

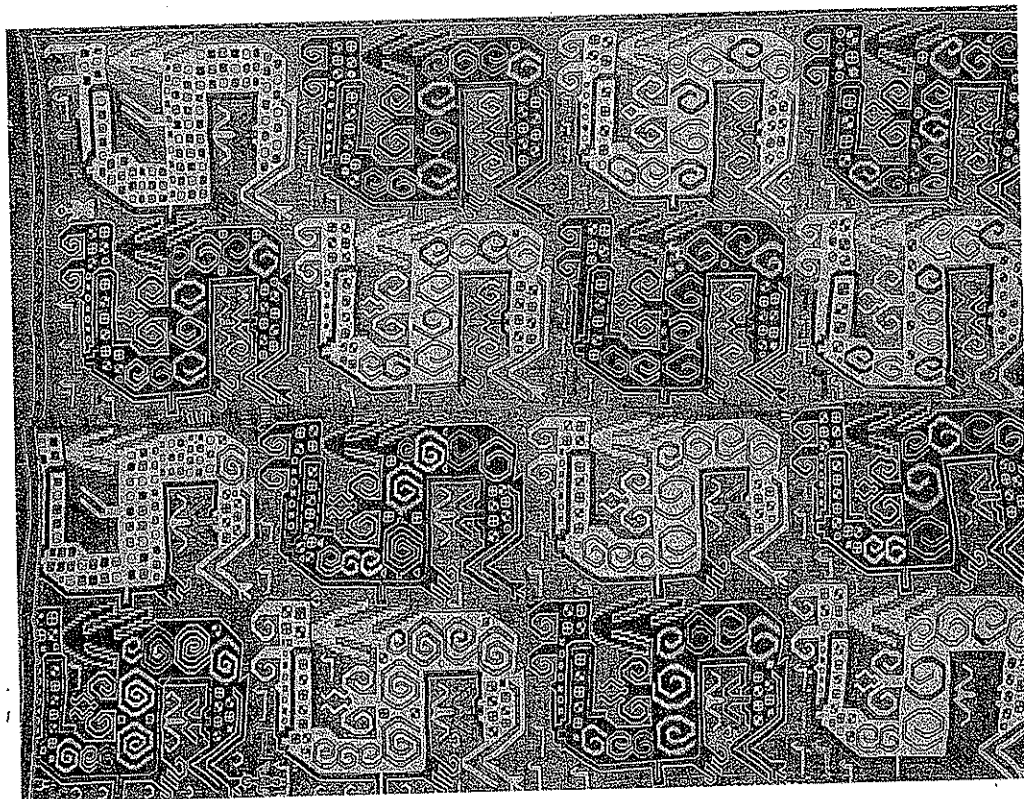
World Art and Music Activity 6



Islamic Textiles

Islamic carpets and silks are works of art. They use bold colors and incorporate geometric shapes, flowers and trees, real and mythical animals, and inscriptions. How did this artistic tradition develop?

Directions: Read the passage below, then answer the questions in the space provided.



Islamic carpet (detail)

Rugs are walked on, clothing is worn out, and even fabric hanging on the wall fades and tears. Because of its dual aesthetic and practical functions, much Islamic textile work does not hold up over long periods of time. The examples that remain, however, display originality, creativity, and artistic ability within a strictly defined religious atmosphere.

The Quran teaches that art should inspire contemplation and prayer. According to Muhammad, only God can make a human figure. Therefore Islamic

artists are forbidden to recreate the human form in artistic representations. The restrictions inspired past artists to create art that moved away from explicit representations of the real world and instead employed patterns and geometric shapes. These patterns illustrate a highly developed aesthetic sense that often emphasizes symmetry, repetition, and proportion. Later Islamic sects were less strict and allowed artists to incorporate real figures into their artworks as long as there was no religious connection.

(continued)

World Art and Music Activity 6

Some of the most highly valued objects in the Islamic world were carpets. Not only did these carpets serve utilitarian or religious purposes (such as prayer rugs), but they were also used as gifts, rewards, and signs of political favor. Carpet-making was highly developed in Iran, where a great, royal carpet could have more than 300 knots per square inch. Some carpets, with their intricate designs and tightly woven piles, could take a single weaver more than 20 years to complete. Many carpets were designed to look like gardens, something that was highly valued in such an arid land.

Another important Islamic art form was the illuminated manuscript. These took the form of either beautifully adorned pages from the Quran or imaginative and richly colored illustrations of romances, historical

accounts, and fables. Because of religious constraints, many artists concentrated their efforts on lovingly and painstakingly copying the sacred text of the Quran to such a degree that it developed into a separate art form—what we know today as calligraphy.

Due to the nomadic lifestyles of many early Islamic peoples, much of their textile art was portable. Rugs were carried for personal use throughout the common trade routes. As rugs and other Islamic textiles began to be traded, they influenced the art of India and the Western world. The influence of Islamic art in Europe can be found in the art from both the Medieval and Renaissance periods in which the arabesque design, a commonly-found Islamic pattern of interlaced lines, was frequently used in tapestries, manuscripts, and wood carvings.

Reviewing the Selection

1. How is the carpet shown typical of Islamic textiles?

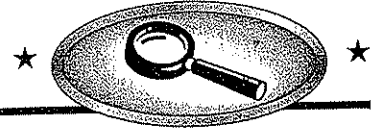
2. Why do most Islamic textiles show patterns instead of human figures?

Critical Thinking

3. **Making Inferences** Why do you think carpets were so highly valued?

4. **Drawing Conclusions** Do you think the Islamic religious restrictions helped or hindered the development of textile art?

★ Enrichment Activity 6



Ramadan

As you have read, fasting is one of the Five Pillars of Islam, and the month-long fast that occurs during the month of Ramadan is required of all adult Muslims. As the follow-

ing passage explains, the fast begins each day at dawn, at the moment when "white thread becomes distinct from black thread," and does not end until sunset.

Ramazán [Ramadan] . . . is an occasion during which believers are thought to be closer to God. Ramazan is a month-long period of fasting, somewhat like Lent only more stringent. It is a time of atonement. It is the month in which the [Quran] was allegedly revealed to [Muhammad]. It is said: "When the noble time of Ramazan comes, the doors of heaven are opened, the doors of hell closed, and the devils tied down." In other words, people's souls are opened to God and closed to **şeytan** (devils); they are sustained by God as by food.

During Ramazan the faithful keep a fast (**oruç**). All day, from before sunrise to after sunset, one must abstain from food and drink. . . . It is also not permissible to smoke, take medicine, or chew gum; in other words, no substance may enter the body. One must be separated from those things which promote and sustain life in its material earthly form; fasting is a way to remind people of their dependence on God for these things. **Oruç** is felt to be a great **sevap** (good work) by which God is pleased; if faithfully performed, it is believed to bring a remission of sins.

—From *The Seed and the Soil: Gender and Cosmology in Turkish Village Society* by Carol Delaney, copyright © 1991 by the Regents of the University of California.

Directions: Answer the questions below in the space provided.

1. Why do the followers of Islam believe they are brought closer to God through their long period of fasting? _____
2. How are the body and the soul, and the gates of heaven and hell, thought to mirror each other during the fast? _____
3. The twenty-sixth night of Ramadan is called the "Night of Determination." According to the Quran, it is on this night that God will decide the destiny of the entire world for the course of the following year. How does this night correspond to the objectives of the rest of the fast? Support your response with details from the passage. _____
4. Take a moment to consider all the food you consume on an average day. How would you feel if you had to undergo a month-long fast? _____
5. You may be surprised to learn that Ramadan is usually thought of by Muslims as a time of celebration. After a long day of fasting, a light meal is enjoyed by neighbors and friends. Why might Ramadan be considered a time of social solidarity and enjoyment rather than simply one of hardship? _____



Reteaching Activity 6

The World of Islam

The Islamic religion greatly influenced the growth of Southwest Asia. Cultures and civilizations developed based on the teaching of the Quran. In the period between its beginnings and the Abbasid dynasty, the Islamic civilization saw many changes and developments.

DIRECTIONS: Information about the Islamic civilization is listed in the box below. Place each item under its proper heading.

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|--|-------------------|
| • House of Wisdom | • urban civilization | • algebra |
| • Sunni/Shiite split | • Five Pillars of Islam | • hajj |
| • built powerful state | • Ibn Sina | • Harun al-Rashid |
| • Ibn-Rushd | • founded by Mu'awiyah | • Battle of Tours |
| • A.D. 661–750 | • worked to ensure equality among all Muslims, Arab and non-Arab | • A.D. 750–1258 |
| • revelations recorded in Quran | | • shari'ah |

CHAPTER 6

Islamic Civilization	
Islamic Beliefs and Practices	Umayyad Dynasty
Abbasid Dynasty	Islamic Achievements