

Exploring Islam in North Carolina

Overview

During this lesson, students will receive a brief introduction to Islam through the picture book, Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns. In addition, students will learn that there have been Muslims in North Carolina for many, many years through the story of Omar ibn Said.

Essential/Compelling Question(s)

- How is Islam similar or different from other religions that I know about?
- How do artifacts help us understand people and the past?

Grade(s)

3-5

Subject(s)

Social Studies

Materials

- Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns by Hena Khan or the online read aloud video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UadbtM_5600
- Attached biography resources:
 - <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/said-omar>
 - <https://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/omarsaid/summary.html>
 - http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/community/text3/reli_gionomaribnsaid.pdf
- Attached primary source documents and photographs
- Blank paper and crayons

Duration

60 minutes

Procedure

Section 1: Introduction and Overview

1. OVERVIEW: Around the world, there are over 1.8 billion people who are Muslim, or followers of Islam. There are Muslims living in every country in the world and in every state in the U.S. Muslims believe there is one true God (Allah in Arabic), and the Muslim holy book is the Qur'an (sometimes spelled Koran) which is the word of Allah as told to Muhammad, the last prophet sent by Allah. Muslims follow the five basic Pillars of Islam like praying five times a day, and giving charity, and go to a mosque to worship.

2. Some mosques are large and well-known such as the [Great Mosque of Mecca \(Arabic al-Masjid alHarām\) in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.](#)



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3f/A_packed_house_-_Flickr_-_Al_Jazeera_English.jpg

If time allows, explore the 3D site of this mosque: <http://www.3dmekanlar.com/en/masjid-al-haram-kaaba.html>. There is also a live stream of the Kaaba here: <https://www.webcamtaxi.com/en/saudiarabia/mecca/great-mosque.html>

3. Tell students that while these mosques are grand, other mosques are smaller. (Consider finding a photo of a mosque or masjid in your town to share).

Section 2: Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns

1. In this story, you will learn a lot about a girl as she celebrates and discusses her religious beliefs and traditions. When you listen to the story, see if you can remember what color goes with each object that she mentions.
2. Read Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns by Hena Khan or play [the read aloud video](#): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UadbtM_5600

3. After you read the book, ask students for things that they noticed in the book. Sample responses might include “I noticed that I have seen men wear kufis in different colors before” or “I noticed that my family gives money at the holidays too.” Then, reference back to the Essential Question, “How is Islam similar or different from other religions that I know about?” and allow students to share observations.

Section 3: Omar ibn Said

1. Sometimes buildings like schools are named after people. This mosque or masjid in Fayetteville, NC is named after a man called Omar ibn Said:
- 2.



If you drive down the road in Fayetteville, you might see this sign.



This road sign tells us a little bit about Omar ibn Said, but let’s learn a little more!

3. Share Omar ibn Said's biography with the students drawing from the following resources as age appropriate.

<https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/said-omar>

<https://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/omarsaid/summary.html>

<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/community/text3/religionomaribnsaid.pdf>

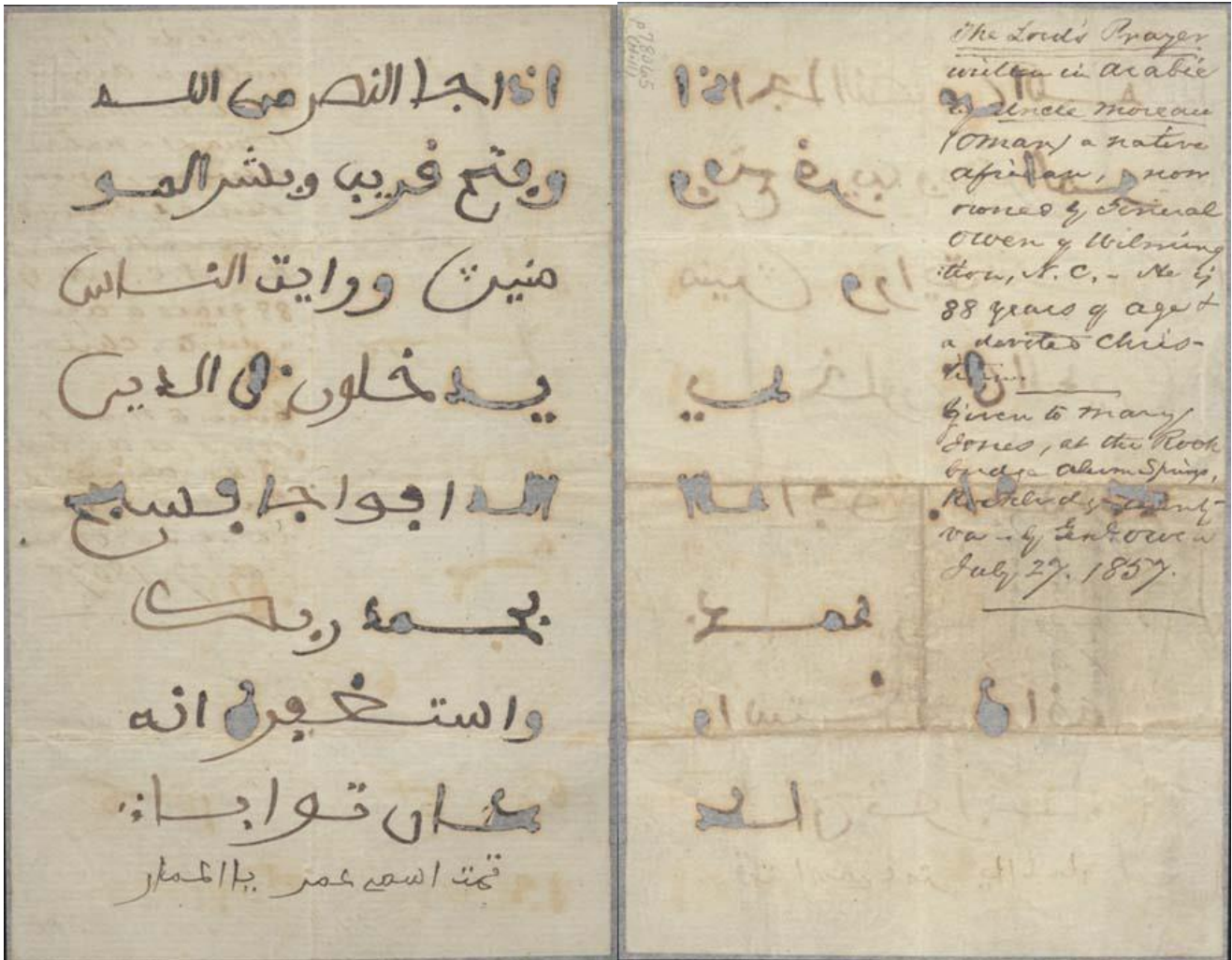
4. Highlights of his biography include:

- Said was born around 1770 into an aristocratic family in a region then called Futa Toro and now lies in Senegal. He was an educated man who went to school.
- Said was captured, enslaved, and transported to Charleston, SC in 1807.
- In 1810, he escaped from the plantation where he worked. He made his way to Fayetteville, NC where he was recaptured and became the property of James Owen in Bladen County. The Owen family plus Said moved to Wilmington in 1836. Said is believed to have died when he was 94.
- About 10% of enslaved Africans brought to Americas were Muslim. Records show that Omar converted to Christianity, but many scholars believe that he maintained his Muslim faith.
- Said wrote his 15 page autobiography in Arabic in 1831. It was translated many times but the original was lost for years. In 1995, the original was found in an old trunk in Virginia.
- Said's autobiography starts with a passage from the Koran and then talks about his birth and enslavement.
- There are two artifacts of Said's writing in Arabic:
 - A transcription of the 23rd Psalm. When it was later translated back into English, people realized that Said started the psalm with this text: "In the name of God, the merciful and gracious. May God have mercy on the prophet Mohammed."
 - The second artifact is text written by Said in Arabic. On the back of the card it says in English: "The Lord's Prayer written in Arabic by Uncle Moreau (Omar) a native African, now owned by General Owen of Wilmington N. C. He is 88 years of age & a devoted Christian." The Arabic text actually is a passage from the Koran.
- There is still a lot we don't know about Said's life. What questions do you have?

5. Share with students the following two primary source images included (his photograph and Arabic text). Allow students time to make observations about what they see. If students need prompting, ask them what they notice about the handwriting or what Said is wearing.



Ambrotype of Omar Ibn Said <https://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/omarsaid/support6.html>



"The Lord's Prayer written in Arabic by Uncle Moreau (Omar) a native African, now owned by General Owen of Wilmington N. C. . He is 88 years of age & a devoted Christian. Given to Mary Jones, at the Rockbridge Alum Springs, Rockbridge Country Va. by Genl Owen July 27, 1857." <https://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/omarsaid/support3.html>

6. After sharing Omar ibn Said's biography, ask students to come up with some "I wonder...." statements about his life to help them process what they have learned. Responses might include "I wonder how Omar felt about...." "I wonder what happened to"

Section 4: Artifacts

1. Artifacts are objects that tell us about the past. Artifacts can be things that people made or created or drew or used in their daily life.
2. Give each student a piece of blank paper and encourage them to draw an artifact that relates to Omar ibn Said's life or from the story, Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns. It can be something big or something small. (Ideas: a pen, paper, lantern, patterned rug, boat...) Allow students to share their artifact as time allows as a way to process topics discussed and what they have learned.