

The Islamic Golden Age

Just like Greece, Islamic culture experienced a Golden Age during which they made many advancements in art, literature, education, math, and science. Some of the concepts invented by Arab Muslims during this time are extremely important to our society, and are in fact, used every day.

Literature: During the Islamic Golden Age, there was an explosion of Arabic language literature. Perhaps one of the most well-known example is the book *1001 Nights*. *1001 Nights* is a collection of short stories, many of which are still known today, including Aladdin and Simbad.

Education and Scholarship: Libraries had long been popular places of learning throughout the ancient world, often housing thousands of books and a place where scholars would do their work of learning, reading, writing, and even answering questions for curious people. However, Islamic Arabs invented the concept of universities, or places of organized learning in different topics. They also invented the idea of getting different degrees based on your level of knowledge in a topic. Basically, Islamic Arabs invented the idea of college and formal education for adults. In addition, Arabs worked hard to preserve (by then already ancient) texts and writings from Ancient Greece and Rome. Important works that we still study today by famous philosophers, such as Aristotle, were saved from being lost forever by Islamic scholars who preserved and catalogued them for the ages.

Math and Science: In addition to advancements in literature, Islamic Arabs also revolutionized both math and science. The number symbols that we use today (1, 2, 3, etc.) are actually Arabic numbers. Islamic mathematical advances were so important, that the entire world adopted and uses their number symbols. In fact, Arabs not only invented the numbers we use, but they also invented algebra. The entire mathematical concept of finding a missing number that we currently learn in schools as algebra was an idea brought to the world by Arabs. They also invented trigonometry, the math that deals with finding the angles and lengths of triangles.

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They also made a number of advances in the areas of science and medicine. They were very interested in astronomy, and therefore studied the movement of the stars and planets in the sky in a very scientific and mathematical way that gave them very accurate calculations. A number of Islamic scholars also made important medical breakthroughs by studying and experimenting. They were able to classify and understand new diseases, and one man, Az-Zahrawi is credited as being the “father of modern surgery.” The work of these scholars was incredibly important for treating diseases and expanding the life expectancy of people who benefited from these advancements. Furthermore, since they also invented universities, they were the first to have a series of required classes and topics of study to train aspiring doctors.

One of the most important things about Islamic scholarship during this time was the use of what we would now refer to as the scientific method. While they did not necessarily follow all of the steps that modern scientists do, they used observation and looked for actual evidence to explain the way things were—whether it was the movement of the stars, the spread of disease, or the use of a mathematical equation. Previous scholars often just made their best guess about how things worked, and then spent their time trying to prove it was true, rather than looking at both sides of every argument, and looking for evidence that proved *or* disproved their ideas.

There is no doubt that the world would not be the place it is today without the inventions and scholarship of Islamic Arabs during the Islamic Golden Age, and we owe a great debt to the Arab culture for the basic functioning of our modern world.

WARNING: IF YOU ANSWER IS THE SAME OR SIMILAR TO ANOTHER STUDENT, YOU WILL RECEIVE A 0 AND A TEXT HOME, NO EXCEPTIONS, NO MAKE-UPS. MAKE IT A NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTION TO DO YOUR OWN WORK.

Answer the following questions in at least **THREE (3) SENTENCES EACH.**

1. In your opinion, what were the most important accomplishments (inventions or contributions) of the Islamic Golden Age?
2. What was the difference between the libraries that most ancient civilizations had, and the university system that the Islamic Arabs invented? Why was this difference especially important for people wanting to become doctors? (NOTE: THIS IS A TWO PART QUESTION. YOU MOST ANSWER BOTH PARTS OF THE QUESTION IN ORDER TO GET FULL CREDIT.)

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