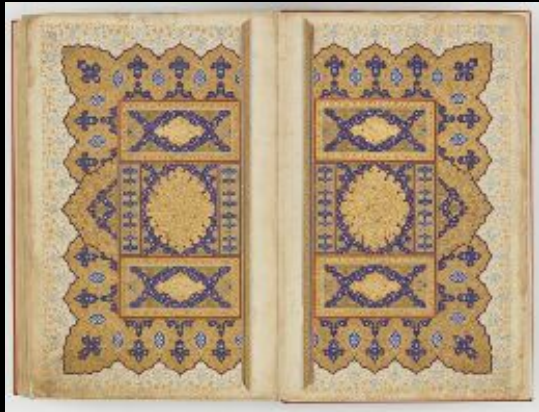


# What is the Qur'an?

## A Historical Journey



Qur'an  
Calligrapher: Ahmad Sayri  
Iran, Safavid period, 1598 (1006 AH)  
Ink, color, and gold on paper  
Purchase-Charles Lang Freer Endowment  
National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Freer  
Collection, F1932.65



Fragment of a Qur'an, sura 2:191-233  
Near East, 9th-10th century  
Ink, color, and gold on parchment  
Purchase-Charles Lang Freer Endowment  
National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Freer  
Collection, F1937.6.1-33

# Students will understand ...

- the origin of the Qur'an including the Qur'an's historical and geographic context
- the significance of Qur'an as a guide for Muslims in both personal and civic contexts.

# What is the Qur'an?

- Islamic sacred text
- the literal Word of God for Muslims
- a collection of civil and moral codes

National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Collection, Purchase—Charles Lang Freer Endowment, F1932.65





Muslims believe the Qur'an was conveyed by the Angel Gabriel to Muhammad in Arabic from 610 to 632. The language of Arabic itself is considered the sacred Word of God.

Detail showing the Angel Gabriel from Double-folio from the *Haftawrang* (Seven Thrones)

by Jami (d. 1492): The Miraj of the Prophet (f. 275a)  
Iran

Opaque watercolor, ink, and gold on parchment

Purchase—Charles Lang Freer Endowment

National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Collection,  
F1946.12.275

# The First Revelation

Read!

“In the Name of thy Lord who created,  
created Man of a clot of blood.”

Read!

“Thy Lord is the most Generous,  
who taught by the Pen,  
taught Man what he knew not!”

(Qur'an 96:1-5)

Listen to this recitation.

How might  
reciting or  
listening to the  
Qur'an create a  
sense of  
community or  
belonging?



# Moral Law and Civic Law

The Qur'an provides both moral guidance for daily decisions as well as legal guidance for community decisions.

What do you rely on for guidance on these issues? Consider a variety of environments, such as home, school, or country.



# Fragment of a Qur'an from 9-10th century Near East

This fragment of a Qur'an displays verses of the sura "The Cow" ("Al-Baqarah"), including part of verses 191–233.

Read a translation of **THREE** verses and summarize their meaning in your own words



National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Collection,  
Purchase—Charles Lang Freer Endowment, F1937.6.1-33



## Sura 2, Verse 215

"They ask you as to what they should spend. Say, 'Let whatever wealth you spend be for the parents, relatives, orphans, the needy, and the traveller.' Allah indeed knows whatever good you do." (Qur'an 2:215)

*English translation by Ali Quli Qara'i*



National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Collection,  
Purchase—Charles Lang Freer Endowment, F1937.6.1-33

## Sura 2, Verse 219

"They ask you concerning wine and gambling. Say, 'There is a great sin in both of them, and some profits for the people, but their sinfulness outweighs their profit.'" (Qur'an 2:219)

*English translation by Ali Quli  
Qara'i*



National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Collection,  
Purchase—Charles Lang Freer Endowment, F1937.6.1-33

# Sura 2, Verse 220

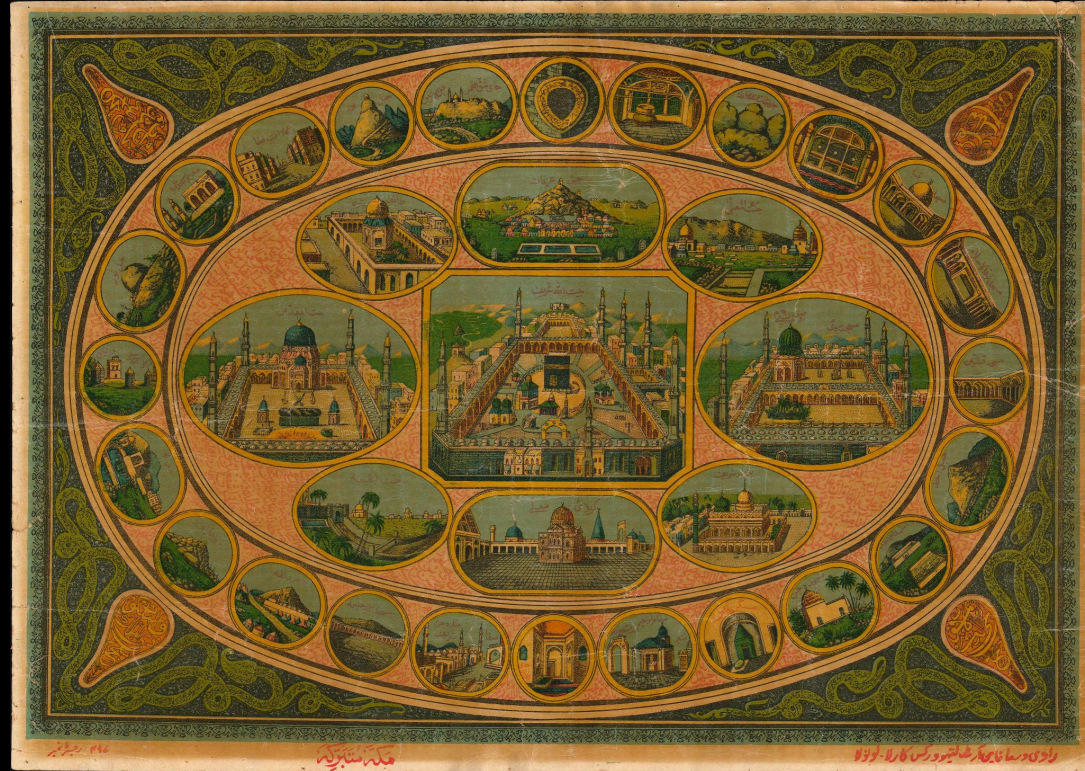
"And they ask you concerning the orphans. Say, 'It is better to set right their affairs, and if you intermingle with them, they are of course your brothers: Allah knows those who cause corruption from those who set things right.'" (Qur'an 2:220)

*English translation by Ali Quli  
Qara'i*



National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Collection,  
Purchase—Charles Lang Freer Endowment, F1937.6.1-33

The Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad in response to events surrounding his life across a period of over twenty years in the trading cities of Mecca and Medina.



Raja Ravi Varma (1848–1906)  
1900 Views of mecca, Medina and Jerusalem  
[Wikimedia Commons](#)



# The Ka'ba and the Great Mosque in Mecca

View in Mecca: the Ka'ba and the Great Mosque, from the north  
India, 19th century  
Color and gold on paper  
Gift of Charles Lang Freer  
National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Collection,  
F1907.246



# The Ka'ba and the Great Mosque in Mecca

Photo centered on the Kaaba in Mecca by Nacizane  
[Wikimedia Commons](#)  
CC BY 2.0 DEED



## Reflection

Write down **THREE** new things you learned about the Qur'an.

Write down **TWO** new insights you have about the Islamic faith or about Islamic art.

Write down **ONE** new question you have.