Routes and Ideas

Trace the spread of Islam and the reach of scholarship

AWH.C.9.4 "Describe the impact and legacy of Islam and the Islamic empire, including discoveries in science and mathematics, the spread of Islam in the Middle East, Africa, and Europe."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one detail showing how Islam spread in each region, and write Middle East, Africa, or Europe beside each detail. Circle two scientific or mathematical contributions, then box a detail showing their later influence.

From Baghdad to Iberia

1. In 762, the Abbasid rulers founded Baghdad near important trade routes. Islam had begun in the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century and spread across the Middle East through conquest, migration, and trade. New rulers supported roads and cities that connected people who spoke different languages. Conversion was gradual; many Christians and Jews continued to practice their religions under Muslim rule. In Baghdad, scholars working in Arabic studied ideas from Greece, India, and Persia. The city became a place where merchants carried goods and scholars exchanged knowledge across a growing empire.

2. Across North Africa, Muslim armies established new governments in the seventh and eighth centuries, while communities adopted Islam over generations. Farther south, merchants carried Islam across the Sahara to West African trading centers. Rulers in Mali later supported Islamic learning, and Timbuktu became known for its schools and manuscripts. In Cairo, Egypt, the scholar Ibn al-Haytham investigated how sight works. He argued that light enters the eye, rather than being sent out by it, and tested ideas about light with careful observations. His work on optics shaped later investigations of vision and light, including studies by scholars in Europe.

3. In 711, Muslim forces crossed into the Iberian Peninsula, beginning centuries of Muslim rule in parts of what are now Spain and Portugal. Islam spread there through settlement as well as government, although Christians and Jews also lived there. Córdoba became a center of libraries and learning. Earlier in Baghdad, the mathematician al-Khwarizmi had written a systematic work on solving equations, helping establish algebra as a field. In twelfth-century Toledo, under Christian rule, translators rendered Arabic scholarly works, including al-Khwarizmi's algebra, into Latin. These translations gave European readers access to mathematical and scientific ideas developed and shared in Islamic societies.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Islam spread across the Middle East, and what shows that religious change was gradual?

2. Compare how Islam reached North Africa and West Africa. What lasting center of learning developed in West Africa?

3. How did Islam become established in Iberia, and what evidence shows a legacy of learning there?

4. How did the work of scholars in Cairo and Baghdad affect learning beyond those cities?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence label for an exhibit about how Islam and learning traveled. Compare Islam's spread in two regions, explain one discovery's later impact, and make your own claim about why this history matters using passage details.

ANSWER KEY

Routes and Ideas

HIGH SCHOOL · AWH.C.9.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one detail showing how Islam spread in each region, and write Middle East, Africa, or Europe beside each detail. Circle two scientific or mathematical contributions, then box a detail showing their later influence. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Islam spread across the Middle East, and what shows that religious change was gradual?	**Islam spread through conquest, migration, and trade. Many Christians and Jews continued practicing their religions under Muslim rule.**
2	Compare how Islam reached North Africa and West Africa. What lasting center of learning developed in West Africa?	**Muslim armies established governments in North Africa, while merchants carried Islam across the Sahara to West Africa. Timbuktu became known for its schools and manuscripts.**
3	How did Islam become established in Iberia, and what evidence shows a legacy of learning there?	**Muslim forces entered Iberia in 711, and settlement also spread Islam. Córdoba had libraries, and translators in Toledo later made Arabic scholarly works available in Latin.**
4	How did the work of scholars in Cairo and Baghdad affect learning beyond those cities?	**Ibn al-Haytham's work on light shaped later studies of optics, including in Europe. Latin translations of al-Khwarizmi's algebra gave European readers access to his mathematical work.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In North Africa, Muslim armies established governments, while merchants carried Islam across the Sahara to West Africa. In Iberia, Muslim rule began after forces crossed the peninsula in 711, and settlement also spread Islam. Ibn al-Haytham's observations about light in Cairo later shaped studies of optics in Europe. This history matters because trade, settlement, and scholarship connected distant communities in different ways.

Accept comparisons of any two regions supported by the passage. The exhibit label should connect a specific contribution to its later influence and support an original claim with passage details.