

Recommended Titles for the Educator Interested in Learning about Islam

By Zainab Mahmood

Basic Introductory Volumes

Jamal Elias, *Islam*, Religions of the World Series (Prentice Hall, 1999)

This volume serves as an excellent starting point for a reader with little background in Islam. Written in clear, straightforward prose, this book includes a basic introduction to the history, belief, and practices of Islam. Teachers will enjoy the eminently usable maps, glossary, pronunciation guide, photographs, list of sacred days and festivals, and lists of suggested reading.

Frederick Denny, *Islam and the Muslim Community*, Religious Traditions of the World Series (Waveland, 1987).

An accessible introduction to Islamic institutions, doctrine, and devotional life. Denny provides close looks at the *Sunna* (the record of Muhammad's personal example and teachings) along with Qur'anic explications to illuminate ritual practice, belief systems, and *shariah* (Islamic law). This text also describes the differences between Sunnism and Shi'ism.

Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam: An Introduction* (SUNY, 1992)

This text brings the reader into a fuller appreciation of the traditional view of Islam as lived by Muslims across the world, giving noteworthy attention to the oft-neglected realm of Islam in South Asia.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam: Religion, History and Civilization* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2003)

A quick read, this introduction shows depth and sensitivity in its treatment of Islamic doctrine, belief, and history. Nasr discusses early Islam and the contemporary arena with equal aplomb.

The Qur'an

Michael Sells, *Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations* (White Cloud Press, 1999)

An excellent introduction to the early revelations to Muhammad. The translations are lyrical and go far to intimate the majesty of the verse in its original Arabic. Sells' astute commentary helps place each *sura* into enriching cultural, historical, and linguistic contexts. The volume comes with an impressive audio CD of male and female Qur'anic cantors, featuring different styles of recitation.

Bell's Introduction to the Qur'an, revised by Montgomery Watt (Edinburgh University Press, 1995)

This text provides an overview of the life, character, and inspiration of Prophet Muhammad, explains the history and form of the *Qur'an*, and gives an overview of Muslim and Western Qur'anic scholarship.

Muhammad and the Hadith Tradition

Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet* (Harper-SanFrancisco, 1993)

This description of the Prophet, and the world he lived in, moves beyond distortion and myth to present a balanced view of one of history's most remarkable men.

Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (Inner Traditions International, 1987)

Based on Arabic sources of the eighth and ninth centuries, Lings crafts a compelling narrative for both versed and unversed.

The Hajj Pilgrimage

F. E. Peters, *The Hajj* (Princeton University Press, 1995)

A helpful historical survey of the yearly pilgrimage.

The Hajj chapter, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (Ballantine Books, Reissue edition, 1987)

Vivid in its description of the truly international Hajj experience, Malcolm X describes his journey in plain English with great honesty and intimacy.

Islamic Art

Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam 1250–1800* (Yale University Press; Reprint edition, 1996)

Many people consider the early thirteenth century through the arrival of European colonial rule in the nineteenth century to be the pinnacle of Islamic art and architecture. This volume surveys traditional Islamic lands in this epoch, setting accurate historical explanation alongside illustrations.

Shi'ism

Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism* (Yale University Press, 1987)

Extremely detailed but highly readable account of Shi'i history, ranging from the time of the Prophet through the 1979 Iranian revolution.

Sufism

Carl Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism* (Shambhala Publications Inc., 1997)

Ernst goes far to demonstrate both the personal and political facets of Sufism, emphasizing the mystical and spiritual elements of the faith, while also discussing the significant role played by Sufi orders in the social sphere over the years. Spirited engagement of music, poetry, and art is balanced by critical and informative discussion.

Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'raj, Poetic and Theological Writings* (Paulist Press, 1996)

An excellent treatment of the regularly ignored early period of Islamic mysticism, this volume presents the influential figures of early Islamic spirituality. A wide array of literary translations of primary documents is coupled with descriptive and explanatory prose. ■

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