**“Muhammad” adapted from HistoryforKids.org**

Mohammed was born in the Arab trading and pilgrimage city of Mecca, in the [Arabian Peninsula](http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/maps/arabia.htm), between 570 and 580 [AD](http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/ad.htm). Even before Muhammad’s birth, Mecca was a holy city because it was home to a temple called the Kaaba. According to Muslim history, the Kaaba was built by Abraham and his son Ishmael. Mecca was also an important trading town because it was an oasis in the desert.

Muhammad’s parents were part of a family of [traders](http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/islam/economy/index.htm), not among the ruling families of Mecca, but certainly not poor either. Mohammed himself, however, grew up poor, because both his parents died when he was still very young. His grandfather brought him up.

When he grew up, Mohammed married a wealthy widow named Khadija, whose first husband had been a trader, and so he became well-off again. He also became a trader himself. Although he was happily married and had four daughters with Khadija, he became unhappy with life in Mecca. There were many poor people who were treated badly by the wealthy merchants. Other people were worshipping idols (statues and images of gods). Muhammad began to spend time alone praying in the mountains outside of Mecca.

When Mohammed was almost forty, he said he had heard an angel from God speaking to him for the first time. The angel, Gabriel, told Mohammed that there was only one God, that it was wicked to worship idols (statues and images of gods), and that the end of the world was coming soon, with the Last Judgment. Mohammed also heard Gabriel telling him the words that were later written down in the [Koran](http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/islam/religion/koran.htm), which is the holy book for Muslims.

At first the Meccans seem to have felt that Mohammed's preaching was harmless, but later, as he got more support from the lower classes, and really began to say that people should not worship the [old gods](http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/islam/religion/preislamic.htm), the upper-class Meccans threw Mohammed out of town. People beat up and even killed his followers, who began to be called Muslims. Some of them fled to [Ethiopia](http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/africa/index.htm). Mohammed himself fled to the nearby town of Medina, a farming town where Arabs of various tribes lived together with many powerful [Jews](http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/religion/jews/arabs.htm) and some [Christians](http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/religion/christians/christianity.htm). Mohammed's flight to Medina in 622 [AD](http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/ad.htm) is called the Hijra in Arabic, and it is the date where the Muslim calendar begins.

Mohammed gathered a group of followers in Medina, though he failed to convince the Jews to join him as he had hoped. In 630 [AD](http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/ad.htm) he returned to Mecca with an army and conquered it. After he won another victory against Arabic tribes in 630 AD, other Arabic tribes began to send messengers to Mohammed to say that they would submit to his rule, because he was so successful that he must have God on his side.

On June 8th, 632 AD, Mohammed died, at about 50 or 60 years old, but his teachings endured.

**Homework:**

Part 1: Myths and Facts of Islam

Directions: Using the PowerPoint on Moodle, correct each myth by writing in the true fact.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Myth | Fact |
| Most Muslims are Arabs who live in the Middle East. | 1. |
| Muslims have a strange religion and worship a god called Allah. | 2. |
| Muslims believe it is ok to kill civilians in holy war. | 3. |
| Most Muslim women wear veils over their faces and are treated very badly. | 4. |

Part 2: Muhammad and the Founding of Islam

Directions: Using the biography of Muhammad, answer the following questions:

5. Why was Mecca a holy city, even before Muhammad was born?

6. What was Muhammad’s childhood like?

7. Before becoming a prophet, why was Muhammad unhappy with life in Mecca?

8. What happened to Muhammad when he was praying in the mountains?

9. How were Muhammad and his followers treated by people in Mecca?

10. What has the Hijra?

Part 3: The Five Pillars

Directions: Using your class notes and the videos on Moodle, list and describe each of the Five Pillars of Islam.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Pillar | Description |
| 11. |  |
| 12. |  |
| 13. |  |
| 14. |  |
| 15. |  |