

After the death of the **Prophet Muhammad**, in 632, the Middle East underwent a period of significant change. Over the next 200 years, Islamic **civilisation** spread as far as Spain in the west and China in the east. While Europe was in a period called the Middle Ages, early Islamic societies were developing scientific thinking medicine, education, literature and prosperous trade routes.



Location



Settlements

Out of respect for Allah, or God, no images of living creatures are depicted in Islamic art. As a consequence, the art of writing (calligraphy) and the science of geometry took on great importance in art and architecture in the Muslim world.

The Golden Age of Islam is especially well-known for the use of calligraphy, geometric designs and **arabesques** to decorate mosques (places of worship for Muslims), buildings and public spaces.



Culture and pastimes

The opening of the House of Wisdom in the city of **Baghdad** led to a significant number of achievements in Islamic literature. Having learnt the art of paper making (from China), Islamic scholars tried to collect and translate all of the known world's knowledge into Arabic.

Muslim writers also created their own stories, perhaps the most famous of that time being *One Thousand and One Nights*. Sometimes known as *The Arabian Nights*, it is a collection of short stories including *Aladdin*, *Sinbad* and *Ali-Baba*.



Beliefs

**Baghdad** became the capital of the Muslim world but was also home to many different religious and ethnic communities. Christianity, Judaism and other religions were practised in the city, and people were tolerant of other people's beliefs. Baghdad was also heavily influenced by Persian and Egyptian culture. The Golden Age of Islam saw Islamic culture and beliefs spread through its art, architecture, writing, trade and language.

Topic related vocabulary:

<b>prosperous</b>	rich and successful
<b>civilisations</b>	a group of people with their own languages and way of life.
<b>Prophet Muhammad</b>	Arab prophet and founder of Islam. Muslims regard him as God's messenger through whom the Quran was revealed.
<b>arabesques</b>	designs made up of flowing lines
<b>Baghdad</b>	is the current capital of Iraq and the second-largest city in the Arab world after Cairo.