

CURRICULUM MATERIALS REVIEWS

Arts of the Islamic World A Teacher's Guide

FREER GALLERY OF ART AND ARTHUR M. SACKLER GALLERY
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, 2002
90 PAGES, 10 COLOR PLATES. SPIRAL-BOUND WITH INSERTS

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This thoughtfully compiled teaching tool is essential for today's educators. While it emphasizes the visual arts, it is a cultural study, and could be taught within the fields of Social Studies, History, or Religion.

The brief introduction makes clear that specific categories—Book, Mosque, and Portable Object—are highlighted. The fine color plates, found in a sleeve of the folder, are works from the Smithsonian Institution's Freer Gallery and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery. On the back of each plate is a full identification and lengthy description setting each work within its cultural context. For instance, the description for a double-page from a Safavid *Qur'an* gives the history of how the sacred text was revealed, how it was compiled, and its main teachings. It then discusses the elegant *naskh* script and the type and origins of the repeated geometric design. The expert research, combined with carefully chosen advisors, brings a high level of scholarship to this guide. The input of a Teacher-Consultant Group helps make this work truly teacher-friendly.

Any educator would want to refer to contemporary issues concerning Islam. *Arts of the Islamic World* gives a strong base for further discussion in the classroom. Interviews with practicing Muslims, as well as an excerpt from a young Muslim woman's journal, help bring a contemporary human reality to the subject. Facts and terms are covered exceptionally well, and could easily be used by educators from elementary through high school. A map shows the early spread of Islam, while diagrams clarify the parts of a Mosque and how Arabic script is written. Each section has a glossary of terms appropriate to the subject. Nine pages of resources could prove invaluable to teachers and school librarians. Suggested readings and videos carry good descriptions, and specific order information is given. Books are listed under age categories of Children and Adults.

Obviously, the original *Teacher's Guide* was developed for the Washington area. The lists of Local Islamic Centers and Mosques, and Embassies and Consulates are all in the neighborhood of the Smithsonian. However, such a model can be easily followed by educators working in other locations.

The Lesson Plans found in *Arts of the Islamic World* are remarkable proof that this Guide works. The five contributions are by

named educators from elementary and high schools in Washington, Maryland, and Virginia. All are art teachers, and the activities described relate specifically to the accompanying plates. Each Lesson includes a goal, objectives, vocabulary, motivation and discussion, activity, and assessment and evaluation. Further information includes time needed, materials, variations and extensions, particularly in relation to older students. Actual student artwork has been reproduced, making the Guide completely believable.

Arts of the Islamic World: A Teacher's Guide, an important contribution to the field of education, holds many possibilities for the inspired teacher. The Lesson Plans are just a guide; the possibilities of nuanced and original lessons are endless. ■

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The Silk Road

FREER GALLERY OF ART AND ARTHUR M. SACKLER GALLERY,
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The Silk Road, a series of trade routes connecting the Mediterranean with the Far East for several millennia, was at its height from the first to twelfth centuries CE. Travel and commerce led to the diffusion of languages, religions, inventions (e.g., paper, gunpowder, and the compass), and expensive and prized goods (jade, rugs, spices, etc.). In a multicultural world and pedagogically, lesson plans that include the Silk Road are essential and provide a compelling platform for supplementary activities.

The Silk Road, a four-part set of curriculum materials on the fabled Silk Road, is designed for use predominantly by elementary school teachers but may be adapted to the secondary level. These materials include an eight-page brochure featuring classroom projects, a vocabulary and definitions of important terms, a lesson plan on sericulture (raising silkworms to produce silk cloth), storytelling, and resources (suggested books for young readers and adults, and a list of Internet sites). Six five-by-eight-inch color images on cardstock depict three ceramics (a Turkish plate, a Chinese amphora, and