

Name: _____

Date: _____



The Islamic Empire

The Arabs were nomadic people who lived in the Arabian Peninsula. By the 600s A.D., communities began to grow as trade increased. The city of Mecca became an important stop on a trade route. A mix of people, including Christians and Jews, lived in Mecca. The idea of believing in one God, who was called *Allah* in Arabic, was not new to Arabia. Mecca was a mixed religious environment around 570, when Muhammad was born.



Born in Mecca to a merchant family, Muhammad had a great interest in religion. He often spent time alone praying or meditating. When Muhammad was about 40 years old, he went to the hills to meditate. Muhammad said that while he was meditating, Allah sent him a message. In this message, Allah told Muhammad that Allah was the one and only God. He said that people should abandon all other gods and worship only Allah.

Muhammad came back from the hills and said he was a prophet of Allah. He began to preach that everyone should follow him and convert to Islam. "Islam" means "submission to the will of Allah." Followers of Islam are called Muslims.

As he gathered more followers, Muhammad became both a religious and a political leader. Some people did not like Muhammad's beliefs and acted violently toward him and his followers. Muhammad built an army to defend his group. The Muslims took over Mecca in 630, and most of the people converted to Islam. Two years later, as Islam began to spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula, Muhammad died.

After Muhammad's death, the Arabs were left with a problem. Muhammad had not said who should take over after him. His father-in-law, Abu Bakr, was chosen to be the new leader. Under Abu Bakr, the Muslims expanded throughout Arabia and beyond.

The Muslims defeated the Byzantine army and took control of Syria. They took Egypt and northern Africa. By 650, the Arabs had conquered the entire Persian Empire. The Islamic Empire continued to grow. Spain, northern Africa, and Mesopotamia were brought under Arab rule during the Umayyad Dynasty. Many people in all these places converted to Islam.

The Islamic Empire eventually split into separate kingdoms after being invaded by the Mongols from China. Although the Islamic Empire had come to an end, the religion of Islam continued. With over a billion followers, Islam is one of the world's major religions.

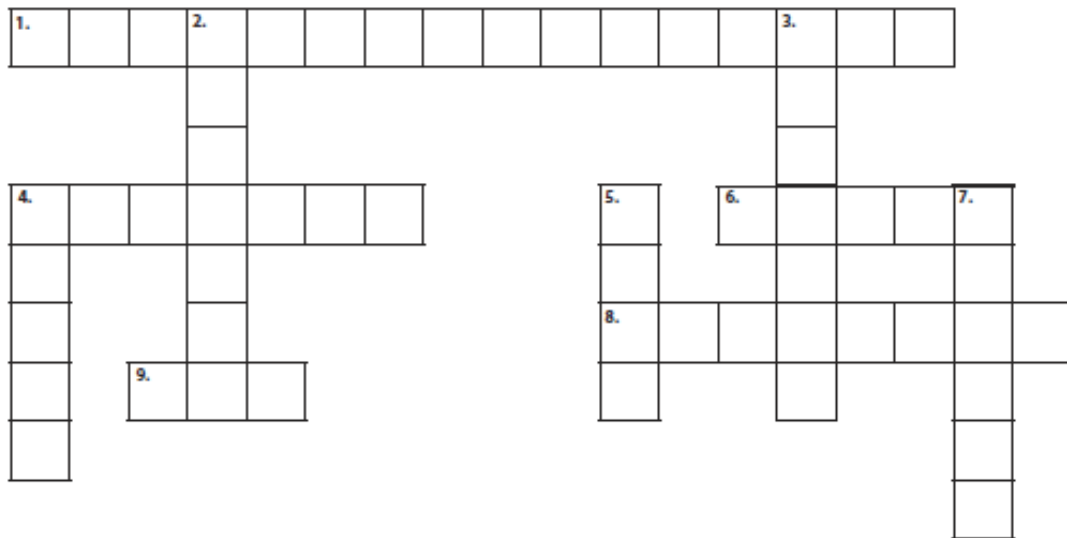
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Crossword Puzzle

Write the best answer in each blank, and complete the crossword puzzle.



ACROSS

1. Islam spread throughout the _____.
4. The _____ took over Mecca in 630.
6. The Muslims defeated the Byzantine army and took control of _____.
8. _____ said he was a prophet of Allah.
9. The idea of believing in _____ God was not a new idea.

DOWN

2. Islam has over a/an _____ followers.
3. Under the _____ Dynasty, Spain, northern Africa, and Mesopotamia were brought under Arab rule.
4. A mix of people, including Christians and Jews, lived in _____.
5. Muhammad built a/an _____ to defend the Muslims.
7. Under Abu Bakr, the Muslims expanded throughout _____ and beyond.