approximately 500 years after it was finished in AD 1000. It describes how to treat a huge range of medical conditions and many of the techniques described in it are still used today. Al-Zahrawi also wrote a book called 'On Surgery and Instruments' in which he drew over 200 surgical tools.



1. How did the early Islamic scholars influence the Renaissance in Europe in the 14th century?

2. What did Muhammad ibn Zakariya Razi find out about smallpox and measles?

3. Why is Razi regarded as the father of paediatrics?

4. Why did Razi write the book 'A Medical Adviser for the General Public'?

5. Why is Al-Zahrawi regarded as the father of surgery?

6. What medical techniques or procedures did Al-Zahrawi develop that are still in use today?

7. Why is Al-Zahrawi's book Al-Tasrif so important?

8. How did medicine in the early Islamic civilisation compare to medicine in Europe at the same time?

9. How have early Islamic doctors influenced medicine today?

Challenge: Can you find out about any other early Islamic doctors who helped lead the development of medicine?

