**From Mecca to Malaysia: the Rise of Islam on the Indian Ocean**

**Author:** Peter Atwill

**Overview and Purpose of Lesson:**

The Maritime Silk Road was a thriving commercial highway and means to spread technology, philosophy, languages, and religions. Of the religions that permeated this region, Islam differed from Hinduism and Buddhism in that it was much more centralized. The act of Hajj, an obligatory pilgrimage to Mecca, has long established a flow of Muslims across great distances throughout the Indian Ocean. This lesson will focus on how Islam shaped Indian Ocean interactions and explores why the Indian Ocean marketplace was highly interconnected space. Islam maintained relevance and used different media to spread far beyond the borders of the Arabian Peninsula. By viewing changing relations and technologies in the Indian Ocean through the lens of Islam (its spread, Muslim merchants, Muslim technological innovations, etc.) students will learn about the role Islam has played in the development of this region.

The Indian Ocean marketplace – a series of economic exchanges throughout East Africa, Arabian Peninsula, India, and China – played a huge role in the spread of Islam. Religion was just one of the ideas that flowed through the travelers, traders, and goods of the Indian Ocean. Throughout this lesson, students will grapple with how the Indian Ocean's Maritime Silk Road defined the spread of Islam. This lesson is designed to build analytical skills through the exploration of maps; documenting trade routes, goods, and exchanging ideas across the Indian Ocean. This lesson works well within a curriculum on world history, religion, or globalization.

**Performance objectives:**

**-**Provide light background knowledge about Islam

-Provide basic history of key Islamic centers/significant actors (i.e Ibn Batutta, Swahili Coast)

-Identify why it was beneficial for people/cities/rulers to convert to Islam

-Understand how Indian Ocean interaction would affect thought and ways of life

**Materials Needed:**

-Access to website *The Indian Ocean in World History* ([www.indianoceanhistory.org](http://www.indianoceanhistory.org))

-One large printed world map OR a digital world map

-Projector

-3-5+ computers with internet access for group activities

-Pens or pencils

-Whiteboard, whiteboard markers, whiteboard eraser

**Time Needed:**

-Three 50-minute class periods

Procedure:

Part I: Introduction and Context

1. Start the lesson by projecting a map of the area around the Indian Ocean onto the whiteboard and posing the following poll: In which region on this map of the Indian Ocean do you think the majority of Muslims reside (Saudi Arabia, India, Egypt, Somalia, Indonesia, etc.)? Have students raise their hand as you point to and name each country to indicate their votes. Each student should vote only once. Tally the guesses on the whiteboard.
	1. Presumably, the majority of students will guess a Middle Eastern/North African nation. After the students guess, reveal that the answer is Indonesia, Pakistan, and India.
2. Ask students the following: If Islam originated in the Arabian Peninsula, why/how did Islam permeate the Swahili Coast, Southeast Asia, and greater India? Have students brainstorm and theorize about how/why other locales would convert to Islam.
3. After this initial introduction, have students watch John Greene’s CrashCourse history video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6XtBLDmPA0>). This video highlights the prominence of Muslim merchants and discusses that the majority of this trade was peaceful and mutually beneficial.
4. Using the Indian Ocean website tab under ‘Learning Tools’ 🡪 ‘Further Reading’🡪 ‘Bridging World History, 'The Indian Ocean World' video segment,’ show students 10:30-13:30. This clip gives a more in-depth look at how communities interacted with Muslim merchants.

PART 2: Brief Overview of Islam

1. What is Islam? Ask students what they know about the religion, its origins, and the historical significance of its founding/give students some light background on the basic tenets of Islam and where and when it was founded. Show students the extent of its prevalence throughout the Indian Ocean area.
2. Use <http://www.softschools.com/timelines/islam_timeline/337/> as a resource to go over the timeline of Islam’s foundation and the local growth of its influence. Then have students guess as to how Islam spread beyond its site of creation.
3. Have elementary school-age students explore the following website while answering four or five basic questions. Examples of questions are below.
	1. <http://resources.woodlands.kent.sch.uk/Homework/religion/Islam.htm>.
	2. Where was Islam founded? What is special about how Muslims pray?

**Part II: Familiarity/Activity**

**Activity A (For grades 7-12):** Split the students into four groups. Each group will tackle the Medieval Era, First Global Era, Industrial and Imperial Era, or the era of the 20th Century and Globalization.

1. Have each group silently read the historical overview of their respective era (2 pages). Then have them reconvene and discuss which parts of the overview would link to the spread of Islam and what technologies would have enabled this.
2. Each Era within the interactive map has items that relate to the spread of Islam. Have each group search for these items and then compile a summary of each item. In addition to its summary, the group should identify how the item relates to the flow of ideas/the spread of Islam. Below is a list of questions that students can use to structure their research (There is no single correct answer for many of these questions)
	* 1. Who were the great Islamic travelers of your era?
		2. How did changing technologies and transportation facilitate Islamic Indian Ocean interaction?
		3. Which locations/landmarks do the Indian Ocean website’s maps highlight?
3. The discussion should allow students to connect the traveler, port, or good to how it affected the spread of Islam. Below are the items that should be included, though the teacher can decide which items are best suited for her students. For lists with more than five items, please select five so that they are consistent with the other categories. Each of the research points shows the wide expanse of Islam as a world religion and highlights its diversity through locations, travelers, and landmarks.
	1. **Medieval Era**
		1. Ibn Battuta
		2. Quran, Surat al-Quraysh
		3. Sohar
		4. Wooden Ceiling in Kaaba
		5. Kilwa
		6. Zheng He
		7. Chittanagong
		8. Calicut
		9. Kedah
		10. Huaishang Mosque
	2. **First Global Era**
		1. Muscat
		2. The Mappilas
		3. Ahmad Ibn Majid
		4. Ottoman Empire
		5. Coffee
	3. **Industrial/Imperial Era**
		1. Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani
		2. Jiddah
		3. Friendship Treaty Oman-USA
		4. Muscat
		5. Zanzibar
		6. Aceh, Sumatra
		7. Persian Carpets
	4. **20th Century and Globalization**
		1. Jiddah Airport-Hajj Terminal
		2. Makka-Modern Hajj
		3. Petro/First Saudi Oil-well
		4. Crew aboard Jewel Muscat
		5. Shabab Oman
		6. Burj Khalifa

**Activity B (For grades K-7):** Have students use the Indian Ocean website map of the Medieval and First Global Era to identify routes/travelers that were important to the spread of Islam. Students should use this map to attempt to find the highest number of routes, travelers, and ports that mention Islam.