

Islam Islamic Scholarship

Early in the history of Islam, Muslims were great **scholars**.¹ They studied science, medicine, mathematics, poetry, and art. During the Middle Ages, when the Church controlled all of learning in Europe, and most people only studied religion, Muslims continued to study the classics.

Islam spread to many foreign places. Some of the cities were centers of learning. In the 7th and 8th century, Muslim scholars began to study the classic texts of Greece and Rome. They translated important **philosophical**² works from Greek and Latin into Arabic. They also read many science and mathematical works from other languages and translated those into Arabic. Their language became a very important scientific language.

Al-Khawarizmi made the first map of the known world. He is also known as the founder of a type of math called algebra. He was the first person to practice many parts of algebra. He even wrote about the importance of the number zero before anyone else. Other branches of math, including calculus, algebra, and geometry were also developed by Muslims.

Another famous Muslim scholar studied mechanics, or the use of machines. His name was Al-Jazari. He was the first person to draw designs for new machines and mechanical ideas on paper. Now engineers and architects always use paper or computers to plan their designs.

The first place to study the stars and planets, an observatory, was also in the Islamic world. Muslim people developed many **astronomical**³ instruments.

One great Muslim scholar was Ibn Sina. His knowledge was known and respected in many other countries. People called him Avicenna. He lived in the Golden Age of Islam and wrote at least 246 books! One of his books was a very important study of medicine called *Qanun fit Tibb*. This book was used for the study of medicine in Europe from around the 12th century all the way to the 17th century. Advancements of medicine also occurred in the Islamic world. Many

¹ **scholar** – people who study a great deal

² **philosophical** – having to do with thinking and ideas

³ **astronomical** – having to do with the planets and the stars

Islamic cities had hospitals. Their hospitals did more than just care for sick people. They also taught medicine to new doctors. Some Muslim scholars also studied pharmacology—the use of drugs to cure diseases and help reduce pain.

One way that the Islamic world helped **enhance**⁴ the Renaissance in Europe was through its paper industry. Muslims learned how to make paper from the Chinese. The Chinese used bark from trees, but Muslims used a material called linen, which was also used to make cloth. Papermaking spread to Europe through Muslim settlements in Spain and Italy. In 1293, the first paper mill in Europe was started in Bologna. Bologna was very near Florence, the heart of the Italian Renaissance.

⁴ **enhance** – to make better

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. What was a difference between Christian scholarship and Islamic scholarship in the middle ages?

- a. There was no difference; both studied and discovered many things.
- b. Christian scholars made many more discoveries than Muslim scholars.
- c. Muslim scholars focused on religion while Christian scholars studied many subjects.
- d. Christian scholars focused on religion while Muslim scholars studied many subjects.

2. Al-Khawarizimi founded

- a. pharmacology
- b. the study of astronomy
- c. hospitals
- d. the study of algebra

3. Which one of these statements does NOT show an Islamic contribution to medicine?

- a. Ibn Sina's book on the study of medicine
- b. The use of an observatory to cure patients
- c. The creation of hospitals that also taught new doctors
- d. The study of pharmacology

4. How did the Islamic world contribute to the European Renaissance?

- a. Muslim translations of Greek and Latin texts were read by Europeans.
- b. Europeans learned to make paper through Muslim settlements.
- c. Muslim discoveries in engineering influenced Italian artists.
- d. There was a Muslim hospital in Italy.

5. The passage "Islamic Scholarship" is mostly about

- a. a culture and what it produced in a number of areas of thinking
- b. how Muslims do in school compared to people with other religions
- c. the European Renaissance and its connection to Islam
- d. scholars of all religions and how they can work together

6. What attitude does the author seem to have about Islamic scholarship? Use at least one detail from the text in your response.

7. Who was Ibn Sina?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word or phrase that best completes the sentence.

There were many important scientific advancements in the Muslim world, _____ the use of drugs to cure disease and reduce pain.

- a. although
- b. in spite of
- c. including
- d. before

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Papermaking spread to Europe through Muslim settlements in Spain and Italy.

What? _____

(did) What? spread

(to) Where? _____

How? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** enhance: to make better.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____

Teacher Guide and Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 850

Featured Text Structure: Descriptive – the writer explains, defines or illustrates a concept or topic

Passage Summary: Early in the history of Islam, Muslims were great scholars. They made important advancements in map-making, mathematics, mechanics, medicine, and astronomy. The Islamic world also helped aid the Renaissance through its paper industry.

1. What was a difference between Christian scholarship and Islamic scholarship in the middle ages?
 - a. There was no difference; both studied and discovered many things.
 - b. Christian scholars made many more discoveries than Muslim scholars.
 - c. Muslim scholars focused on religion while Christian scholars studied many subjects.
 - d. **Christian scholars focused on religion while Muslim scholars studied many subjects.**
2. Al-Khawarizimi founded
 - a. pharmacology
 - b. the study of astronomy
 - c. hospitals
 - d. **the study of algebra**
3. Which one of these statements does NOT show an Islamic contribution to medicine?
 - a. Ibn Sina's book on the study of medicine
 - b. **The use of an observatory to cure patients**
 - c. The creation of hospitals that also taught new doctors
 - d. The study of pharmacology
4. How did the Islamic world contribute to the European Renaissance?
 - a. Muslim translations of Greek and Latin texts were read by Europeans.
 - b. **Europeans learned to make paper through Muslim settlements.**
 - c. Muslim discoveries in engineering influenced Italian artists.
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5. The passage "Islamic Scholarship" is mostly about
 - a. **a culture and what it produced in a number of areas of thinking**

- b. how Muslims do in school compared to people with other religions
- c. the European Renaissance and its connection to Islam
- d. scholars of all religions and how they can work together

6. What attitude does the author seem to have about Islamic scholarship? Use at least one detail from the text in your response.

Suggested answer: Answers will vary but may include that the author seems impressed by the advancements made by Muslims. One example to support this opinion would be the sentence, “He lived in the Golden Age of Islam and wrote at least 246 books!”

7. Who was Ibn Sina?

Suggested answer: Ibn Sina was a great Muslim scholar whose knowledge was known and respected in many countries. He wrote at least 246 books, including an important study of medicine called *Qanun fit Tibb*.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word or phrase that best completes the sentence.

There were many important scientific advancements in the Muslim world, _____ the use of drugs to cure disease and reduce pain.

- a. although
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What? **papermaking**

(did) What? spread

(to) Where? **Europe**

How? **through Muslim settlements in Spain and Italy**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** enhance: to make better.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.