

Culture & Lifestyles in the Middle East

Islamic Influences

- Because people in the Middle East are primarily Muslim, their culture reflects the teachings of Islam.
- Clothing, architecture, language, and food influenced by Islam is called Traditional.

Religion

- Religion plays a major role in the region.
- Islam is the major faith.
- Two branches: Sunni & Shia or Shiite- both follow the Qur'an but have different practices.
- Jewish & Christian followers make up only a small percentage of the population.

Major Beliefs- 5 pillars

- 1) Proclaim belief in one God (Allah).
- 2) Pray 5 times a day facing Mecca.
- 3) Charity: share wealth with the poor.
- 4) Fasting: No food or drink (sunrise to sunset) during month of Ramadan.
- 5) Hajj or Pilgrimage to Mecca once during lifetime.

Family Life

- Most are Patriarchal- Man's responsibility is the livelihood of the family.
- Married woman's first responsibility is to the home and family. Work outside the home is becoming common in Western Countries.
- Children learn traditions from parents as soon as old enough to understand.

Daily Life- Food

- Dietary restrictions for religions:
Muslims- No pork or pork products, no alcohol.
Jewish- Kosher- No pork
Christians- Lent restrictions no meat on Fridays

Islamic meal traditions:

- They wash & pray before meals.
- Fast during Ramadan.

Daily Life-Clothing

- Clothing varies throughout the Middle East.
- Many Muslims wear Traditional Muslim Clothing
- Muslim Men wear long, loose-fitting robes called Thawbs.
- Many Muslim women wear a head covering called Hijabs.
- Not all Muslims wear traditional Muslim clothing. Some are moving more toward western style.
- Traditionally, women are only allowed to show their hands and face in public when around men. Some women are required to cover their entire face with a veil called a burqa.
- This is because Muslim women are expected to be modest in the ways they dress.

Architecture

- Traditional Muslim architecture is characterized by domes, arches, and geometric patterns to make beautiful, complex art.
- Muslims also use Arabic writing, usually verses from the Koran, to decorate buildings. This is called calligraphy.

Language

- Arabic is the most commonly spoken language of the Middle East and the holy language of Islam.
- Arabic- must learn it to read Quran.
- Arab- people who are originally from the Arabian Peninsula and who now live mostly in the Middle East and northern Africa

Education

- Education is very important and students take their learning seriously.
- In some countries men and women are not always treated equally.
- Men sometimes receive more education than women.
- In some countries, less than half of the women can read and write.

Shopping

- There are modern western-style malls.
- There are also open-air markets where shoppers can bargain with sellers.

A Walk in Your Shoes Video Questions- take notes as you watch:

- 1) How did the events of September 11, 2001 affect Muslims?

- 2) In what ways does religion impact Miriam's daily life?

- 3) According to Mariam, why do Muslims fast during Ramadan?