

Celebrating Ramadan

Ramadan (Rah-ma-Dan) is celebrated around the world as a time of charity and thanksgiving among family and friends. Muslims commemorate this month as the time the *Quran* was revealed to the Prophet Mohamed. In countries in the Middle East, it is a celebrated time among Muslims and non-Muslims, as friends gather together at the end of the day and eat special foods and participate in the festivities. These traditions are preserved in Muslim families in America, as well. This year, Ramadan in America will be during the month of September.



Restaurants and cafes outside of historical El Hussein Mosque, Cairo

Recognizing the Muslim holy month of Ramadan is a good way for students to understand both the diversity and shared values of many Muslims worldwide. To do this, we have compiled an introductory unit which explores the cultural practices associated with this month.

Below you will find:

- Ramadan Lesson Plan
- Activities, card and lamp craft projects

The CSAMES library also has the following films and books that may be checked out:

A Walk in Your Shoes: Muslim-American, (film) Nancy, a 15-year-old Protestant from Boston spends two days with Mariam, a 13-year-old Muslim teen from New Jersey. Nancy attends Mariam's Muslim school, her mosque, wears a hijab, and celebrates Ramadan with Mariam and her family. The girls also spend time doing typical American teen activities. Nancy and Mariam's experience demonstrates that by learning about one another, we see how much we have in common while appreciating what makes us unique.

American Ramadan: Fasting for Faith (film) Filmed on location in Dallas and Los Angeles, the documentary follows the lives of five American Muslim families during Ramadan. This unique film does more than build bridges; it spotlights the plight of anyone seeking faith and a higher spiritual understanding.

Celebrating Ramadan, by Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith, tells about Ramadan through the personalized daily life of a young Muslim boy named Ibraheem who lives in Princeton, New Jersey.

Magid Fasts for Ramadan, by Mary Matthews, recounts the tale of Magid's first attempt to fast during Ramadan, and explains what Ramadan is and why Muslims fast during the festival, as well as various traditions and customs about the celebration.

Ramadan, by David Marx, introduces children to the Muslim holiday of Ramadan with colorful photos and simple text. There are vocabulary words and pronunciation guides included.

Festivals of Egypt, by Jailan Abbas, covers ten of the most popular festivals in Egypt with ethnographic and historical details. Recipes, pictures, games, and songs are included for the festivals focusing on both Islamic and Christian celebrations.

Ramadan Lesson Plan

Overview:

In this lesson plan, students will investigate the Islamic festival of Ramadan. This lesson plan provides a two-fold approach to the festival including Ramadan lamp craft projects and student book reports. Through the investigation of Ramadan and the creation of the fanoos (a Ramadan lamp), students will learn about Ramadan itself. The lesson begins with a discussion of symbols and objects related to particular holidays and moves to the specific festival of Ramadan, a symbol of its celebration, and the festival's meaning. By learning more about the particulars of the Middle East and its celebrations, students will start to draw parallels between the Middle East and their own forms of celebration. This lesson will aid students in their examination of the Middle East, its cultures, and its peoples, and can also be paired with other units on festivals in the Middle East and Spring Festivals.

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Consider what symbols/objects are associated with various holidays.
2. Research the festival of Ramadan. (See Middle Eastern Festivals Information Sheet, as well as the Annotated Bibliography on festival resources.)
3. Report on the practices and beliefs of Ramadan.
4. Create a Ramadan Lamp or Eid card.

Activity:

1. Ask students the following question either as an individual prompt for an in-class writing or as a group discussion: "Can you think of particular objects that are associated with particular holidays?" (Pumpkins with Halloween, evergreen trees and stockings with Christmas, four-leaf clovers with St. Patrick's Day, turkeys with Thanksgiving, dragon with Chinese New Year, dreidel with Hanukkah, eggs with Easter, etc.)
2. Either obtain an actual fanoos (Ramadan lamp) or find pictures of them for your class. (A Ramadan lamp is available to loan from the Program in South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies.) Relate the importance of the fanoos as a symbol and object of Ramadan. Provide information about the lamps or allow students to research the lamps themselves after they learn more about the festival of Ramadan.
3. In order to provide students with the means to understand the lamps and the festival of Ramadan, assign students one of the books below to read and write a report on. (All of the books below are available to loan from the Center for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, as well as a prayer rug.) Ask students to explain what Ramadan is and how it is celebrated according to the book. Another option would be to read aloud one of these books to your class afterwards discussing the fanoos.

Ramadan Books Available from CSAMES:

- a. Abbas, Jailan. *Festivals of Egypt*. Cairo, Egypt: Hoopoe Books, 1995.
The book covers ten of the most popular festivals in Egypt with ethnographic and historical details. Recipes, pictures, games, and songs are included for the festivals focusing on both Islamic and Christian celebrations. (Available to loan from the CSAMES library.)
 - b. Hoyt-Goldsmith, Diane. *Celebrating Ramadan*. New York: Holiday House, 2001.
Islam and the special month of Ramadan are taught through the personalized daily life of a young Muslim boy named Ibraheem who lives in Princeton, New Jersey.
Family life and prayer help young adult readers understand the importance of the *Qur'an* for Muslims. (Available to loan from the CSAMES library.)
 - c. Matthews, Mary. *Magid Fasts for Ramadan*. New York: Clarion Books, 1996.
This five-chapter book for elementary-aged children recounts the fictional tale of Magid's attempt to fast during Ramadan with realistic introductions to modern Muslim life. Although Magid is considered too young to fast, he wants to anyway. The book explains what Ramadan is and why Muslims fast during the festival, as well as various traditions and customs about the celebration. (Available to loan from the CSAMES library.)
 - d. Marx, David F. *Ramadan*. New York: Children's Press, 2002.
This book introduces children to the Muslim holiday of Ramadan with colorful photos and simple text. There are vocabulary words and pronunciation guides included. (Available to loan from the CSAMES library.)
4. Following the discussion of the festival itself, discuss the significance of the lamp to the students. The fanoos has become the symbol of Ramadan, legend has it that in the era of Mamluks' rule over the Near East and Egypt, women would walk around with their lanterns to go to relatives to break their Ramadan fast. The fanoos has developed greatly in the past centuries, where is started to take several other shapes and move into other regions as well.
- a. Why is it used? How is the lamp connected to the meaning of Ramadan?
 - b. How is it used? In the past and today?
 - c. What association does it have with Ramadan and its practices?
5. Craft Project:
- a. Have students create their own Ramadan lamp out of milk cartons. Hang the lamps around the classroom. (See CSAMES Ramadan Lamp Craft Project for more information.)

- b. Have students create their own Eid cards. Eid el-Fitur (Feast of the Breaking the Fast) is the holiday that marks the breaking of the fast for Muslims at the end of Ramadan. The celebration lasts three days during which time families and friends get together to celebrate with good food and give to charity. Muslims often exchange cards with family and friends to celebrate. Use the stamping kit available on loan from the CSAMES library, along with paper and colors to decorate your own Eid card. (See CSAMES Eid Card Craft Project for more information.)

Ramadan Lamp Craft Project



What You Need:

- ❖ Empty, rinsed out individual or quart sized milk carton; a cardboard orange juice container will also work well
- ❖ Scissors
- ❖ Tape or Glue
- ❖ Construction Paper
- ❖ Tissue Paper
- ❖ Glitter, Star and Moon Stickers
- ❖ Ribbon or Thread; Paper Clip

What To Do:

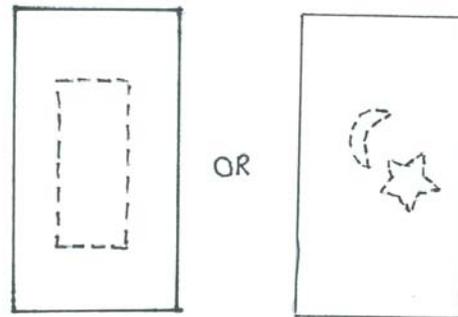
Step One: Take a milk carton and cut off the top and bottom, leaving the four sides intact.

Step Two: Cut out panels in the four sides of the milk carton. The panels can be in the traditional Ramadan shapes of crescent moons or stars, or they may be simple square cut outs.

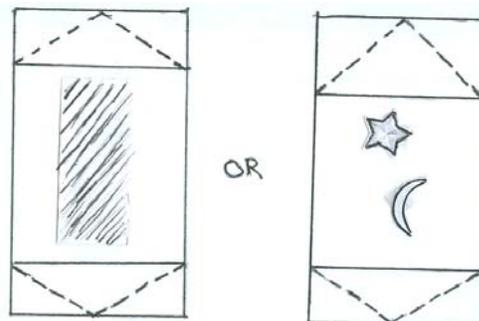


Step Three: Cover the outer facing sides of the carton in construction paper to make a festive lamp.

Step Four: Glue or tape colored tissue paper onto the inside of the carton covering the panels that you cut out of the carton. The light will shine through the paper making a colorful lamp.

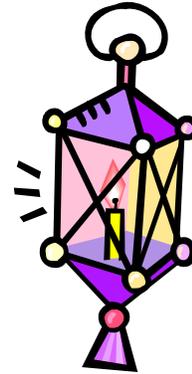


Step Five: Create the bottom and top of your lamp by cutting a triangle on each of the four sides of the carton on the top and bottom. Pull the tops of the triangle together, creating a closed bottom and top for the carton and tape them together.



Step Five: Use an embellishments that you have like glitter and traditional shapes like moons and stars to decorate the lamp.

Step Six: Hang the lamp by the top using either a ribbon or thread, or by stretching out a paper clip.



To receive more information on the Ramadan unit or schedule an in-class presentation, please contact Angela Williams at 217-333-2258 or aswillms@uiuc.edu.