

USING ARTEFACTS TO TEACH ABOUT ISLAM

General Introduction

Artefacts can be used either as demonstration tools, or as an interactive resource to encourage investigation, questioning and independent thinking. One artefact can focus people's attention and bring in a whole range of information and concepts which remain 'pegged' in the memory to the artefact.

These notes aim to give teachers some ideas and guidelines on how to use artefacts in teaching about Ramadan.

Sources for each artefact and addresses of the sources will be added and updated in due course.

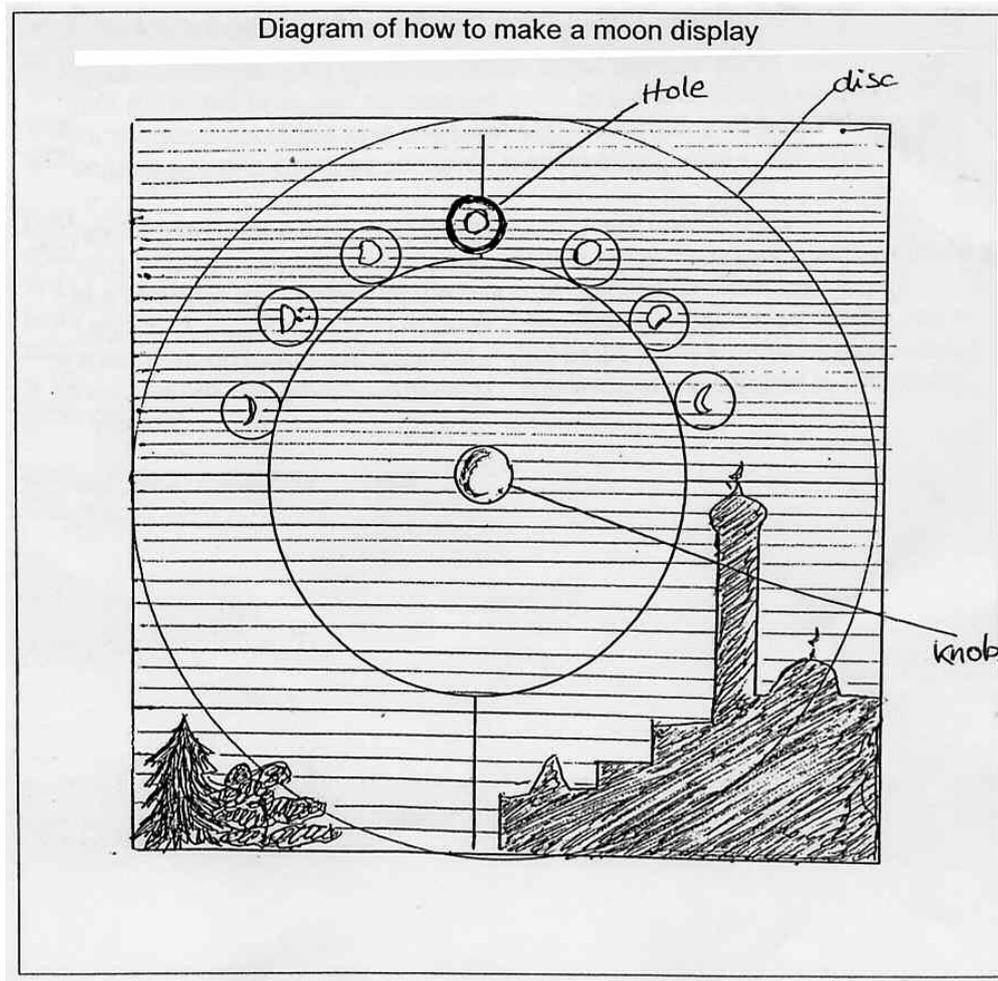
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Islamic Year and Moon Display

A Moon Display can be constructed to help explain the phases of the moon and their relation to the beginning and end of the Islamic month of Ramadan (and all the others too). A board depicting a dark horizon and sky with holes cut in it showing the shapes of the moon at different stages. Behind it a circular, dark sky-coloured board with a white circle under the holes turns on a handle so the white part shows through the holes one at a time.

Something like this could be made as a class activity using stiff card and colour markers/crayons and scissors, with a wooden peg as a handle, or making the circle protrude beyond the edge of the face-board so that the edge of the circle can be used to turn it. Small cards like this could be made and used as Eid cards.

Diagram of how to make a moon display



THE ISLAMIC YEAR

no.	month	date	event
1	Muharram*	1st	Islamic New Year's Day
		10th	Ashura
2	Safar	27th	Prophet left Makkah for al-Madinah
3	Rabi' al-Awwal	12th	Mawlid al-Nabiy (Birthday of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh))
4	Rabi' al-Thani		
5	Jumadah al-Awwal		
6	Jumadah al-Thani		
7	Rajab*	27th	Laylat al-Isra' wa al-Mi'raj (The Prophet's Night Journey and Ascension)
8	Sha'ban	15th	Laylat al-Nisf min Sha'ban (Mid-Sha'ban) Change of Qiblah (direction of prayer from Jerusalem to Makkah)
9	Ramadan	1st-29th/30th	Fasting from dawn to sunset
	During the last ten days		Laylat al-Qadr (The Night of Power)
10	Shawwal	1st	Eid al-Fitr
11	Dhul Qa'dah*		
12	Dhul Hijjah*	8th	Start of Hajj
		9th	Yawm Arafat (Arafat Day)
		10th	Eid al-Adha (Festival of Sacrifice)
		10th -12th	Stoning the Jamarat at Mina

*The four sacred months (Qur'an 9:36)

The above Islamic Year table of the Islamic months and the main events in each one can be used to explain that Muslims use a different calendar based on the moon - a lunar calendar. There are twelve months in a year, each of them can be either 29 or 30 days long, depending when the new moon is sighted to show the beginning of the next month.

Explain the phases of the moon using the handle at the back of the Moon Display to turn the disc round. The NEW moon is the crescent like a BACK-TO-FRONT C. ("When the moon looks like 'C' for 'coming', its going.") Move it from there to the half moon, full moon and so on till the old moon appears, then back to the new moon, explaining that it takes two weeks to reach full moon and another two to return to new moon. The moon rises and sets at different times according to a different cycle, which means that sometimes the new moon can't be seen until the 30th night. Explain that at the beginning and end of Ramadan some Muslims have to see the new moon before the fast can start and end. This is one opinion; according to another, the dates can be calculated. Most Muslims use both means together: the calculation helps to determine when to watch out for the new moon, while sighting confirms its actual appearance.

Use the Islamic Year board to show that Ramadan is the 9th of these lunar months, and briefly mention the other months.

Then use Islamic calendars from different years (available from Islamic bookshops, Islamic Relief, Muslim Aid) to explain that the lunar month is 11 days shorter than a solar year, which is the one most people use in Britain. Ramadan and all the other Muslim dates, move backwards through the solar year, and all the Muslims all around the world get a chance to fast sometimes in the summer and sometimes in the winter, on longer and shorter days.

Ramadan Lantern (fanous pl. fawanis)

Lanterns are made for children in Ramadan in Egypt, and some other Muslim countries, because it is a tradition for children to go round the village with the man who wakes people up for sahur (the early morning meal) in the dark hours before dawn. The lanterns are used to light their way. There are songs which they sing to wake people up, and some of these are available on tape in countries like Egypt. Children can make lanterns out of card or stiff paper by folding a long rectangle in half lengthways, cutting slits at intervals along the folded edge, ending about 1 cm from the far edge, and then rolling it up and sticking it together to form a tube with slats all round. They can then draw round the bottom and stick it into a circular base for the light to stand on, and make a handle out of a strip of card at the top to hold it.

Ramadan worksheets

Old Ramadan timetables can be obtained from mosques and Islamic bookshops and aid organisations, or from Muslims who have them lying about at home. Ramadan worksheets showing Ramadan timetables from two different years can be used to follow up the calendar theme, see how long fasting days are in the summer and how short in the winter, and how the times and dates change over the space of a few years.

Dates (Health Food Shops, etc.)

While talking about Ramadan, the teacher should explain, that it is traditional to break the fast as the Prophet used to do. After a short prayer to break the fast with a few dates. Perhaps some dates could be bought and offered to the children to try.

Eid al-Fitr

Eid cards can be made for the children to colour by photocopying Islamic patterns found in colouring books. Original patterns can also be made using a pair of compasses to draw circles and a ruler to join the points with lines. Recipes for suitable sweets and cakes can be found in books like Claudia Roden's New Middle Eastern Cookbook.

Here is one from The Muslim World Cook Book (American Trust Publications) which has a useful introduction on 'Dietary Regulations and Food Habits of Muslims, and some Qur'anic verses about food.

Turkish Cookies

250 g unsalted butter 250 g flour
110 g granulated sugar 200 g peeled almonds

Place butter in mixing bowl and cream well. Add sugar and sifted flour. Chill. Roll from 1/4 to 1/2 inch thick (not too thin, better when thick). Cut into desired shapes. Place 1 white almond on top of each cookie. Bake on a greased pan in a moderate oven (350o C) for 8-12 minutes till pale golden colour (Watch carefully!)

RESOURCE ADDRESSES

Beads for making sibhah

Creative Beadcraft Ltd

Unit 2, Ashridge Business Centre
Ashridge Road
Chesham, BUCKS, HP5 2PT
Tel: 01494 778818
Fax: 01494 776605
Web: www.creativebeadcraft.co.uk
Email: tracey@creativebeadcraft.co.uk

The Bead Shop

21a Tower Street
London WC2H 9NS
Tel: 020 7240 0931
www.beadshop.co.uk
Email: info@beadworks.co.uk

Songs for Muslim children from

Articles of Faith

Resource House, Kay Street, Bury,
Lancashire BL9 6BU
Tel: 0161 763 6232
Fax: 0161 763.5366
Web: www.articlesoffaith.co.uk
Email: hello@resourcehouse.co.uk

Religion in Evidence Catalogue

TTS Group Ltd
Park Lane Business Park
Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire
NG17 9LE
Tel: 0800 318686
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