

# THE BRITISH MUSEUM

New Resources:  
Art & Design, RE,  
Citizenship, History  
KS3 & KS4

---

DISCOVER  
THE  
**ARAB**  
WORLD

---





# DISCOVER THE ARAB WORLD

## CONTENTS

4	Introduction
8	Key themes
20	Curriculum links
22	Themes matrix
23	Supplementary card notes
28	Appendix 1: The Arabic script
30	Appendix 2: Maps
34	Further information
35	Acknowledgements

*Discover the Arab World* is an innovative free set of resources for Secondary school teachers, which has been produced in consultation with educators, museum professionals and experts. It will support teachers in exploring relevant and challenging issues about the Arab world and help to develop a greater understanding of Arab culture among students.



# INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

Arab people have had a huge impact on the shaping of the modern world, from helping to introduce Islam to the Middle East, North Africa and beyond, to fostering important scientific and cultural achievements. However, the Arab world is often seen in stereotypical terms and is in danger of being misunderstood.

*Discover the Arab World* uses objects from the British Museum's unique collection to explore many aspects of this diverse, complex and fascinating region. These resources are designed to highlight important key themes, providing a platform for students to research, debate and discover the Arab world for themselves.

## DEFINING THE ARAB WORLD

Today, the term 'Arab' is often used for people who speak Arabic as their first language, share Arab culture, and identify themselves as Arab. The 'Arab world' in these resources comprises those countries where most, or a significant number, of the population are Arabic-speakers (see map on page 30). It has been estimated that there are 300–340 million Arab people. Of these, up to 40 million live outside Arab countries. For example, about 500,000 Arabs live in the UK; the majority from Egypt, Morocco, Palestine, Yemen, Lebanon, the Gulf States and Iraq. Parts of the Arab world overlap with the Middle East but the latter also includes some non-Arab countries like Turkey and Iran, so the geographical areas are not synonymous.

The Arabs originated in Arabia where, in ancient times, they were predominantly nomadic pastoralists, herding sheep, goats and camels. Other Arabs were settled farmers who grew dates and cereal crops in the oases, which also served as staging-posts for the caravans that took valuable commodities from south Arabia to trade in the north.

The revelation of the Qur'an, the holy book of Muslims, to the Prophet Muhammad in the early 7th century AD, in what is now Saudi Arabia, helped to unite the Arab peoples, and by about AD 750 they had spread Islam from Spain in the west to central Asia in the east. Because the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic (see page 28), Muslims saw the language as God's word and therefore sacred. In order to recite the Qur'an, all Muslims needed to learn Arabic. Therefore, as the Islamic world grew, the Arabic language spread and, in time, its script was also adopted to write non-Arabic languages such as Persian and Urdu.

Although about 5% of Arabs are non-Muslims, most people in the Arab world follow Islam. Today, the history, people and places of the Arab world continue to have a key role in the lives, cultures and identities of all Muslims across the Islamic world.

# SELECTING THE OBJECTS

These resources are based around 30 objects from or linked to countries in the Arabic-speaking world. Some of them, like the Assyrian relief dating to around 700 BC are not 'Arab' objects, but were made in countries that later became part of the Arab world. Others, such as the representations of key religious sites in Jerusalem, relate to a city that remains extremely important to millions of people from the Arab world today. Where objects were made before the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 they are described as Palestinian. Objects have been chosen for their individual significance, connection with important events, their value in explaining a key issue and relevance for teaching the Secondary curriculum. Every effort has been made to reflect a balance in representing the geographical scope and cultural diversity of the Arab world. However, due to the strengths of the British Museum's collection, the main focus has been on the countries in the Middle East and North Africa, and it has not been possible to cover every Arab country.



Detail from the Blacas ewer. Brass with silver and copper inlay. Mosul, Iraq, AD 1232.

# OVERVIEW

The resources identify ways to teach about the peoples and cultures of the Arab world at KS3 and KS4 in Art and Design, Citizenship, History and Religious Education within cross-curricular themes. They enable a creative response to the flexibility encouraged by the new Secondary curriculum.

*Discover the Arab World* comprises 30 colour object cards with contextual information and activities organised around six themes:

**Achievement**  
**Art**  
**Conflict**  
**Diversity**  
**Gender**  
**Interaction**

It includes a Teachers' Guide with thematic enquiries, notes, maps and further reading.

All the contents of *Discover the Arab World* are also available online. This allows multiple copies to be printed for use in the classroom, as well as downloading of the images for projection or for inclusion in your own resources and in students' work. Visit [www.britishmuseum.org/schools](http://www.britishmuseum.org/schools)



## HOW TO USE THESE RESOURCES

These resources have been designed for flexible use in the classroom. In this way, the object cards can be used to develop one-off sessions or whole units of work, depending on the curriculum need.

There are three recommended approaches to using the resources:

**Thematic** – Students can use a series of object cards to explore six key themes relating to the Arab world. Background information and suggested activities with further research for each theme are located in the Teachers' Guide.

**Individual cards** – Students can use contextual information on the back of a card to complete a series of suggested activities and further research relating to an object.

**Object images** – Teachers and students can use the selection of objects as an image bank to be drawn on for a range of teaching and learning opportunities across the curriculum. Specifically, the images could be used as a stimulus for introducing the Arab world. The activities have been written with careful attention to the new Secondary curriculum requirements in Art and Design, Citizenship, History and Religious Education at KS3 and also to KS4 opportunities.

## SENSITIVITY

The resources have been designed to introduce the cultures of the Arab world in a balanced and sensitive way. Clearly, questions around identity, religion, gender and conflict need to be handled carefully. Try not to make assumptions, but explore the subject rationally by using the object cards and so gradually build the students' awareness and understanding. Some of the images and related issues are emotive and may create a strong reaction. These responses, when channelled correctly, can show a real engagement with the subject. At the same time, it will be necessary to ensure that planning and support is in place to respond to students' concerns both inside and outside the classroom.

These resources contain objects and art which include religious text. Please ask your students to treat them with respect.

## SCOPE

The resources reflect the existing collections and work of the British Museum and do not claim to be comprehensive. It is hoped that teachers will use them to support and enhance their planning and teaching relating to the Arab world, and the Middle East and Islamic world more broadly. Teachers are encouraged to supplement the resources whenever possible and appropriate (please see page 34 for a list of relevant websites, publications and resources).



Right: Appliqué hanging for the doorway of a tent.  
Cairo, Egypt, early 20th century AD.



## KEY THEMES

Each thematic section is designed to provide the teacher with some background to a key theme or issue relating to the Arab world. Important objects have been highlighted where possible to illustrate a point. The activities at the end provide a suggested class-based approach leading to an extended piece of work involving individual or group research. In some cases, these assume that many students know very little about the subject so that information and ideas can be revealed as a session develops. All the activities can be adapted in any way.

## ACHIEVEMENT

For many in the West, the cultural achievements of the peoples of the Arab world in the fields of the arts, science, commerce and industry are either unknown or seen as inferior to those of western European cultures. However, world-famous achievers like Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid, Palestinian scholar Edward Said and Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz, among others, reflect the successes of modern Arabs while a number of key historical contributions can be highlighted by the British Museum's collection. That such names and contributions may be unfamiliar testifies to the need to help young people in the West to understand more about the achievements of the Arab world.

Today, Arabic continues to unify Arab and Muslim people and is spoken, written and read by millions. The writing of Arabic has been refined over time, initially to copy the Qur'an and later for use in various contexts.

Many different script styles have been used to practical or beautiful effect on diverse materials.

For hundreds of years, Arabic inscriptions were used on Islamic coins, which made them immediately recognisable to traders across the world, who valued them for their high gold purity. As a result, contact expanded and fine commodities flooded into the markets of the Arab and Muslim worlds. King Offa of Mercia may have had his imitation *dinar* minted to capture a share of this trade.

As Arabs travelled, like the 10th-century AD diplomat Ahmad Ibn Fadlan from Baghdad, they learnt about the world. This knowledge was shared with others in colourful picture books, including *The Wonders of Creation and the Oddities of Existence*. At the same time, the work of ancient Greek and Roman writers like Ptolemy and Dioscorides was translated into Arabic so that scholars in the Muslim world could draw on this earlier knowledge. The result was a 'scientific revolution' during the medieval period, with Arabs and Persians becoming world leaders in a whole range of specialisms. Books on science proved vital in helping to communicate new ideas to Muslim students and to other scholars globally. Large numbers of books were translated into Latin during the 12th and 13th centuries AD so that Western scientists could learn the latest thinking on human anatomy, medicinal drugs and surgery, among many other things. Similarly, once Muslim scholars had developed the astrolabe, it was introduced to Christian Europe and helped to transform astronomy.

A growing knowledge of chemistry enabled Arab potters to create a new style of decoration. Lustreware, designed to imitate gold and silver, was popular wherever it was made and sold, but especially in Christian Europe. The technique was copied and adapted in Renaissance Italy and Victorian England. Today, the techniques of the medieval craftworkers are still alive in the workshops of the Middle East. Similar creative skills are used by contemporary artists from the Arab world, and their work, often using Arabic script, strong colours and the human form, is particularly popular.

The Dome of the Rock is one of the most famous and iconic buildings in the world. When people think of Jerusalem, the golden dome comes to mind. It is a structure of great beauty, with astonishing decoration in vibrant mosaic tiles and flowing Arabic inscriptions. Countless other historic buildings survive across the Arab world which reflect these features – the mosque, the fortress, the religious college and the market. Even today, we only have to look at the growing cities of the future, like Dubai to see that huge and cutting-edge building and engineering projects are underway every day in the region.

To explore the achievements of any people, country or civilisation is to witness a process of how individual and collective creativity builds on experience and the exchange of ideas. It can rarely be said that these things grow in a vacuum. There is always cause and effect, and the successes of Arab people and culture should be explored in this light too.

## ACTIVITIES ON ACHIEVEMENT

CARD NUMBERS: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

See page 22 for Themes Matrix.

1. Brainstorm on the achievements of people in the Arab world. Ask the students to think about any people, buildings, music, styles, etc. that they are impressed by and to feed back.
2. Divide the class and distribute the cards. Ask the students to look at and discuss their object image before feeding back to the class. They should try to indicate whether the object relates to religion, art, science, communication, trade, war, architecture or more than one category.
3. Ask the students in each group to write down how their object represents achievement. Remind them that the achievement might be found in what the object represents, how it was made or why it was made.
4. Discuss the achievements with the class and place them in order of importance. The students should try to explain the significance of the achievements.
5. Ask the students to carry out further research on the achievements of Arab people. Each group could then create a webpage to represent the achievements or add their information with images to a whole class timeline.

Much art and design from the Arab world belongs within the framework of Islamic art. However, a closer look at the range of artworks featured in the resources reveals a rich diversity of inspiration, characteristics, media and function.

Since the early 7th century AD, Islam's influence on the art of the region has been considerable. For many artists, craftspeople and designers throughout history their work has been a direct expression of faith. It can be seen in the continuous efforts of calligraphers to beautify the copying of the Qur'an, in the interior and exterior decoration of a mosque, or in the crafting of a practical object for a religious context. All can be done to please God.

Some art has a specifically religious purpose or is made for a religious environment. The Mamluk lamp was made for one of the mosques of medieval Cairo. Designed to hang from the ceiling to light up the building, it is also decorated with Qur'anic inscriptions that reflect its religious context and function, and encourage the worshipper. As such, the object is also an expression of faith and shares some of the features that are commonly associated with so-called 'Islamic art', such as Arabic writing and floral decoration.

Many people know that representing living creatures is not acceptable to many Muslims. Interpretations of the Qur'an and the comments of the Prophet Muhammad (recorded in the text known as the Hadith) have helped to shape this view over time.

Consequently, living beings are almost never seen in an Islamic religious context, artists choosing instead to develop alternative designs using, for example, geometric patterns. Although examples are not included here, some Christians in the Arab world and Middle East have taken a different attitude and churches and holy places were highly decorated with mosaic portraits of Jesus, figures of the saints and representations of the Crucifixion.

In pre-Islamic art and secular art in the Arab world, people and animals are a frequent feature, from the figures on the Blacas ewer to the ladies of the *Hands of Fatima* and the poster of Yasser Arafat. Indeed, the illustrating of books about science or epic stories with scenes of fantastic creatures, doctors discussing treatment or battle scenes was commonplace in the medieval period.

There are often important issues of identity to be explored with modern artists. Although artists may have Arab heritage, they generally see themselves simply as artists, taking inspiration from anywhere and everywhere. However, many of them are still greatly influenced by their background, experiences and the region. An upbringing in Baghdad, street scenes in Cairo, Palestinian poetry and the pain of exile from Iraq have all helped shape the work of the artists represented in these resources. In Britain there are many artists like Iraqi Dia al-Azzawi and Palestinian Laila Shawa with Arab and Middle Eastern connections who are often grouped and exhibited together because of the focus and related identity of

their work. This can help us to understand their character and motivation, as long as we avoid the temptation to label artists solely according to culture.

Where traditional artists and craftspeople often used glass, ceramics and metal, contemporary artists are constantly experimenting and pushing the boundaries of media using stencils, foam board, acrylic paint, canvas, photographs and even used newspapers.

Over time, artists, craftspeople and designers have often combined the skills of calligrapher, illustrator and sculptor, in their work. Today, the modern Arab artist may make art specifically to highlight a political issue, to sell to private collectors or museums, or simply because they feel inspired, and this is something that all artists share whatever their heritage.



Sabah Naim, *Cairo Faces*. Painted photograph on canvas and newspaper. Egypt, AD 2005. © Sabah Naim.

## ACTIVITIES ON ART

CARD NUMBERS: 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

See page 22 for Themes Matrix.

1. Brainstorm with the class on art and design in the Arab and Islamic worlds.
2. Divide the class and distribute the cards. Ask the students to discuss the object they see. They should then describe to the class what characteristics their object has and why these might relate to the Arab world.
3. Ask your students to sketch their object and use the text to help them annotate it, considering why their object or structure was produced and what inspired the artist or designer. They could supplement their comments following further research.
4. Discuss the range of media and materials, techniques and processes that have been used to create the objects. Ask the students to explain whether they can think of particular reasons why these were used.
5. Ask the students to develop a piece of art in response to this work on the Arab world. Before starting, they could select at least five objects from the pack including contemporary, historical, personal and cultural examples that they are going to work from. They could sketch and annotate, explaining why they are using the images and how they represent the Arab world. Further research could be done at this point.



# CONFLICT

Conflict has been a feature of life in the modern Arab world, as it has in all other parts of the globe, irrespective of culture. Unfortunately, the aggressive activities of some Arabs and Muslims against the West, such as the attacks on New York in 2001 and London in 2005, have led to negative stereotyping of people from this region. Within the same mind-set, relations between the West and the Arab world continue in some quarters to be related to the medieval Crusades, seen as naturally hostile and described in emotive language. The media, politicians and religious extremists have helped to create the impression that conflict involving the region is somehow inherent, inevitable and unstoppable. The images of conflict and co-operation in the resources will help you and your students to question these views and explore the impact on Arab people and the world.

The Arab world and, more broadly, the Middle East have often been fought over, from ancient to modern times. For thousands of years, the control of fertile land, water, natural resources and trade have provoked military action. To this end, the Assyrians built an empire that covered a large part of Iraq and the Levant using a well-organised and well-equipped army, commemorating their victories in huge stone panels.

The Arabs of the early Islamic period, however, were driven by their faith, and used extremely effective tactics to take control of the Middle East and North Africa in a very short period of time. Weapons and armour can be seen in paintings and on metalwork from the medieval

period and help to provide some clues regarding Arab military success. From the late 11th century AD, it was armies inspired by Christianity that invaded the region and clashed with Muslim forces for control of Jerusalem and the holy places. In modern times, the region has been dominated by the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The 'heroic' portrayal of key players like Yasser Arafat on political posters and armed Palestinian groups on the internet reflects the complicated perceptions of conflict in the region – for some they represent the fight for freedom and for others terrorism.

Although emotive, the representation of war and violent action can help us to understand the issues involved and the viewpoints of the protagonists. In the context of the Arab world, propaganda has sometimes been used to distort public awareness of events and inflame attitudes. These messages and other interpretations of war can be assessed by evaluating key objects in the resource, like the depiction of Richard I defeating Saladin in a duel, the aftermath of the Assyrian victory at Lachish, or the more subtle work of contemporary artists, like Saïd Farhan.

For some, the invasion of Iraq in 2003 appears to mirror the earlier aggression of the Crusades and the French Expedition of 1798, but East–West relations have been far less polarised than they might appear and the objects can help us track the changing nature of conflict and co-operation between Britain and the West and the Arab world over time. It has not been all conflict. Throughout the Crusades, opposing diplomats sat down together, negotiated truces

and made treaties that saved lives and property. The medieval period was a one of great cultural and scientific exchange between Muslims and Christians, and it is believed that peace opened the channels that brought new architectural features, technology, foods and fashion to Europe, leaving many Arabic loanwords in the English language.

Images of war often reveal its shocking impact. Death, torture and looting can all be seen in the series of Lachish panels, but it is the streams of refugees that leave an abiding impression. Conflict in the Arab world since ancient times has created dislocation and forced millions of people into exile across the world. Many Arab people have come to live in the UK over the past fifty years to escape conflict or political differences. We can clearly see in the work of contemporary artists with Arab heritage how conflict has shaped them but also how it has shaped the population and society of Britain today.



Anti-war badge. Better Badges, UK, AD 2003.

## ACTIVITIES ON CONFLICT

CARD NUMBERS: 11, 12, 13,14

See page 22 for Themes Matrix.

1. Brainstorm with the class on conflict in the Arab world and Middle East.
2. Display the images and ask the class to try and identify the conflict, period and countries or cultures involved.
3. Explain how images of war are used as propaganda. Give each group a card and ask the students to discuss how their object could be used to manipulate or influence attitudes about conflict.
4. Display card 13 which provides an Assyrian impression of the siege of Lachish. Ask the students to list the consequences of war from the stone relief. If possible, they should do this by annotating a copy of the image. They should then explain what other sources of evidence would be useful to evaluate the validity of this interpretation of the events.
5. Show card 14 and talk about Saïd Farhan's life. Ask the students to create their own response to the impact of war. They could design their own 'PowerPoint suitcases' by digitally photographing the things that they would take with them (objects, favourite view, CD covers etc) and downloading them on to the computer. They could label their things and explain why they want to take them.

## DIVERSITY

Diversity is a thread that runs through the whole of these resources. The objects can be used to explore the diversity of the Arab world, from ancient to modern times, from a variety of angles and to challenge several stereotypes. It is religious diversity that forms the focus for this thematic selection.

The Abrahamic faiths – Islam, Christianity and Judaism – can all be explored in relation to the Arab world. The differences in belief and practice between these religions are mirrored by the diversity within each particular faith. Although not all Arabs are Muslims, most people in the Arab world follow Islam. The majority of Arab countries adhere to Sunni Islam. Iraq, however, is a Shia majority country, while Lebanon, Yemen, Kuwait, and Bahrain have large Shia minorities. In Oman about 75% of the population follow Ibadi Islam. Overall, Arabs make up less than one quarter of the world's Muslims.

Christians form the next largest group. Most live in Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Jordan, Sudan and Syria. The largest Christian groups include the Copts, Maronites, Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholics and Nestorians. Formerly, there were significant minorities of Jews throughout the Arab world; however, the establishment of the state of Israel prompted their mass emigration within a few decades. Today only small Jewish communities remain, in Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen, for example.

In ancient times, from Arabia to Iraq, many people were polytheists, following gods and goddesses like Baal, represented among the

objects. These gods were seen as controlling all aspects of life, natural forces and the universe. Images of the gods and spirits were worshipped, asked for protection and made as offerings. In some cases, people believed that the gods also controlled access to the afterlife, as illustrated in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*.

The objects in the resource can particularly help you to explore the creative expression of faith in religious life. Muslim rulers commissioned beautiful tiles to decorate the Dome of the Rock, calligraphers developed fine scripts to copy out the Qur'an and glassmakers applied delicate religious inscriptions to mosque lamps. Similarly Christians decorated the interior of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to honour God and the site's association with the life of Jesus.

From ancient statues to Christian icons, spirits, gods, saints and others have been represented artistically in parts of the Middle East across history. In Islam, however, many Muslims have disapproved of figural images and particularly the representation of God and the Prophet Muhammad. Instead, artists took other directions, and rich traditions gradually developed in the use of Arabic, plant-forms and geometric patterns. Although secular, the Egyptian tent-hanging provides a useful expression of these elements. With Arabic seen as the language of God, calligraphers made beautiful copies of the Qur'an with constantly refined *kufic* (angular) and cursive (rounded) scripts that conformed to a system of proportion. Other artists explored the regular division of the circle using geometry to

create a multitude of fine and tessellating tiles to decorate a religious setting.

Clearly there are times when the faiths of the Arab world have come into conflict with each other and this continues today. However, the many points of common ground can and should be highlighted with your students. There are many examples of shared practice and belief, including monotheism, holy books, script, pilgrimage and the use of holy places. Life after death in particular can be carefully explored from ancient Egypt to the contemporary viewpoint of Mohammed al-Shammarey's *Mural*. There are also the shared links to the sacred places of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. The city remains extremely important to Arabs and many see it as the natural capital for a Palestinian state. As a truly multi-faith city, it has been at the centre of considerable interfaith dialogue and so presents a valuable opportunity for your students to study the relationships, conflicts and collaboration within and between religions.



Model of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Made in Bethlehem, Palestine, late 17th century AD.

### ACTIVITIES ON DIVERSITY

CARD NUMBERS: 15, 16, 17, 18, 19

See page 22 for Themes Matrix.

1. Display card 15 and look at the map. Identify the cultures linked to the objects and discuss the evidence we have for religion in the Middle East before Judaism, Christianity and Islam. A search using the Explore function on the British Museum website might also prove useful here.
2. Divide the class into groups and distribute the cards. Ask the students to match up the cards with the correct religion.
3. Discuss how people and cultures express their beliefs and values. Ask the students to look at the cards and identify which objects or buildings were created as expressions of faith. Ask them to explain their choices.
4. Ask the students to look through the cards and note down the similarities and connections between Judaism, Christianity and Islam, such as monotheism, holy books, script, pilgrimage and life after death.
5. Ask the students to use cards 17, 18 and 19 to explain why Jews, Christians and Muslims have an interest in Jerusalem. They could research the current situation in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and explain how interfaith dialogue might be used to help settle the dispute over the Old City. This activity could be presented as a debate with student groups representing the major viewpoints and the United Nations working to find a sensitive, diplomatic and practicable solution.



## GENDER

Gender is important in the Arab world, as in any society. Although men and women have tended to fulfil particular roles, there has also been considerable diversity since ancient times and this has increased in the last century, as it has in Western society. The resources provide the opportunity to explore this diversity and the changes in society, and so challenge gender stereotypes.

From the objects it is possible to track particularly how women in the region have been portrayed over thousands of years by artists and craftspeople in different media, from stone to metal to paint. Hair, headgear and jewellery can all be seen, as well as clothing from the colour to the cut. The roles of women in society can also be studied: rich lady, servant, musician, one of the crowd, celebrity.

The women of the ancient world were commemorated in finely carved stone. The monuments to Ghalilat and Tamma reflect the wealth and success of women in some parts of the region and provide a hint of the power and responsibility that women like Queen Zenobia held at Palmyra as she resisted Roman rule.

For an age that has become increasingly focused on how Muslim women dress, it is worth recognising that the veil has been a feature of life in the Arab world since ancient times, worn to protect the face from dust, as a fashion accessory and for religious reasons. Tamma has a veil but has been carved revealing her face for eternity. Following the coming of Islam, some women chose to wear the veil but this was not universal, as the musicians

depicted on the 13th-century AD Blacas ewer show. Context, status, the attitudes of others and personal choice all played a part in these decisions.

Today a growing number of Muslim Arab women wear face veils and all-concealing clothes to conform to what they see as the true ideals of Islam and sometimes as a public rejection of Western materialistic values. The modern veiled women in the *Hands of Fatima*, however, challenge a number of stereotypes with their plucked eyebrows, eyeliner and colourful clothes. The traditional dress from Palestine helps to support the argument that the past was not in black and white, and neither were the lives of Arab women. Today, as is seen across the world, women in Arab countries wear a great variety of clothing forms, colours and styles depending on fashion, and their social and physical environment.

As in the West, the daily lives of many Arab women revolve around the home and childrearing. In rural areas they are an important part of the family workforce, working in the fields, fetching water or collecting firewood. In towns women are also involved in trade, selling produce, running shops or in a range of modern professions, depending on their level of education.

Many female contemporary artists from the region, like Palestinian Laila Shawa and Egyptian Sabah Naim have become very successful. Their work depicts the Arab world around us. Whereas some people find it easy to see Arab and Muslim women as victims

with no autonomy and no prospects, Chant Avedissian's work depicts one of the most internationally successful and iconic Arab people of modern times, the Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum.



Chant Avedissian, *Umm Kulthum*. Print on paper. Egypt, AD 1990s.  
© Chant Avedissian.



Laila Shawa, *Hands of Fatima*. Oil and acrylic on canvas.  
Palestinian Territories/UK, AD 1989. © Laila Shawa.

### ACTIVITIES ON GENDER

CARD NUMBERS: 9, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25

See page 22 for Themes Matrix.

1. Display part of the image on card 9. Ask the students to suggest who and what it depicts and where it is and what you might see outside the frame. Once they have fed back reveal the whole image and explore the reactions of the class.
2. Brainstorm with the students on impressions of Arab men and women.
3. Divide the class into groups and distribute the cards. Ask them to discuss the objects and see if their impressions are reinforced or challenged by this evidence.
4. Identify the diversity in the way that women are depicted in art. Highlight that this diversity represents the reality of life for women over time in the Arab world.
5. If the students were to interview the women depicted in the pictures what questions would they ask to find out about their lives? To do this, you could allocate each group or student a card and ask them to think about daily life, clothes, religion and attitudes. They could do further research to support their work. This activity could be developed into some drama work or a magazine article.

## INTERACTION

It is often assumed that the UK and Europe's relationship with the Arab world is a relatively recent phenomenon, motivated mainly by politics and economics and expressed entirely through conflict. Although it can be said that contact has particularly intensified over the last 20 years, this interaction has been significant since ancient times. Attention has tended to focus on negative and more sensational aspects and events, like the Crusades or terrorist bombings. Shared identity, mutual respect and the exchange of knowledge and skills can too easily be forgotten. The resources can be used to identify and explore these complex relationships and to provide a balanced view based on evidence.

During ancient times, Britain and large parts of the Middle East were part of the Roman Empire. Philip I, emperor of Rome from AD 244 to 249, was born near Damascus and had Arab heritage. The Roman army also drew soldiers from Syria and sent them to serve on Hadrian's Wall. Other people worked as traders and settled in Britain, bringing their culture and worshipping gods from Rome's eastern provinces. Archaeology has revealed their gravestones and the altars where they made religious offerings.

Trade routes developed in Roman times continued to be exploited during the early medieval period. Silver Islamic coins found in Europe at this time and the imitation gold *dinar* minted for King Offa suggest that trade between Arabs and Europeans was very important.

This interaction was not always peaceful as religious differences often divided Muslim Arab and Christian European, especially around Jerusalem and the Holy Land. These differences were also expressed as Europeans travelled further and ventured into Muslim trading zones. Ships and their crews ran the risk of capture around North Africa and the Mediterranean and Barbary pirates actively raided the coasts of the British Isles for slaves, as the treasure from Salcombe may confirm. Europe has also been the aggressor, whether inspired by religion during the Third Crusade, trying to outmanoeuvre rival powers in the Invasion of Egypt in 1798, or intent on regime change in Iraq in 2003.

Although enemies, it is believed that Richard I and Saladin respected each other. They never met, but did manage to agree peace terms that stopped the fighting and gave Christian pilgrims safe access to Jerusalem. Changing patterns of conflict and co-operation characterise British and European relations with the Arab world. Research reveals the frequent exchange and transfer of ideas between the Arab and Christian scholars during the medieval period. Some European scholars like Adelard of Bath (AD c.1080–c.1150) travelled to the Arab world to learn from Arabs and Muslims. Certainly, as they translated the books into Latin they brought back knowledge and new ideas and so inspired scientific and technological developments in Europe, including the astrolabe and medical treatment.

In Europe a taste for sugar, regular bathing and new styles of textiles are believed to have been consequences of the Crusades. At a similar time, we see the beginnings of European appreciation of Middle Eastern art and design. Lustre decoration was developed by Arab potters in Iraq from the 9th century AD and from there it gradually spread across the Arab world and Middle East. Europeans bought lustreware in large quantities and it went on to inspire Italian potters during the Renaissance. In the 19th century William de Morgan and other designers in Britain drew on Middle Eastern ceramics, carpets, metalwork and architecture in their work.

Britain's interest in the Arab world grew throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries as it sought raw materials for industry, markets for its goods, and strategic bases to maintain its empire. This led to Britain being invited to administer Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq after the First World War and has ensured a close, though troubled, relationship ever since. Today, many British companies and organisations work closely with countries in the Arab world. Some institutions, like the British Museum, work in partnership with colleagues in various countries of the Middle East, keeping alive the spirit of mutual respect and knowledge exchange.

Partly as a result of these relationships, thousands of people from the Arab world have come to live in Britain. By exploring the nature and history of this interaction you can reveal the origins of Britain's diverse society and help to recognise the heritage of thousands of Britons.

### ACTIVITIES ON INTERACTION

CARD NUMBERS: 26, 27, 28, 29, 30

See page 22 for Themes Matrix.

1. Using the map, brainstorm with the students what connections the UK has with the Arab world today. Add the comments to a spider chart on the board.
2. Display the cards and ask students to arrange them in chronological order. Mark up the objects on a timeline on the board.
3. Divide the class and pass a card to each group. Ask the students to discuss the objects and identify the type of relationship that they represent, such as economic, religious, scientific, strategic etc. Ask the students to feed back. Results could be presented in a table.
4. Highlight the fact that the connections are longstanding, complex and controversial. Ask the students to think about which connection most surprised them, which connection was the most important and why. They could write up their 'discovery' as a news headline and short article.
5. Ask the students to research the UK's modern links with the Arab world. They could describe the impact of this relationship on the Middle East and how it has helped to shape British society today. They could include relevant objects to illustrate and support their response.



## CURRICULUM LINKS

*Discover the Arab World* has been developed to support teachers in delivering the new QCA Secondary curriculum and links specifically to the Art and Design, Citizenship, History and Religious Education documents. The resources provides excellent opportunities to explore and teach the new cross-curriculum dimensions, especially identity and cultural diversity and the global dimension.

### ART AND DESIGN KS3

#### KEY CONCEPTS

##### Cultural understanding

- engaging with images and artefacts from different contexts and recognising characteristics of different cultures
- understanding the role of the artist in a range of cultures, times and contexts

##### Critical understanding

- engaging with ideas, images and artefacts and identifying how values and meanings are conveyed

#### RANGE AND CONTENT

- Study a range of artefacts from contemporary, historical, personal and cultural contexts

### CITIZENSHIP KS3

#### KEY CONCEPTS

##### Identities & diversity: living together in the UK

- exploring the diverse cultures, groups and communities in the UK and the connections between them
- considering the interconnections between the UK and the rest of Europe and the wider world
- exploring community cohesion

#### RANGE AND CONTENT

- The changing nature of UK society
- Migration to the UK and the reasons for this
- The UK's relations with the United Nations and the world as a global community

### CITIZENSHIP KS4

#### KEY CONCEPTS

##### Identities & diversity: living together in the UK

- exploring the diverse cultures, groups and communities in the UK and the connections between them
- considering the interconnections between the UK and the rest of Europe and the wider world
- exploring community cohesion

#### RANGE AND CONTENT

- The origins and implications of diversity and the impact of migration and integration
- The UK's role in the world
- The challenges facing the global community, including international disagreements and conflict

### HISTORY KS3

#### KEY CONCEPTS

Cultural, ethnic and religious diversity

#### RANGE AND CONTENT

- Links made to parallel events, changes and developments in British, European and world history:

##### British history

- The impact of diverse peoples
- The way the people in Britain have changed and why
- The British Empire and its impact and legacy in the contemporary world

##### European and world history

- The impact of significant developments and events on past European and world societies
- The changing nature of conflict and cooperation and the role of international institutions in resolving conflicts

### RE KS3

#### KEY CONCEPTS

Expressing meaning: appreciating that individuals express their beliefs and values through many different forms

#### RANGE AND CONTENT

- Study of Christianity, Islam and Judaism
- Beliefs and concepts
- Global issues
- Interfaith dialogue

### RE KS4

#### KEY CONCEPTS

Expressing meaning: interpreting and evaluating sources and forms of religious expression

#### KEY PROCESSES

Learning about religion: use and evaluate forms of creative expression in religious life

#### RANGE AND CONTENT

- Study of Christianity, Islam and Judaism

### GCSE, AS, A2

There are many opportunities in History, Art and Design and RE to explore the Arab world in the context of Islam or the Middle East, especially through recent events and current affairs. It is also possible to select examples from the region or experiences of Arab people with which to interpret particular key global issues and themes.



AS Art exam work on the theme of 'habitation' by a student from St Angela's Ursuline Convent School, London.

THEMES MATRIX		ACHIEVEMENT	ART	CONFLICT	DIVERSITY	GENDER	INTERACTION
CARD NUMBER AND OBJECT							
KEY * Main theme ✓ Secondary theme							
1	Pages from the Qur'an	*	✓		✓		
2	Page from <i>The Wonders of Creation and The Oddities of Existence</i>	*	✓		✓		
3	Astrolabe quadrant	*			✓		✓
4	Page from <i>De Materia Medica</i> in Arabic	*	✓			✓	✓
5	Jar ( <i>albarello</i> ) with lustre decoration	*	✓				✓
6	Appliqué hanging for the doorway of a tent	✓	*		✓		
7	<i>Oriental scene</i>	✓	*				
8	<i>Mural</i>	✓	*		✓		
9	<i>Cairo Faces</i>	✓	*			✓	
10	Poster of Yasser Arafat	✓	*	✓		✓	
11	Painting of a battle beneath the walls of a town	✓	✓	*		✓	✓
12	Tiles showing Saladin and Richard I	✓	✓	*	✓	✓	✓
13	Stone relief of the siege of Lachish	✓	✓	*		✓	
14	<i>Uncle Najib's suitcase</i>	✓	✓	*			✓
15	Baal; <i>Book of the Dead</i> of Hunefer; Stone relief of a protective spirit	✓	✓		*		
16	Mosque lamp	✓	✓		*		
17	Print of the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem	✓	✓	✓	*		
18	Model of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre	✓	✓	✓	*		
19	<i>The Prophecy of Amos (Wailing Wall No 2)</i>		✓	✓	*		
20	Stone marker for Ghalilat	✓	✓			*	
21	Stone memorial for Tamma	✓	✓			*	✓
22	Details from the Blacas ewer	✓	✓			*	
23	<i>Hands of Fatima</i>	✓	✓		✓	*	
24	Embroidered dress	✓		✓		*	
25	<i>Umm Kulthum</i>	✓	✓			*	
26	Brooch with coin of the emperor Philip I	✓				✓	*
27	Imitation <i>dinar</i> of Offa	✓					*
28	Treasure from Salcombe Cannon Site	✓		✓			*
29	<i>Bataille des Pyramides</i>		✓	✓		✓	*
30	Excavations at Tell es-Sa'idiyeh	✓				✓	*

## SUPPLEMENTARY CARD NOTES

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS CONTAINS FURTHER INFORMATION FOR SOME OF THE CARDS.

### 1. Pages from the Qur'an

These pages are from two separate chapters of a Qur'an produced in 14th-century Mamluk Egypt or Syria. The page on the right is from Chapter 51 (*al-Zariyat*, 'The Winds that Scatter'), verses 1–12. The page on the left is from the end of Chapter 49 (*Hujurat*, 'The Inner Apartments'), including part of verse 16 to the end of verse 18. The section between is missing.

The heading of the next chapter is indicated by the decorative medallion at the bottom of the page on the left and inscribed in white against a blue and gold background. Below this is the *basmala*: 'In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate'. The gold rosettes on both pages mark the end of the verses.

### 2. Page from *The Wonders of Creation and The Oddities of Existence*

An enlarged title and six lines of text appear directly under the angel, but these refer to the next section. The text in other existing editions of the book refers to Israfil blowing his horn on the Day of Judgement. References to the trumpet signal for Judgement Day can be found in the Qur'an 69:13 and 36:51.

### 3. Astrolabe quadrant

An astrolabe quadrant is designed for one latitude only, and this instrument was made for the latitude of Damascus: 31°31'.

### 4. Page from *De Materia Medica* in Arabic

The illustrations to early copies of herbal manuscripts took the form of simple diagrams of plants, but occasionally included a portrait

of the author or patron at the beginning of the book. Other, more narrative, subjects began to appear, such as men harvesting herbs and roots, doctors concocting medicine in the pharmacy workshop, and the patients being treated with the freshly prepared drug. A conversation between two doctors, or between the doctor and his young apprentice, was also a popular illustration in books on medicine.

### 5. Jar (*albarello*) with lustre decoration

Arabic script in cobalt blue has been used purely as a pattern on the jar. It consists of a series of letters, *alif lam ayn alif* (possibly an abbreviation of *al-Afiya* meaning 'good health'), contained within panels repeated along the bottom and the side.

### 6. Appliqué hanging for the doorway of a tent

The Arabic translates as: 'Egypt has beauties in every art form. Mentioning them all requires a long talk. Look again, and you will find a beautiful artefact. Here I am, proving it to you (just now)'.

### 7. *Oriental scene*

Dia al-Azzawi trained as an archaeologist and takes inspiration from Iraq's past, especially ancient Sumer. He also pays tribute to his birth city Baghdad in some of his work, creating vibrantly coloured sculptural abstract shapes that resemble ancient sculptures. These are overlaid with Arabic words such as 'Tigris' or 'Baghdad'.

### 8. *Mural*

The text of the poem *Mural* by Mahmoud Darwish (born 1942) translates as follows:



'No angel appeared to tell me:  
 "What did you do back there, in the world?"  
 I didn't hear the pious call out,  
 nor the sinners moan for I'm alone  
 in the whiteness. I'm alone.  
 Nothing hurts at the door of doom.  
 Neither time nor emotion. I don't feel  
 the lightness of things, or the weight  
 of apprehensions. I couldn't find  
 anyone to ask: Where is my where now?  
 Where is the city of the dead,  
 and where am I? Here in this no-here,  
 in this no-time,  
 there's no being, nor nothingness'.

#### 9. **Cairo Faces**

The picture is painted photo-silkscreen  
 on canvas, with folded Arabic newspapers  
 mounted above and below.

#### 10. **Poster of Yasser Arafat**

Inscriptions on the poster in Arabic and  
 French say 'Yasser Arafat leader of the PLO'.

#### 12. **Tiles showing Saladin and Richard I**

The tiles were found at Chertsey Abbey in  
 Surrey. They depict Richard I killing Saladin  
 with a lance. However, the scene was invented  
 as part of a larger theme of combat of man  
 against lion. This was intended to refer to  
 Richard (known as 'the Lionheart') and act as  
 a tribute to his bravery. The subject greatly  
 appealed to English kings, especially Henry III  
 who had a large version painted on the walls of  
 the Antioch Chamber in Clarendon Palace.

#### 13. **Stone relief of the siege of Lachish**

The alabaster panel was part of a series which  
 decorated the walls of a room in the palace  
 of King Sennacherib (ruled 704–681 BC) at

Nineveh. The story continues on the next panel.

Other scenes of the battle show high officials  
 and foreigners being tortured and executed.  
 The foreigners are possibly officers from Nubia.  
 The Nubians were seen as sharing responsibility  
 for the rebellion. The palace was excavated  
 by A H Layard from 1846 to 1851 and many  
 later archaeologists.

#### 14. **Uncle Najib's suitcase**

Following the defeat of Turkey in the First  
 World War, the Ottoman Empire with its Arab  
 possessions was broken up after the First World  
 War. The League of Nations awarded mandates  
 for Syria and Lebanon to France and for  
 Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq to Britain.

#### **Anti-war badge**

The badge is one of 200,000 produced by  
 the firm Better Badges for the Stop the  
 War Coalition, a British group formed on 21  
 September 2001 to oppose the War on Terror.

#### 15. **Page from the *Book of the Dead* of Hunefer**

To the left, Anubis brings Hunefer into  
 the judgement area. Anubis is also shown  
 supervising the judgement scales. Hunefer's  
 heart, represented as a pot, is being weighed  
 against a feather, the symbol of Maat, the  
 established order of things, in this context  
 meaning 'what is right'. The ancient Egyptians  
 believed that the heart represented the good  
 or bad aspects of a person's life. If the heart  
 did not balance with the feather, then the dead  
 person was condemned to non-existence and  
 consumption by the ferocious 'devourer', part-  
 crocodile, part-lion, and part-hippopotamus.  
 Osiris is shown seated under a canopy, with his  
 sisters Isis and Nephthys.

#### **Stone relief of a protective spirit**

This figure of a man with wings may be the  
 supernatural creature known as an *apkallu*.  
 The significance of the deer and branch which  
 the figure carries is unknown. He wears a  
 tasselled kilt and a fringed and embroidered  
 robe, while his curled moustache and long hair  
 and beard are typical of figures of this date.  
 Across the body runs the so-called 'standard  
 inscription' of Ashurnasirpal II in cuneiform  
 script which records some of the king's titles  
 and achievements and is repeated on many  
 of his stone reliefs.

#### 16. **Mosque lamp**

Many mosque lamps, including this one, are  
 inscribed with the following verses from the  
 Qur'an 24:35: 'God is the Light of the heavens  
 and the earth; the likeness of His Light is as a  
 niche wherein is a lamp (the lamp in a glass, the  
 glass as it were a glittering star) kindled from a  
 Blessed Tree, an olive that is neither of the East  
 nor of the West whose oil wellnigh would shine,  
 even if no fire touched it'.

#### 19. **The Prophecy of Amos (Wailing Wall No 2)**

On the bottom left of the painting is the  
 inscription:  
 '...And the sanctuaries of Israel shall lie in  
 ruins'. Amos 7:9

#### 20. **Stone marker for Ghalilat**

Ancient South Arabia is now modern Yemen  
 and Oman. The Romans called it Arabia Felix  
 or 'lucky Arabia' because of its wealth from  
 the incense trade.

While there is no archaeological evidence for  
 her existence in Yemen, the 'Queen of Sheba',

is associated with Saba, the powerful incense  
 trading kingdom. Saba, with its capital at  
 Maryab (later known as Marib), was the oldest  
 and most important of the South Arabian  
 kingdoms, which also included Qataban, Ma'in,  
 Hadramawt and Himyar.

The inscription on the stone is in Sabaean, one  
 of several related Semitic languages spoken in  
 ancient South Arabia. It was written using an  
 alphabet which changed little from the 6th  
 century BC to the 7th century AD.

#### **Incense burner (detail)**

The burner is made from calcite-alabaster.  
 It was found at Shabwa, the ancient capital of  
 the Hadramawt kingdom which profited from  
 the trade in incense and salt. Camel riders, like  
 the one depicted, helped to transport goods  
 and protect the trading network.

#### 21. **Stone memorial for Tamma**

The emperor Aurelian (ruled AD 270–274)  
 defeated Zenobia's forces at Antioch (Antakya  
 in modern Turkey) before capturing Palmyra  
 in AD 272.

Tamma and other rich citizens were buried in  
 tomb towers, house tombs and underground  
 rock-cut tombs in the cemetery at Palmyra.

#### 22. **Details from the Blacas ewer**

The ewer has an Arabic inscription which  
 transliterates as Shuja' ibn Man'a al-Mausili,  
 the name of its maker. He was one of the best  
 metal inlayers in Mosul. The ewer is dated  
 Rajab AH 629 (April AD 1232).

The ewer also depicts a scene from  
 Firdausi's Persian epic poem the *Shahnama*  
 ('Book of Kings').



### 23. Hands of Fatima

The Arabic words '*ma sha'a Allah*' ('as God wills') appear on some hands.

### 24. Embroidered dress

Following the defeat of Turkey in the First World War, the Ottoman Empire with its Arab possessions was broken up. The League of Nations awarded mandates for Syria and Lebanon to France and for Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq to Britain.

### 25. Umm Kulthum

The Arabic inscription on the picture is '*Kawkab al-sharq*' or 'star of the east'. The crescent with the stars in the background of the picture is an Ottoman Turkish symbol.

### 26. Brooch with coin of the emperor Philip I

The Latin inscriptions on the coin are:

Obverse (front): IMPIVLPHILIPVSAVG = Emperor Marcus Iulius Philippus Augustus (his full name)

Reverse (back): LIBERALITAS AVGGII = The generosity of the emperors

The plural is used here because Philip is including his son (Philip II), just a child at the time of minting of the coin, and who probably died with Philip when he was assassinated by the usurper Decius in AD 249.

### 27. Imitation *dinar* of Offa

The inscriptions on the Offa coin resemble the Arabic inscriptions on the *dinar* dating to AD 773–774 of Abbasid Caliph al-Mansur.

The original inscriptions are:

Obverse (front):

Main inscription: There is no God but God, God is alone, he has no associate. Marginal inscription: Muhammad is the Messenger of God. He sent with him guidance and the religion of truth to make it prevail over every other religion.

Reverse (back):

Main inscription: Muhammad is the Messenger of God. Marginal inscription: In the name of God, this dinar was struck in the year seven and fifty hundred [157 AH].

### 28. Treasure from Salcombe Cannon Site

The fact that the gold jewellery and ingots in the treasure appear to have been deliberately cut in half suggests that this may have been a hoard of bullion, exported with the intent of melting it down. The identity of the ship is not known: it may have belonged to Barbary pirates who were raiding the Devon coast at this time. It could also have belonged to an English or Dutch merchant on the busy trade route between Europe and North Africa.

### Gold *dinar* of Sharif al-Walid

Sharif al-Walid was a member of the Sa'dian dynasty of Morocco and ruled from AD 1631 to 1636. The Arabic inscriptions on the coin are as follows:

Obverse (front):

Main inscription: In the name of God. The Caliph, al-Mansur al-Walid son of the Imam al-Nasir Zaydan. Marginal inscription: Qur'an sura 33 verse 33 (last two lines).

Reverse (back):

Main inscription (continues from obverse): son of the Imam al-Mansur Abi'l Abbas Ahmad son of the Imam al-Mahdi the Hasani Sharif. Marginal inscription: Struck in Marrakesh, may God protect it, in the year 1040.

### 29. Bataille des Pyramides

Soldiers in Napoleon's army discovered the Rosetta Stone in 1799 while digging the foundations of an extension to a fort near the town of el-Rashid (Rosetta). On Napoleon's defeat, the stone became the property of the English under the terms of the Treaty of Alexandria (1801) along with other antiquities that the French had found.

### 30. Excavations at Tell es-Sa'idiyeh

Photograph by J Tubb

Tell es Sa'idiyeh, identified as the biblical city of Zarethan, lies at the heart of the central Jordan Valley. The huge mound occupies a key strategic position, commanding the crossroads of two major trade routes, and dominating some of the richest and most fertile agricultural land east of the River Jordan.

Since 1985, excavations have revealed that the site was occupied from at least the third millennium BC to the Early Islamic period of the 7th century AD. The archaeological evidence shows that by about 2900 BC, Tell es-Sa'idiyeh was a large and prosperous city, with well-constructed architecture and highly developed municipal planning.



Right: Stone memorial for Tamma. Limestone. Palmyra, Syria, about AD 100–150.



# APPENDIX 1

## THE ARABIC SCRIPT

### Origin and development

Until the 6th century AD, Arabic was a spoken language only; its script was based on a form of Aramaic used by the Nabateans (100 BC–AD 100). The revelation of Islam to the Prophet Muhammad in the early 7th century AD in Arabia dramatically changed the role of the Arabic script, for there was now a need to write down the holy text of the Qur'an which had been revealed in Arabic. The establishment of Arabic as the language and script of the administration

of the Muslim empire coincided with the belief that in order to copy the Qur'an the writing must be as beautiful as possible. Over the centuries scripts were developed by master calligraphers, principally used to copy the holy text, but also employed in other contexts, including official documents, coins, gravestones, and the façades of buildings. The script therefore became not simply a vehicle for communication but – in a culture in which figural representation was discouraged – a major outlet of creativity and a characteristic feature of Islamic art.

### Arabic script styles written by Nassar Mansour

A verse from the Qur'an (68:1), 'By the pen and what they inscribe'.

*Kufic* script developed around the end of the 7th century AD. Its origin has been associated with Kufa, Iraq, and other centres. Characterised by angular letter forms it gradually became more elaborate and was widely used until about the 12th century AD. It was superseded for copying the Qur'an by the cursive script *naskh*.

*Maghribi* script evolved in North Africa and Spain in the 10th century AD. Forms of this script are still used in North Africa today.

*Square kufic* appears from the 13th century AD on coins, tilework and elsewhere in the lands of the Mongols and their successors.

*Naskh* is the copyists' hand, mainly used from the 12th century AD for writing government documents in addition to copying the Qur'an.

*Thuluth* started to develop in the 9th century AD and is a favoured script for ornamental inscriptions. A variant is *jali thuluth*.

*Nasta'liq*, the 'hanging script'. According to legend it was perfected by the 15th-century AD calligrapher Mir 'Ali al-Tabrizi after dreaming of flying geese. It was popular in Iran and Mughal India from the 16th century.

*Diwani* was developed by Ottoman Turkish calligraphers during the 15th century AD and often used on official documents such as firmans.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

ا	ا	a
ب	ب	b
ت	ت	t
ث	ث	th
ج	ج	j
ح	ح	h
خ	خ	kh
د	د	d
ذ	ذ	dh
ر	ر	r
ز	ز	z
س	س	s
ش	ش	sh
ص	ص	s
ض	ض	d
ط	ط	t
ظ	ظ	z
ع	ع	ayn
غ	غ	gh
ف	ف	f
ق	ق	q
ك	ك	k
ل	ل	l
م	م	m
ن	ن	n
ه	ه	h
و	و	w
ي	ي	y

### The Arabic Alphabet in Naskh script

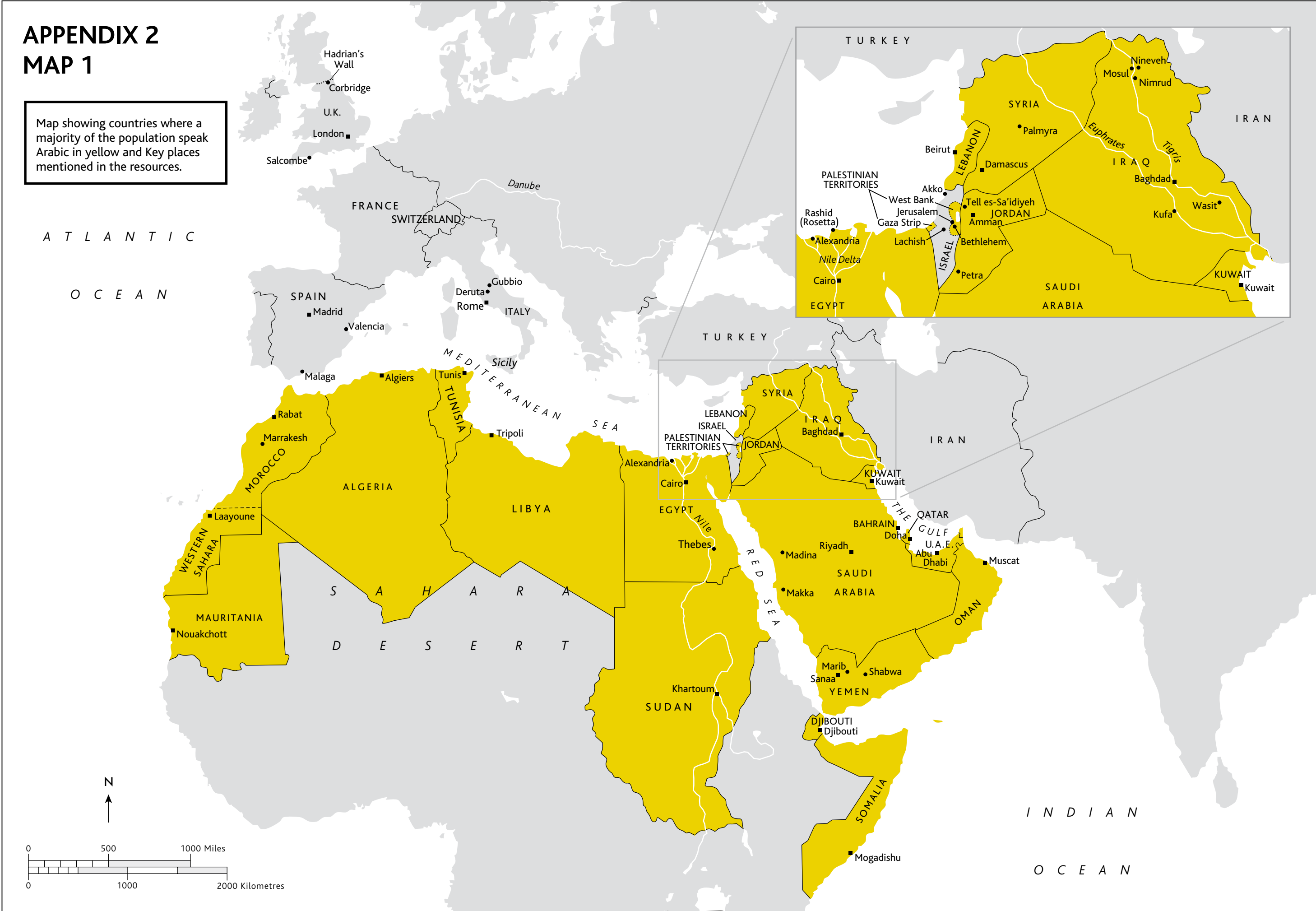
written by Mustafa Ja'far

The Arabic alphabet is written from right to left (shown vertically here with Latin equivalents) and consists of 28 letters created from 17 different letter shapes. In modern Arabic dots above and below help to distinguish letters from each other. In early Arabic these dots were frequently omitted. Many of the letters change their shape depending on where they are situated within a word. These variations are shown here alongside the individual letters. The letters that are underlined are pronounced emphatically. The Arabic alphabet has been employed and developed to write a variety of other languages. One of these is Persian which has 32 letters. To accommodate the extra sounds four Arabic letters have been adapted as follows:

پ چ ژ گ  
g z ch p

APPENDIX 2  
MAP 1

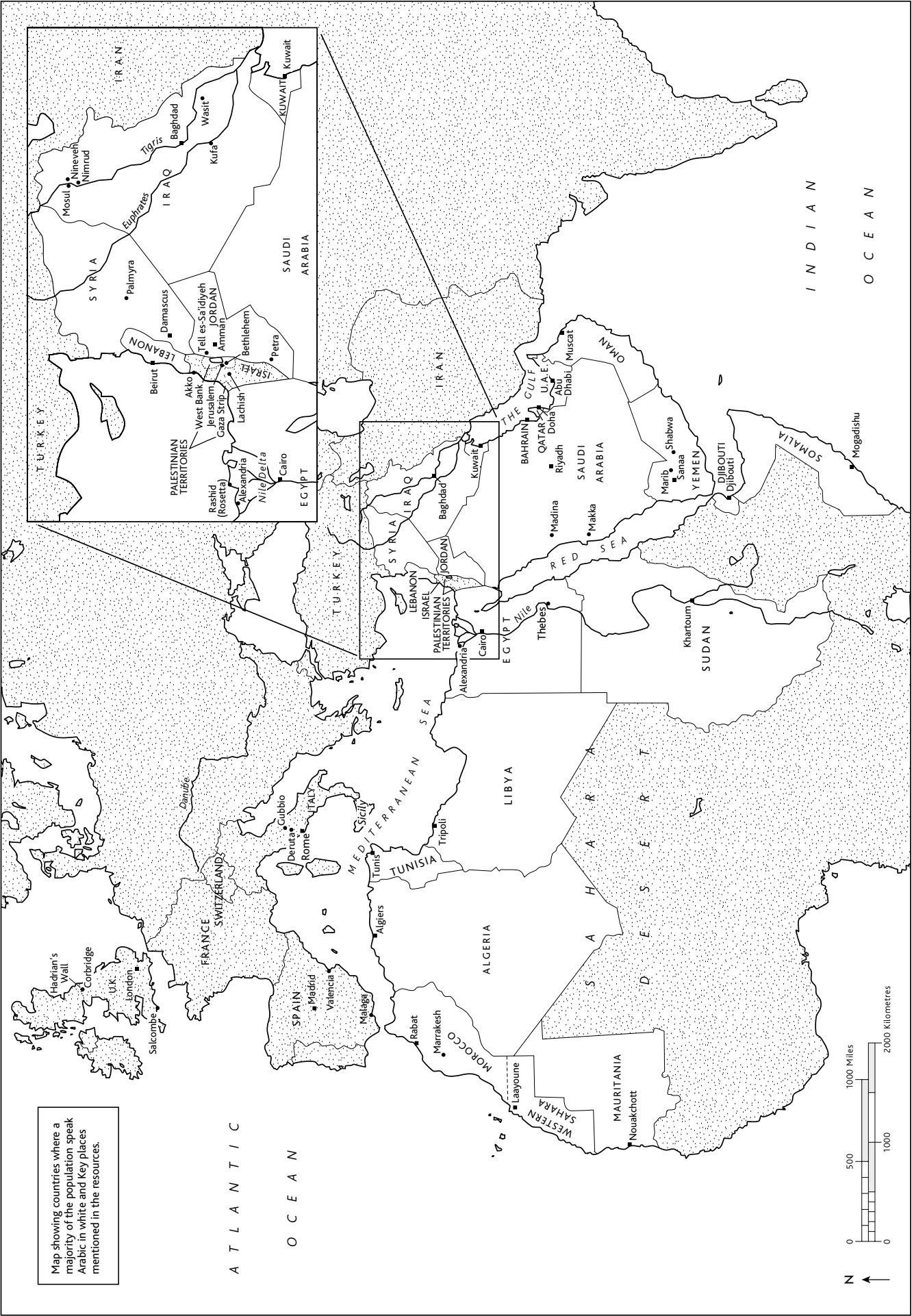
Map showing countries where a majority of the population speak Arabic in yellow and Key places mentioned in the resources.



Maps reference UN Cartographic Section and current British Museum conventions

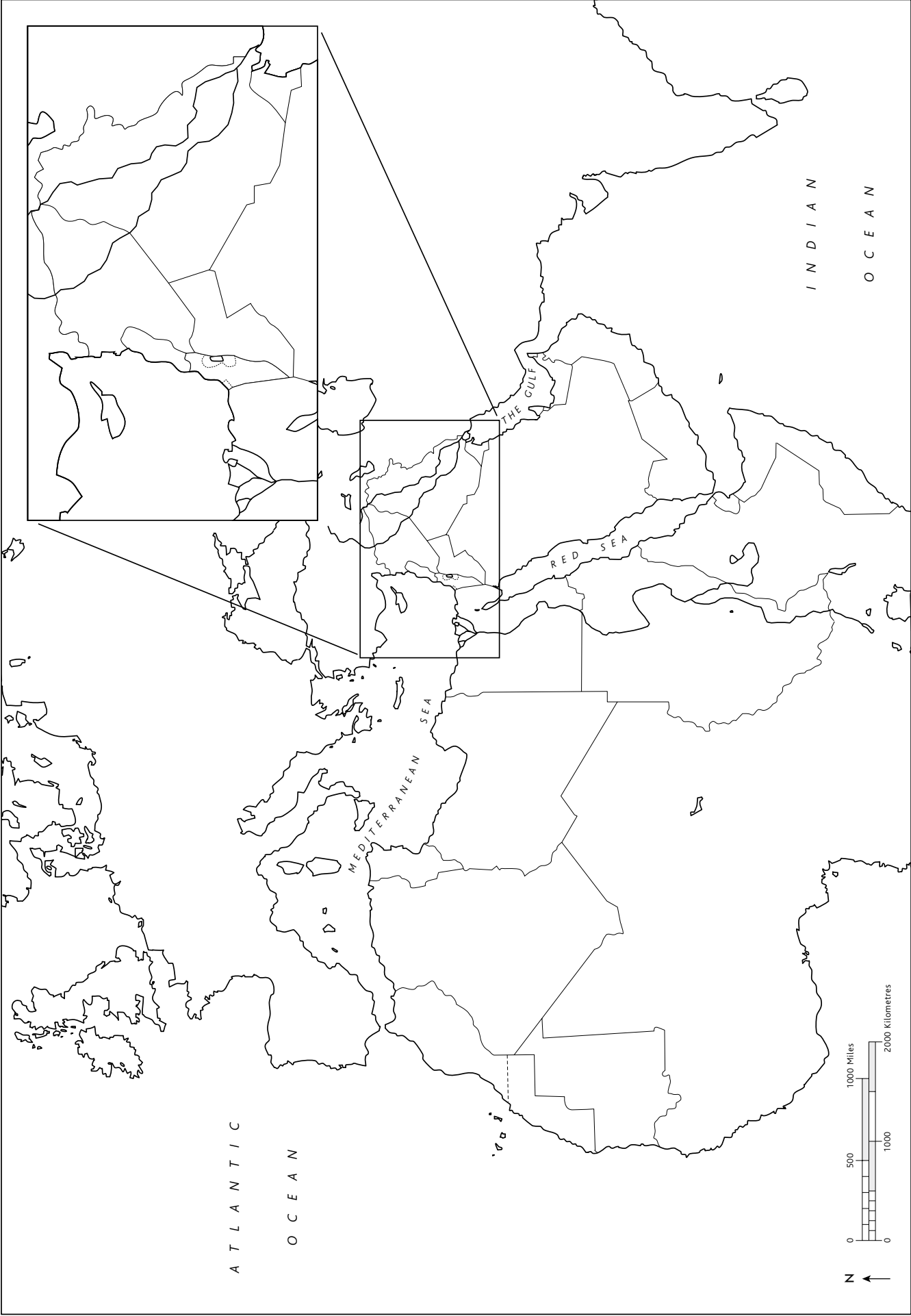


MAP 2



Maps reference UN Cartographic Section and current British Museum conventions

MAP 3



Maps reference UN Cartographic Section and current British Museum conventions

## FURTHER INFORMATION

### READING FOR TEACHERS

#### ARTICLES

'A need to know: Islamic history and the school curriculum' by Nicolas Kinloch in *Teaching History* 120, 2005

'Unravelling the complexities of the Arab-Israeli conflict at GCSE' by Alison Stephen in *Teaching History* 120, 2005

#### BOOKS

*1001 Inventions: Muslim Heritage in our world* by Salim T S Al-Hassani (FSTC, 2006)

*A History of the Arab Peoples* by Albert Hourani (Faber and Faber, 2005)

*Arabia and the Arabs* by Robert Hoyland (Routledge, 2001)

*Captives: Britain, Empire and the World 1600–1850* by Linda Colley (Pimlico, 2003)

*Islamic Art* by Barbara Brend (British Museum Press, 1991)

*Islamic Art* by Robert Irwin (Lawrence King Publishing, 1997)

*Islamic Art in Detail* by Sheila Canby (British Museum Press, 2005)

*Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet* by Karen Armstrong (HarperPress, 2007)

*Palace and Mosque* by Tim Stanley (V&A Publications, 2004)

*Palestinian Costume* by Shelagh Weir (British Museum Press, 1989)

*The Arabs* by Peter Mansfield (Penguin Books, 1992)

*The Cross and the Crescent* by Richard Fletcher (Penguin Books, 2004)

*Word into Art: Artists of the Modern Middle East* by Venetia Porter (British Museum Press, 2006)

#### REPORT

*Teaching Emotive and Controversial History* by the Historical Association, 2007

### READING FOR STUDENTS

#### BOOKS

*Arabic calligraphy: Naskh script for beginners* by Mustafa Ja'far (British Museum Press, 2002)

*Everyday life in the Ancient Arab and Islamic World* by Nicola Barber (Smart Apple Media, 2006)

*Eyewitness Guides: Bible Lands* by Jonathan Tubb (Dorling Kindersley, 1991)

*Islamic Designs* by Eva Wilson (British Museum Press, 2005)

*Looking Back: Mesopotamia and the Near East* by John Malam (Evans Brothers, 1999)

*Meeting of Minds: Islamic encounters c.570 to 1750* by Christine Counsell, Jamie Byrom and Michael Riley (Longman, 2007)

*War and Peace in the Middle East* by Michael Scott-Baumann (Hodder Murray, 1998)

#### USEFUL WEBSITES

Explore pages at [www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org)

Learning pages at [www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org)

Amnesty Education [www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk)

Artschool Palestine [www.artschoolpalestine.com](http://www.artschoolpalestine.com)

BBC Religion & Ethics [www.bbc.co.uk/religion](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion)

Council for Arab-British Understanding [www.caabu.org](http://www.caabu.org)

Explore Saudi Arabia [www.exploresaudiarabia.com](http://www.exploresaudiarabia.com)

FSTC 1001 Inventions [www.1001inventions.com](http://www.1001inventions.com)

Karim Rida Saïd Foundation [www.krsf.org](http://www.krsf.org)

Leighton House Museum

[www.rbkc.gov.uk/leightonarabhall](http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/leightonarabhall)

Offscreen Education [www.offscreened.com](http://www.offscreened.com)

Oxfam Education [www.oxfam.org.uk](http://www.oxfam.org.uk)

Schools History Project [www.leedstrinity.ac.uk/shp](http://www.leedstrinity.ac.uk/shp)

Victoria and Albert Museum

[www.vam.ac.uk/collections/asia](http://www.vam.ac.uk/collections/asia)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The British Museum would like to thank the following educators, museum professionals and experts who contributed to the development of the resources:

**Felicity Allen** (Tate Britain)

**Jamie Buchanan-Dunlop** (Crown Woods School)

**Clare Carlin** (Museum of London)

**Nadia Evans** (Council for Arab-British Understanding)

**Jerome Freeman** (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority)

**Noorah Al-Gailani** (Glasgow Museums)

**Salim Al-Hassani** (Foundation for Science Technology and Civilisation)

**Rebecca Heald** (Tate Britain)

**Louise Hutchinson** (Guardian Newsroom)

**Mustafa Ja'far** (Arabigraphy.com)

**Ulrike Al-Khamis** (National Museums of Scotland)

**Alan Kirwan** (Leighton House Museum)

**Ann Morris** (Morris International Associates)

**Michael Riley** (Bath Spa University and Somerset LEA)

**Katherine Rose** (Leighton House Museum)

**Mariam Rosser-Owen** (Victoria and Albert Museum)

**Catherine Sheppard** (Enfield Grammar School)

**Stephen Stapleton** (Offscreen Education)

**Rim Turkmani** (Imperial College London)

**Gillian Watt** (Council for Arab-British Understanding)

**Emma Webb** (National Museums of Scotland)

**Nighut Yousuf** (Victoria and Albert Museum)

Colleagues in the following departments at the British Museum made valuable contributions to creating these resources:

**Africa, Oceania and the Americas**

**Ancient Egypt and Sudan**

**Coins and Medals**

**Greece and Rome**

**Marketing**

**Middle East**

**Prehistory and Europe**

The British Museum would like to thank the following artists and copyright holders for granting permission to publish artwork in these resources:

Chant Avedissian, Dia al-Azzawi, Saïd Farhan, Mustafa Ja'far, Lee Lozowick, Nassar Mansour, Sabah Naim, Mohammed al-Shammarey, Laila Shawa

English extracts from the Qur'an from *The Koran Interpreted* by A J Arberry. © 1955 George Allen & Unwin Ltd. Extract from *Mural* by Mahmoud Darwish, translated by S Boulus, from *Judariya [Mural]* by S Boulus. © 2000 Riad El-Rayyes Books.

The British Museum would like to thank the Karim Rida Saïd Foundation for their invaluable support of the Arab World Education Programme including the development of these resources.



Dia al-Azzawi, *Oriental scene*. Mixed media, acrylic and foam board. Iraq/UK, AD 1986. © Dia al-Azzawi.



# THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DG  
📍 Tottenham Court Road, Holborn, Russell Square  
Telephone +44 (0)20 7323 8510  
[learning@britishmuseum.org](mailto:learning@britishmuseum.org)  
[www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org)

© The Trustees of the British Museum 05/2008.  
Printed on Revive Uncoated paper, made from  
100% de-inked post-consumer waste, using  
printing inks made from vegetable-based oils.

---

## DISCOVER THE ARAB WORLD

---

Supported by

