

Mr. Dowling's study sheet on the Crusades and the Rise of Islam

1. Islam spread far from its birthplace in the modern nation of Saudi Arabia. By AD1095, land where Jesus Christ lived was controlled by Muslims. Christians considered this land holy and believed they, not Muslims, should control it.
2. The Crusades were a series of wars initiated by Christians, and fought against Muslims, in an attempt to win back their holy lands.
3. The Crusaders were ultimately unable to reclaim their holy lands, but the wars had another effect: Western Europeans had left their homes to fight in a distant war. The stories of the returning Crusaders encouraged their countrymen to look beyond their own villages for the first time.



The Arabs

People who speak Arabic as their primary language are known as Arabs. Traditionally, they lived on the Arabian Peninsula, but the language and culture of the Arabs spread throughout the Middle East with the expansion of Islam. Arabic is the language of the Quran, the holy book of Islam. Today more than 200 million Arabs live in nations around the world. Arabs constitute the substantial majority of people in Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey, Sudan, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco.

When Muhammad, the founder of Islam, died in AD632, Abu Bekr became caliph. Caliph means successor, or "one who comes after." Abu Bekr wanted everyone around the world to follow Islam and "to submit to Allah." H.G. Wells said, "With a faith that moves mountains, he set himself simply and sanely to organize the subjugation of the entire world to Allah – with little armies of 3000 or 4000 Arabs."¹

A century after Muhammad's death, the lands of Islam, under Arab leadership, stretched from Spain in the west across North Africa and most of the modern Middle East into Central Asia and northern India. The Arabs were great traders whose influence reached as far as southwest Asia. Today more Muslims live in Indonesia, far from the Arab world, than in any other nation.

The Arabs were interested in learning and in other cultures. Western Europe was in a period often called "the dark ages" because the civilizations of Greece and Rome had been extinguished, but the Arabs made great advances in mathematics, medicine, and physical science. They replaced clumsy Roman numerals with the Arabic numerals we use today. Algebra and Chemistry are both Arabic words.

The Turks and the First Crusade

The modern nation of Turkey is named for its Turkish inhabitants, but the Turks were not originally from Turkey. The Turks were nomadic people from Central Asia. Many Turks remain in that area, in fact, there is a nation in Central Asia known as Turkmenistan ("land of the Turks").

One Turkish tribe, the Seljuks, began moving into the Anatolian peninsula, or what we now call Turkey. These Turks were Muslims, and a



¹ H.G. Wells, *An Illustrated Short History of the World*, 1922, Salem House Publishers, p. 106.

Christian emperor, Alexius I, controlled the peninsula. Alexius appealed to the head of his church, the Pope, to help him rid Anatolia of “the unbelievers.”

Pope Urban II received Alexius’s call for assistance, but decided to use that call to advance a more ambitious plan. Jerusalem, on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea in the modern nation of Israel, is considered holy land to Christians, Jews and Muslims, but in 1095, the city was controlled by Muslims. The message from Alexius presented Urban with an opportunity to retake the holy lands from the Muslims. The pope called for a “War of the Cross,” or Crusade, to retake the holy lands from the unbelievers.

Pope Urban persuaded the knights of Western Europe to join the First Crusade

- Urban appealed to the knight’s religious convictions
- Urban said Muslim Turks were robbing and torturing Christian pilgrims journeying to the holy lands.
- The war offered knights a chance for glory and wealth.
- Urban suggested the knights fight Muslims instead of continuing to fight one another.

Later Crusades

The first Crusaders crossed into Anatolia in 1097 and reached Jerusalem by the summer of 1099. The fighting was fierce, but the unsuspecting Muslims were no match for the bloodthirsty Crusaders, who killed not only fighting men, but also women and children. The victorious Crusaders established four colonies along the eastern Mediterranean including one in Jerusalem.

A second Crusade was launched when the Muslims recaptured one of the Christian colonies. This time the Muslims were prepared and defeated the Crusaders.



Saladin and the Muslim Recapture of Jerusalem

The Christians had recaptured the Holy Lands by the end of the second Crusade, but a Muslim general named Saladin launched a *jihad*, or Islamic holy war, that managed to recapture Jerusalem. Saladin was neither an Arab nor a Turk. He was Kurdish. The Kurds live between the Turks and Arabs in the mountainous lands of northern Iraq and eastern Turkey.

Saladin recaptured Jerusalem in 1187, prompting the Christians to launch a Third Crusade led by King Richard “the Lion-Hearted” of England. The Christians won some battles in the Third Crusade, but Saladin was able to hold Jerusalem for the Muslims. The two warriors agreed to a truce that allowed the Muslims control the Holy Lands, but Christians were free to visit their shrines.

The Muslims had recaptured all of the Holy Lands by 1291, but the Crusades were a turning point for Western Europe. The returning soldiers told fascinating tales of far away lands; people became interested in other cultures for the first time. The next two centuries would lead to exciting advances in technology and the arts we now know as the Renaissance.



The Crusades led to an increase in trade in Europe.

- The Crusaders traveled to new lands and learned of new and interesting cultures.
- The Crusaders discovered spices that allowed food to last longer and taste better.
- Europeans wanted the fine cloths manufactured in the Middle East.

You will be required to identify the modern nation of Saudi Arabia. It is darkened in the map above.