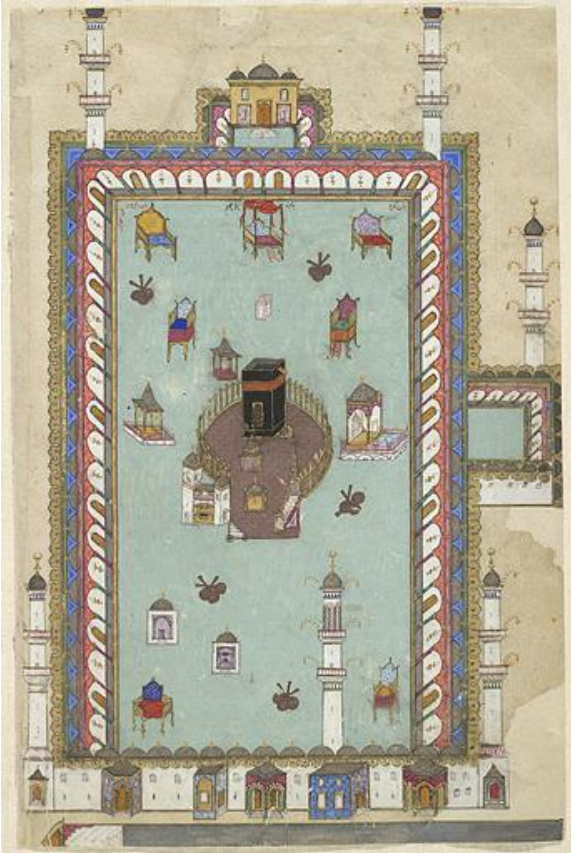


Depicting a Special Place from Multiple Perspectives



Harem al Sharif at Mecca, folio from a manuscript of the *Javahir al-Gharaib Tarjomat Bahr al-Aja'ib* (Gems of Marvels: A Translation of the Sea of Wonders) of Cennabi, 1582

Turkish

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

Harvard Art Museum, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, The Edwin Binney, 3rd Collection of Turkish Art at the Harvard Art Museum, 1985.219.1

Grades: 6 – 9

Subjects: English Language Arts, Social Science, Fine Arts, Foreign Languages

Time Required: 2 – 4 periods, 45 minutes each

Author: Written by Michael Svedman, with contributions by Ann Meehan, and edited by Susan Friel, Omer Mozaffar, and Molly Tarbell

Lesson Overview

Students will learn about Islam and the tradition of the Hajj. They will look at a painting of the haram and the Ka'ba in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, and will understand the importance of each. Students will learn about the Ottoman Empire. They will depict a place that is important to them and consider which details they want to emphasize and what those details tell the viewer about the place.

Materials

- Reproduction of *Harem al Sharif at Mecca*
- Heavyweight textured paper
- Crayons, pencils, oil pastels, and other art materials
- Other materials to decorate the drawing

Lesson Steps

1. Have students look closely at *Harem al Sharif at Mecca*. See how much students can figure out about the work when they take time to look at it, think about it, and share ideas.
2. Use a brainstorming technique, such as Pair Share, to get them started before sharing with the whole class.
 - Pair Share: Students turn to a partner and take turns naming one thing that they notice about the painting. After naming some of the most obvious things, they will soon begin to look more deeply and notice things that their partners did not. They should remember to share these ideas in the discussion later.
3. Use the following questions to begin a discussion:
 - What do you see? What can you find out about the work?
 - Where was the work made? What is it made of?
 - The painting was made with opaque watercolor and gold on paper by an artist who lived in the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century. Lasting from 1299 to 1923, the Ottoman Empire controlled much of Southeastern Europe, Western Asia, and Northern Africa.
 - What does the work show us?
 - The painting depicts the haram (ha-RUM), the sanctuary in the middle of Mecca, Saudi Arabia, that surrounds the Ka'ba (KAH-bah). Please note that *harem* is the 16th-century way of spelling the 21st-century word *haram*.



Saudi Arabia



The haram today

- Why are the haram, the Ka'ba, and Mecca important enough that a painting was made of them?
 - All of these places are important to Islam, a religion practiced by over 1.3 billion people living in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, and North America.
 - According to Islam, Adam built the Ka'ba in Mecca after his departure from Eden. Later, Ibrahim (also known as Abraham) came to Mecca with his wife Hagar and their son Ishmael, and he left them there, as God instructed him. In order to look for water, Hagar left Ishmael and ran to the top of a nearby hill called Safa. She saw nothing, returned to check on Ishmael, and then ran to the top of another hill called Marwa. Again she saw nothing. However, when she returned, she found Ishmael

kicking and screaming. He kicked so hard he gouged a well into the ground with his heel. Hagar said “Zamzam” to quiet the infant, thus giving the well its name. Muslims consider it the foundation of the city of Mecca. Ibrahim eventually returned to Hagar and Ishmael. They lived according to God’s law and fostered a civilization in Mecca. God one day decided to test Ibrahim and commanded him to kill his son Ishmael. Ibrahim took Ishmael to Mina. Along the way, Satan tried to tempt Ibrahim. He appeared three times, and each time Ibrahim threw stones at him to make him disappear. At Arafat, Ibrahim prepared to sacrifice Ishmael, but at the last moment, God sent Jibril (also known as Gabriel) to intercede and replace Ishmael with a ram. Ibrahim had passed God’s test.

- By Muhammad’s time, around 570 CE (after the year 0), the people of Mecca had lost touch with the teachings of the prophet Ibrahim. The Ka’ba was full of idols; many people worshipped many gods there. After receiving God’s word, Muhammad reinstated belief in the one true god, Allah. Muhammad stripped it of its pagan trappings, emptied the Ka’ba of all idols, and established new practices in honor of Ibrahim.
- There was already a practice like the Hajj (Muslim pilgrimage) that centered on the Ka’ba. Pilgrims circumambulate (walk around) the Ka’ba seven times upon their arrival in Mecca. The Ka’ba is now covered with a black cloth embroidered with gold thread called the Kiswa (KEY-swah). They wear simple clothing called Ihram (EH-rom), which for men consists of two white sheets, and for women varies regionally but is simple, modest, and usually white. After the circumambulation, the pilgrims run between Safa and Marwa (the hills that Hagar climbed to look for water) seven times. They spend the night in Mina, a city of tents set up by the Saudi Arabian government for the pilgrims. Then they travel to Arafat for the day, a central event of the Hajj where all of the 2 to 5 million pilgrims spend the day in prayer and reflection. The pilgrims then spend the night in an open field called Muzdalifa. Returning to Mina, pilgrims reenact the stoning of Satan at Mina. Three monoliths surrounded by large stone structures mark the spots where Satan tempted Ibrahim. After the stoning, the Hajj is complete. The male pilgrims shave their heads and the women cut their hair. They return to Mecca, change back into their regular clothing, and complete one more circumambulation of the Ka’ba. Finally, they must participate in the Feast of the Sacrifice, which recalls the way that God rewarded Ibrahim’s obedience and replaced Ishmael with a ram. Pilgrims who prefer not to sacrifice an animal can choose to fast.
- Why is the Hajj important?
 - Undertaking the Hajj is one of the five religious obligations of Islam. The other four are the proclamation that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah, praying five times daily, payment of annual alms, and dawn to dusk fasting during Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. The Hajj should be performed at least once, if physically and financially possible.
- Now that we know about Islam, let’s go back and look at the painting. Why did the artist choose to represent things in this way?
 - The artist represents the scene from above, but the façades of structures and the minarets as though we were facing them. This technique is called mixed perspective. It allowed the artist to represent clearly both the space of the haram and the important sites and structures within that space. In the center is the Ka’ba, the shrine that Muslims circumambulate during the Hajj. The two-tiered structure to the left is the Zamzam well. The walls mark the perimeter of the sanctuary. Only Muslims are allowed within the haram.
- What do you notice about the central structure? What is it?
 - Muslims believe that Adam built the Ka’ba as a place of worship of God. It is the holiest place in Islam. Once used for pagan practices, the Ka’ba has been empty since Muhammad removed all of the idols. A black cloth called the Kiswa covers the Ka’ba and is replaced every year. It is made of silk dyed black and

LUMA

embroidered with verses from the Qur'an (the Muslim holy book) in gold-plated silver thread. Over two hundred weavers and craftsmen work on the Kiswa in Saudi Arabia.

- Describe the place depicted. Is it impressive? What were the artist's motivations?
 - The artist emphasized the improvements that the Ottoman rulers had made to Mecca. The wings of the colonnade are neatly ordered and brightly painted. Lavish blue tiles cover the floor of the inner sanctuary. At the top of the page, the bab Ibrahim, or gate of Abraham, is gold. Six minarets tower over the scene. Muslims pray five times during the day, and a minaret is a tower that a muezzin (pronounced moo-EH-zin) climbs to call people to prayer. However, by constructing five additional minarets and making each of them big and spectacular, the Ottoman rulers made a show of their power and their piety; the extravagance was a political gesture. This painting helped to spread that message of power and piety. In a work devoted to the marvels of the empire, this painting celebrates Ottoman achievements. The painter used a clear style and mixed perspective to emphasize the grandeur of the haram under Ottoman control.

Activity

1. Have the students choose a place that is important to them, considering major details about the site.
2. Using paper and pencils, the students should draw a bird's eye view of the place they have chosen. Then, have the students shift the perspective to capture the details of that place. Have them consider which features will be larger, which will be smaller, and what angle will best represent each feature. Then, the students should color the drawing with markers, crayons, or colored pencils, keeping in mind what effect the colors have on the scene.

Expanding the Lesson

- Ask the students to tell the class about their drawings. They should be ready to explain what place they chose, why they chose it, and why they chose to represent it in that way.

Vocabulary

hajj: a pilgrimage central to Islam. Every Muslim must go on the Hajj at least once in his or her lifetime if able. The pilgrim travels to the holy city of Mecca to retrace the steps of Muhammad and to re-enact the story of Ibrahim.

haram/harem: the sanctuary around the Ka'ba in the center of Mecca; it means "forbidden" because misbehavior is forbidden there.

idol: a figure that represents a god.

ihram: the religious dress worn during the Hajj, which for men consists of two white sheets, and for women varies regionally but is simple, modest, and usually white; the word "ihram" comes from the same root as "haram;" Muslims dressed in ihram are forbidden any misbehavior.

Ka'ba: the holy house of worship in the center of Mecca; Muslims believe the original house of worship was built by Adam at that location.

Kiswa: the cloth that covers the Ka'ba, made of silk dyed black and embroidered with gold-plated silver thread.

minaret: a tower which the muezzin climbs to give the call to prayer.

muezzin: the person who gives the call to prayer.



Ottoman: a Turkish empire that controlled territory in Europe, Western Asia, and Northern Africa between the 13th and 20th centuries.

Illinois Learning Standards

English Language Arts

4 – Listening and Speaking

Social Science

16 – History

17 – Geography

18 – Social Systems

Fine Arts

26 – Creating and Performing

27 – Arts and Civilization

Foreign Languages

29 – Culture and Geography