



Art in the Muslim World

Through the materials presented in this lesson, students will explore basic elements of Islamic art, learn about the origin and styles of the specific art of Islamic calligraphy and create their own piece of artistic calligraphy.

Lesson Summary

Overview

In classical Islamic art, forms of art such as calligraphy, architecture, and decorative arts are celebrated. Through the materials presented in this lesson, students will explore basic elements of Islamic art, learn about the origin and styles of the specific art of Islamic calligraphy, and create their own piece of artistic calligraphy.

Objectives

- Demonstrate an understanding of the basic elements of Islamic art;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and styles of Islamic calligraphy;
- Gather information from a variety of sources, process and record information, and create a piece of art based on this work;
- Demonstrate an understanding of religious concepts that Islamic art is grounded in.

Grade Level:

5-12

Suggested Time

Four 45-minute class periods

Media Resources

- [Islamic Art QuickTime Video](#)

Materials

For the class:

- A chalkboard, whiteboard, or poster paper (for brainstorming activities)
- The appropriate writing utensil for your writing surface

- Tape (necessary if you are using poster paper so that you can display the students' work)
- Ideally, a screen on which to project Web-based video segments or a TV and VCR/DVD player

For each student:

- Pen or pencil
- Calligraphy pens (if available) or markers
- Paper (art paper or construction paper) for their culminating activity
- Computer with Internet access
- [Student Response Sheet](#)

Web Sites

[Introduction to Islamic Art](#)

Islamic Calligraphy

- [Introduction](#)
- [Origins of Calligraphy](#)
- [Reform of Arabic Writing](#)
- [Noble Calligraphers](#)
- [Early Development](#)
- [Late Development](#)
- [Writing Instruments](#)
- [Alif as Unit of Proportion](#)
- [Elements of Decoration, section on Calligraphy](#)

Styles of Islamic Calligraphy

- [Deewani](#)
- [Kufi](#)
- [Naskh](#)
- [Riqa](#)
- [Taliq](#)
- [Thuluth](#)

[The Tughra of Sulaiman the Magnificent](#)

Before The Lesson

Prior to teaching the lesson, review all of the Web sites and video segments used in the lesson to make certain that they are appropriate for your students. Bookmark the Web sites used in the lesson on each computer in your classroom, or upload them to an online bookmarking utility such as www.portaportal.com.

Download, print, and copy all of the student organizers listed above for each student in your classroom.

Prerequisite: Before beginning this lesson, be sure to do the Introductory Activity from the [Religion and the First Amendment](#) lesson with your class.

The Lesson

Part I: Introductory Activity: The Basic Beliefs and Practices of Islam

1. Explain to your students that you will be examining Islamic Art, but first you will talk about what art is. Begin by asking your students, as a whole class, to brainstorm a list of things that they think can be considered art. It is possible that they will give answers that are more general, such as paintings or sculpture, or they may give answers that are more specific, such as the "Mona Lisa," "The Kiss," and the Sistine Chapel. After students have given a list of as many things as they can think of, review the list with them and discuss their views and perceptions of art. Are buildings art? Can they think of examples of buildings that could be considered works of art? What about household objects, like bowls and rugs? Can writing and calligraphy be considered art?

1. After students have completed the brainstorm activity, explain that they are going to watch a short video segment and view a Web page that will give them an overview of Islamic art. As a whole group, have students watch the [Islamic Art](#) QuickTime Video and read "Introduction to Islamic Art" (five pages total) located at www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/features/art/index.shtml. Ask students to complete the questions for these pieces on their [Student Response Sheet](#). They will record information for the following questions:
 - "Islamic Art" -- What are the guidelines and aesthetic principles of Islamic art; what types of objects are art in Islam?
 - "Introduction to Islamic Art" -- What are some of the essentials of Islamic art; what does the art of the Muslim world reflect; what is the meaning of geometry and Islamic art; what are everyday items, like Islamic arts and crafts, made to be art; what are some of the major principles of Islamic architecture?

1. Once students have finished answering these questions, check for comprehension by discussing this information as a group. If possible, play the segment a second time, pausing when various art works appear on screen. Take the time to examine these paused images, engaging students in conversations about what they see and observe, such as the symbols and symmetry in the work.

Part II: Learning Activities: The Islamic Art of Calligraphy

1. Explain to your students that you will be taking a closer look at the Islamic art of calligraphy. Divide students into groups of nine. Each student will read the information from one of the Web pages below. Ask them to read their assigned page, summarize the information on their Student Response Sheet, and use these summaries to teach the rest of the group the information they learned. The pages they will be assigned are:

- Introduction:
www.islamicart.com/main/calligraphy/intro.html
- Origins of Calligraphy:
www.islamicart.com/main/calligraphy/origins.html
- Reform of Arabic Writing:
www.islamicart.com/main/calligraphy/reform.html
- Noble Calligraphers:
www.islamicart.com/main/calligraphy/calligraphers.html
- Early Development:
www.islamicart.com/main/calligraphy/early.html
- Late Development:
www.islamicart.com/main/calligraphy/late.html
- Writing Instruments:
www.islamicart.com/main/calligraphy/instrument.html
- Alif as Unit of Proportion:
www.islamicart.com/main/calligraphy/module.html
- Elements of Decoration, section on Calligraphy:
www.islamicart.com/main/architecture/decorate.html

1. Once they have finished reading and summarizing their segments, each student will teach what they have learned to the other students in their group, and these students will record the information that their classmate has taught them. Once every student has taught the others about what they have read, discuss the information as a whole class and answer any questions students may have.
1. After students have learned about the origins and art of calligraphy, divide them into pairs. Each pair will view a series of Web pages to learn more about the different styles

of Islamic calligraphy. Instruct students to read the following pages and record information about each style on their Student Response Sheet. For each style, students are to record information about the origins of the style and the distinctive characteristics of that style, as well as sketch an example of that style. The different styles they will read about are:

- Deewani:
www.islamicart.com/main/calligraphy/styles/deewani.html
- Kufi:
www.islamicart.com/main/calligraphy/styles/kufi.html
- Naskh:
www.islamicart.com/main/calligraphy/styles/naskh.html
- Rika:
www.islamicart.com/main/calligraphy/styles/riqa.html
- Taliq:
www.islamicart.com/main/calligraphy/styles/taliq.html
- Thuluth:
www.islamicart.com/main/calligraphy/styles/thuluth.html

1. Once students have recorded their information and sketched their example of each style, return to the large group and discuss these styles. What are the similarities between these styles? What are the differences? What kind of training is required to be able to write like that? Do they think that they could write like that?

1. Explain to students that, in addition to the different styles of Islamic calligraphy, sometimes special designs or works were developed to be used for specific purposes. Students will look more closely at one of these unique works, the tughra. The tughra was the specific style used for signatures of the Ottoman sultans. Explain to students that they will look specifically at "The Tughra of Sulaiman the Magnificent" at [The Tughra of Sulaiman the Magnificent](#). Ask students to read the pages about the tughra, answer the questions on their Student Response Sheet, and sketch an example of the tughra. The questions they will answer include: what is the tughra; what are the origins of the tughra; who is Sulaiman the Magnificent; what is the Ottoman empire; how do the different parts of his name fit together to create the tughra for Sulaiman?

1. Once students have recorded their answers and sketched their examples, talk with them about the tughra. Why do they think people created these types of works? Do they think the tughra is art? Why or why not?

Part III: Culminating Activity

1. Now that students have learned about the origins and styles of Islamic calligraphy, have them practice writing the Arabic alphabet. Direct students to the Web site www.islamicart.com/main/calligraphy/origins.html and have them click on the link "Arabic Alphabet" in the third paragraph. Provide students with a Focus for Media Interaction, instructing them to watch the animated illustration of the 28 Arabic letters and practice writing these letters. Once they have written each letter, discuss this process. Was it easy or difficult to write these letters? Why or why not?
1. Next tell students that they are going to create their own artistic calligraphy. Instruct each student to pick a saying or a quote from a book or a song that they find meaningful and inspiring. Instruct them to write out this quote on a piece of paper, using calligraphy pens or markers, making this quote or saying into a piece of art. Students can try to copy any of the styles they learned about or they can create their own. Once they have completed their calligraphy, have them share their pieces with the class and hang their art up in the classroom.

Extensions

Science/Art

World Cultures/Comparative Religion

Art/Current Events

World History

[Selections of Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Calligraphy](#)

Community Connections

- If possible, have your students visit a museum with a collection of Islamic art, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art or the Detroit Institute of Arts. If you cannot take students to a museum, have them visit the Web sites for these institutions and view selected items from their collections that are available online.
- Have students speak with a Muslim artist to learn about the connection between his or her religion and art. If this is not possible, have students speak with a calligrapher to learn more about the art of calligraphy.

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