



Year 5

Baghdad 900 CE Reading Booklet

Lesson Series

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- 2. Baghdad: A City of Peace**
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Name: _____

Class: _____

Lesson 1 - The Rise of Islam

Islam is the second-largest religion in the world, covering almost one-quarter of the world's population. Islam is the most recently founded of the world religions, originating in Mecca (modern-day Saudi Arabia) 1,400 years ago. Before the rise of Islam, the Arabian Peninsula held a mix of different religions: there were Jews, Christians, and many polytheistic tribes. Muhammad lived in Mecca, and it was there, as believed by Muslims, that Muhammad was visited by the Angel Gabriel to receive the word of Allah.

Read this

Muhammad's early preaching led to persecution from the ruling tribes of Mecca, and it was in his new home of Medina that Muhammad built up his support and constructed the first mosque. From Medina, Muhammad was able to capture Mecca and from there, most of the Arabian Peninsula. By the time of his death aged 62, Islam was not just a religion, but an empire which would grow to cover three continents. In the years following the death of Mohammad, Islamic rule spread across three continents, a rapid territorial expansion which laid the groundwork for Islam as a global religion.

During the period after the fall of Rome (476 CE), and before the European Renaissance (beginning around 1450 CE), the Islamic world was the most culturally and intellectually advanced civilization in Europe and the near east. It kept alive the study of Roman and Greek literature and developed mathematical and scientific principles which we still use today.



Lesson 2 - Baghdad: A City of Peace

The construction of Baghdad began in 762 CE when Caliph Al-Mansur laid the first brick. The caliphs (pronounced kah-leaf) were the chief civil and religious leaders who were regarded as the successors of Muhammad. Caliph Al-Mansur was the leader of the Abbasid Caliphate, a dynasty that ruled from 750 CE to 1258 CE. Al-Mansur selected the location of Baghdad as it was close to the Tigris River and was a crossing point for many trade routes. The proximity to the Tigris River also created fertile land around the city, which was required for farming.

Read this

Baghdad was designed to be a circular city with four gates connecting to routes from the north, south, east and west. The trading routes across land and sea created a flow of knowledge, wealth and craftsmanship from China, India and Armenia. According to scholars, the construction of Baghdad took 100,000 workers and over 300,000 bricks.

Baghdad was then known as the City of Peace, and many important scholars came from around the world to think, study and talk. The period of the Abbasid Caliphate is considered to be the Golden Age of Islamic History. The name Baghdad is of Iranian origin and comes from bag, meaning God and dād, meaning gifted.



Lesson 3 - Baghdad: Building a City

Read this

Baghdad was built in a circular shape. At the centre of this round city was the Mosque and a palace, in the surrounding areas were government buildings and accommodation for guards.

Outside the city, walls were markets and homes. Four avenues of trees spanned out from the centre of the city stretching to each of the four city gates. The gates, made of iron, were so heavy it took a team of people to open and close them. The four gates enabled people to access the city from whichever direction they were travelling in, highlighting the location of Baghdad as a crossing point.



Lesson 4 - A Centre for learning in the Golden Islamic Age

Read this

Baghdad became a hugely significant city by 900 CE. People came from all over the world to study maths, science, medicine, philosophy and law. Baghdad's location near a river made paper production easier and lowered the cost of producing books. A Chinese method of making paper from flax and hemp also arrived in the region around this time, adding to the availability of paper for bookmaking.

Libraries and book shops sprung up all over the city. Translation of important texts was a vitally important activity, and many people worked on translating texts from Greek, Aramaic, Persian and Sanskrit into Arabic. Acting as a library, translation centre and school, the House of Wisdom brought together scholars from many countries.

Language, ideas and cultures were shared, which led to Baghdad's development as a truly cosmopolitan city. Not only did people bring together knowledge, but they also built on this knowledge and made scientific and mathematical discoveries of their own.

In 900 CE, Baghdad had the largest collection of books in the world. Important translation was performed, taking important texts from the time in Latin and Greek and translating them into Arabic.



Lesson 5 - The Mongol Attack on Baghdad and The Regional Powers

Read this

The fall of Baghdad happened in 1258. The Mongols (originally from Mongolia) were a tribe of nomads who rode on horseback across central and northern Asia. One army of Mongols, led by Hulagu Khan (Grandson of Genghis Khan), were set a target of conquering Syria, Persia and Egypt.

To do this, they needed to destroy the Abbasid Caliphate who ruled over Baghdad. Over several hundred years before this point, Baghdad had been in decline. Other centres of learning had sprung up around the world, and the city was no longer the cultural centre that it was before.

In 1258 the Mongols entered Baghdad, and complete destruction ensued. Baghdad's Mosque, hospitals, libraries and palace were completely destroyed. Thousands of books are said to have been thrown into the Tigris River, making the river run black with ink. Over 200,000 people were killed during this time. Entire regions were depopulated and were left uninhabitable as means of irrigation, and growing crops were ruined. The Caliphate was destroyed, and Baghdad's golden age had come to a violent end.

