

NAME	CLASS
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Institut du Monde Arabe Worksheet

Calligraphy

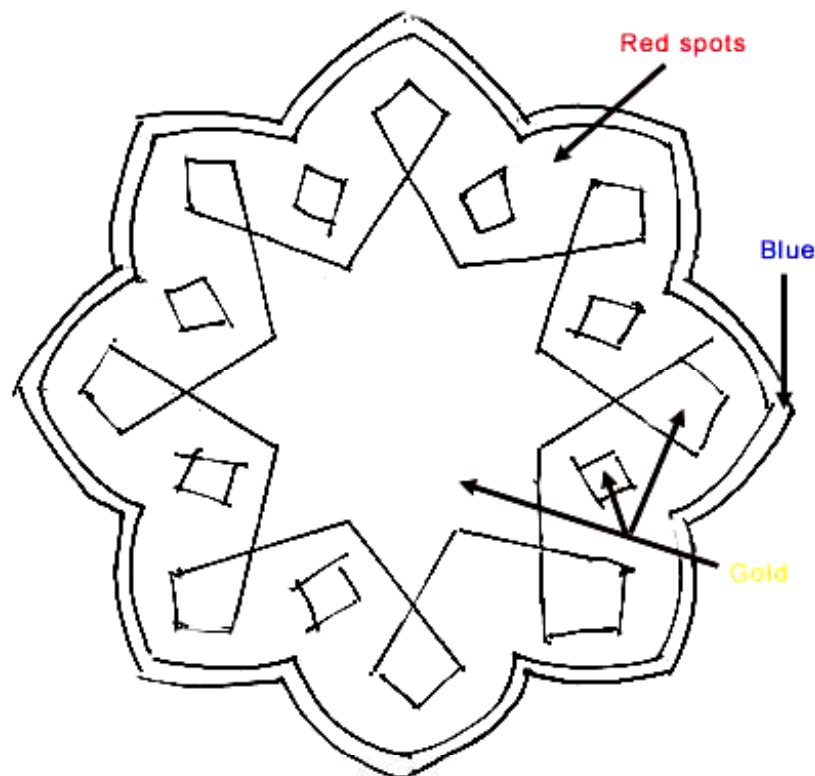
The art of writing was very important in the Islamic world : the divine revelation of Mohammed was written down in words, making Arabic a sacred language. Wealthy muslims in the Middle Ages kept libraries full of beautifully written and illustrated books: the Koran, of course, but also story books that could transport the reader into a mysterious and fascinating world.

The producers of books were writers and painters, employed by the Caliph himself or by the great lords of the caliphate. Then there were other craftsmen : the leather-tanners who made the covers, the papermakers and the chemists who mixed together the glues and inks.

The 'Shamseh'

The idea of decorating or 'illuminating' texts was taken from the Byzantines and, before them, the Hebrews. From the 12th c onwards it was traditional to show a decorated 'shamseh' or 'sun' on the first page (the frontispiece) of a Koran. It was a beautiful polygon representing perfection beyond our world.

1. Look for this 'shamseh' on display and lightly colour it in:



"Shamseh" or "Sun" : Iran XVI c.

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2. Look for a line of Arabic text and copy it here. Don't forget to write from left to right!

Trade

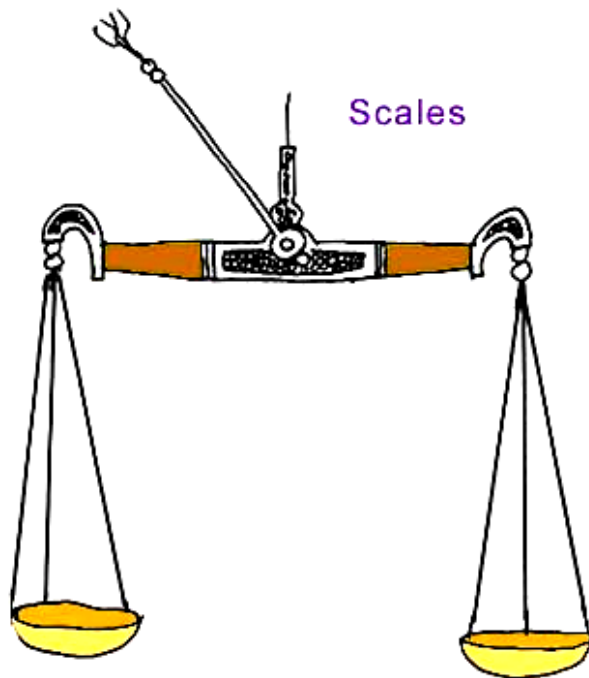
The Arabs were excellent merchants carrying silks, perfumes, spices, precious stones and metals, slaves, carpets, ceramics and other goods across deserts and seas.

3. Look at the coins on display. What are they called?

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4. Look at the sets of scales. What do you think they were used to measure?



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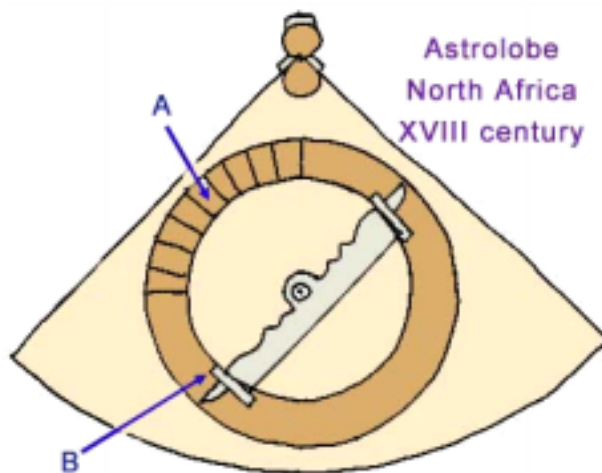
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Scientific Knowledge

5. Name five sciences the Arabs were good at? (Look at the text in French)

6. Name five civilisations from whom the Arabs learnt their science. (Look at the text in French)

Look for this quadrant astrolabe.



7. Along the scale 'A' in the picture write the degrees.

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8. What did the navigator look through at point 'B'?

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9. What did he look at?


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10. Name five things that could be calculated with this quadrant. (Look at the text in French)

11. Look at this pestle and mortar. What do you think it was used for?



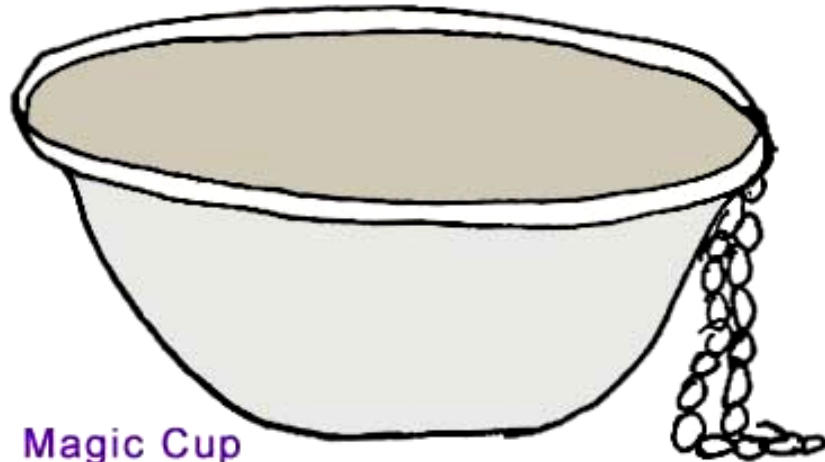
Pestle & Mortar
Spain
XII century

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12. Look for this 'magic cup' and draw in the decoration.



Magic Cup
India XVII

Carpets

The art of Arab carpet-making goes back to antiquity, long before the Islamic period. Traditionally it was the most important object in the tent, house or palace. There are over 20 different Arabic words for carpet : prayer-carpet, decorative-carpet, wall-carpet, floor-carpet, striped-carpet, flowered-carpet, etc.

Carpets have a religious importance: a prayer-mat is necessary five times a day to say prayers, pointing towards Mecca. In the Koran, references to carpets are almost always related to Paradise.

13. Who made tribal carpets? (Look at the text in French)

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14. What materials were used in tribal carpets?

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15. Look at a prayer-mat. What does the design in the middle represent? (Look at the text in French)

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16. Look at a prayer-mat and draw the design here.

