

Expansion of the Early Islamic Empire Lesson Plan

Central Historical Question:
How did the early Islamic empire expand?

Materials:

- Expansion of the Early Islamic Empire PowerPoint
- Copies of Documents A-C
- Copies of Guiding Questions

Plan of Instruction:

1. Introduction: Use the PowerPoint presentation to review or provide an overview of Islamic expansion in the 7th and 8th centuries.

- a. Slide 2: Arabia at the Dawn of Islam. *Muhammad was born in about 570 CE in Mecca (present-day Saudi Arabia). In his life, he reported receiving revelations from God and preached about them. His revelations form the Quran, the central religious text of Islam.*

At the time of Muhammad's birth, the Arabian Peninsula was divided into many competing tribes. By the end of his life in 632 CE, most of the peninsula had converted to Islam and after his death became the first caliphate.

The caliphate was the political and religious state of Muslims and the lands in their possession in the centuries after the death of Muhammad. The ruler of the caliphate was called a caliph, who was considered the political successor of the Prophet Muhammad.

- b. Slide 3: Expanse of the Umayyad Caliphate. *A little more than a hundred years later, the Umayyad Caliphate stretched across the Middle East, North Africa, and into Spain. It covered 5.8 million square miles at its largest extent, more than twice as large as the Roman Empire at its height. It was the largest empire ever up to that point.*
- c. Explain to students: *Today you will be examining three different documents and making a series of hypotheses to answer the Central Historical Question.* Slide 4: Central Historical Question. *How did the early Islamic empire expand? In particular, you will be hypothesizing about what strategies Muslims used to expand.*

2. Slide 5: Expansion of the Early Caliphates. Point out the extent of the empire as it grew during the 7th and 8th centuries. Pass out the Graphic Organizer.
 - a. Students examine the map and make a hypothesis about what strategies Muslims used to expand the early caliphates.

- b. Students share out answers.
3. Pass out Document A.
 - a. In pairs, students read documents and answer the Guiding Questions.
 - b. Individually, students use the document to make another hypothesis about what strategies Muslims used to expand the early caliphates.
 - c. Students share out answers.
 - Important to note:
 - *Whose hypothesis changed from their first hypothesis?*
 - *Whose hypothesis remained the same or similar?*
 - *Is this a reliable source for learning how the early caliphates expanded? Is this document alone enough evidence to determine how the early caliphates expanded? Stress that although historians use documents to make hypotheses, they never use only one document to make historical claims.*
4. Pass out Document B.
 - a. In pairs, students read documents and answer the Guiding Questions.
 - b. Individually, students use the document to make another hypothesis about what strategies Muslims used to expand the early caliphates.
 - c. Students share out answers.
 - Important to note:
 - *Whose hypothesis changed from their first two hypotheses?*
 - *Whose hypothesis remained the same or similar?*
 - *The header to this document mentions an invasion, which presumably included force.*
 - *The terms of this treaty, however, are peaceful and suggest that the expansion of Islam involved a level of tolerance and acceptance of differing religious beliefs.*
5. Pass out Document C.
 - a. In pairs, students read documents and answer the Guiding Questions.
 - b. Individually, students use the document to make another hypothesis about what strategies Muslims used to expand the early caliphates.
 - c. Students share out answers.
 - Important to note:
 - *Whose hypothesis changed from their first three hypotheses?*
 - *Whose hypothesis remained the same or similar?*
 - *The stipends described here seem to run counter to Document A and are more similar to Document B.*
6. Final Discussion
 - a. How do these documents shed light on how the caliphates expanded during the 7th and 8th centuries?
 - b. Is any one document more reliable than the other? If so, why?

- c. What other types of sources might you consult to continue investigating how the early caliphates expanded?
 7. Final Claim/Summary. For homework students write a paragraph that draws on evidence from the documents to address the question: How did the early Islamic empire expand?
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Citations

Document A

Al-Biladuri: The Battle of the Yarmuk (636) and After. In *Internet Medieval Source Book*. Fordham University. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/yarmuk.asp>.

Document B

The Treaty of Tudmir. In Olivia Remie Constable (Ed.), *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources* (pp. 37-38). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.

Document C

Donner, F. (1981). *The Early Islamic Conquests*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.