



CULTUREGUIDE

EGYPT

SERIES 1
PRIMARY (K–6)



BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
KENNEDY CENTER
FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

EGYPT CULTUREGUIDE

This unit is published by the Intercultural Outreach Program of the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies at Brigham Young University as part of an effort to foster open cultural exchange within the educational community and to promote increased global understanding by providing meaningful cultural education tools

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WHY STUDY CULTURES?

For most of us, cultures are misunderstood; they are nebulous, vague, and hidden. Like the famous iceberg analogy, we know that most of what a culture is cannot be seen. But what does that mean? And why, then, should we study cultures if we do not know what we're studying in the first place?

In the late twentieth century, Brigham Young University did not embrace a new discipline, but rather a new area of study—the study of cultures. Typically, anthropology is the social science that studies cultures. Why should they have all the fun? The study of cultures unites other academic disciplines (as needed), drawing upon literature, political science, sociology, and even the more applied areas of nursing, social work, law, and business. The study of cultures has grown into nothing short of a revolt against disciplines, “a mode of inquiry” that looks at things in new ways.¹

In 1982, the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies established Intercultural Outreach² as a formal program to help build bridges of intercultural understanding. Since then, more than 10,000 gratis cultural presentations have been given to local area public schools, taking students to new places using language, multimedia, and imagination. *CultureGuides* derive from the same expertise that has been honed in classrooms—with the exciting exception that these intercultural learning tools are not geographically bound. Thanks to the Internet, accessible multimedia technology, and our trusty eMACs, a limitless audience can learn about different cultures.

Globalization, the driving paradigm of the post–Cold War world, means that now, more than ever, culture matters. Culture is the invisible context that may keep us from understanding important people, places, and ideas; it exists whether or not we think about it. Intercultural education can help us, not only as an intellectual exercise, but also in very practical ways to combat racism, to expand business, and to communicate effectively.

CultureGuides share the same aim as Edward T. Hall, the eminent cultural scholar, to try to “make culture real.”³ Even though our “student guides” are not present in every classroom, we hope that *CultureGuides* will make classrooms of the mind and cultural laboratories wherever you may reside.

¹ Ziauddin Sardar and Borin Van Loon. *Introducing Cultural Studies*, Totem Books, New York: 1998.

² The program was originally called International Outreach when it was established in 1982, but it was renamed Intercultural Outreach in 2006 to better reflect its aims.

³ *The Edge: The E-Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Summer 1998, Vol. 1(3) Posted 10/11/98, <http://interculturalrelations.com/v1i3Summer1998/sum98sorrellshall.htm>.

TRADITIONS

THE END OF THE GREAT FAST

The Egyptians are very devoted to their country. They love to celebrate their national and religious holidays, and their festivals are extremely lively and long. The most exciting religious holiday is the *Eid al-Fitr* [eed-all-fiteer]. The Eid al-Fitr is celebrated at the culmination or end of *Ramadan* [ram-ah-don], the Islamic holiday known as “the month of blessing.” Since 94 percent of Egyptians are Muslims—people who practice the religion of Islam—the Eid al-Fitr is a very prominent holiday in Egypt.



Starting Points

1. Imagine a holiday that lasts three days and is celebrated by almost everyone in your country. During the holiday, everyone takes a vacation from work, wears their best clothing, gives each other gifts, and goes to parties all day and all night. Are there any similar holidays in American culture? How do you celebrate them? The three-day holiday celebrated in Egypt is the Eid al-Fitr; it is an essential aspect of Egyptian culture.
2. List qualities or virtues that your parents taught you (e.g., honesty, kindness, tidiness, etc.). In Egypt, parents teach their children many of the same virtues and also teach their children from the *Qur'an* [ko-ran], a book considered by Muslims to be a record of God's work.
3. Describe to a classmate a religious holiday that you celebrate. What are some important things you do as you celebrate? As Egyptians celebrate Ramadan and the Eid al-Fitr, they focus on fasting, prayer, generosity, and cleanliness.



Information

The Muslim Religion

Today, the Egyptian population is 94 percent Muslim. The word Muslim comes from an Arabic word that means “submission to the will of God.” Since Muslims live by the Islamic law, Islam is not only a religion but also a way of life. This way of life is outlined in the teachings of the Qur'an, and the Muslim people use these teachings as a model for their lives. The Qur'an is a book that Muslims consider to be a record of God's work. They believe it was revealed around 610 C.E. to the prophet Muhammad.

Muslims share some common beliefs with Jews and Christians, and the three religions share some common roots. Muslims believe in one God, just as Jews and Christians do, but they call him *Allah* [ah-lah]. Muslims also believe that many prophets from the Bible were Allah's true prophets. They even believe that Jesus was the greatest prophet aside from the last Muslim prophet, Muhammad. In fact, Muslims share the belief that the birth of Jesus was miraculous and that he was born of a virgin; however, unlike Christians, they do not believe that Jesus was the literal son of God.

At the core of the Islamic faith, there are five pillars, or practices:

1. Bearing witness of the one true God and recognizing Muhammad as his messenger.
2. Praying five times daily while facing Mecca, the Saudi Arabian city that Muslims believe is holy (see **Traditions Visuals 1–3 and Map of Egypt**).
3. Giving alms to the unfortunate.
4. Fasting from dawn until dusk during Ramadan.
5. Traveling to Mecca; this journey, called the *Hajj* [hahj], is required only once during the lifetime of each Muslim.

Ramadan

Islam follows the lunar calendar. This calendar is about eleven days shorter than the solar calendar which most of the world uses. For this reason, Islamic holidays occur on different dates on the solar calendar each year.

Muslims have many religious holidays. One such holiday is called Ramadan, or “the month of blessing” (see **Traditions Visuals 4 and 5**). Egyptian Muslims believe that Allah gave Muhammad the first verses of the Qur’an during this month. To remember this occasion, Muslims try to pray more during Ramadan and to act more charitable than usual. They give money to the poor and perform other charitable acts. This holiday is also a month of fasting; every devoted Muslim refrains from food and drink from dawn until dusk. During this month, Muslims arise early to eat their breakfast before the sun rises, and they wait until after the sun sets to eat their dinner. They even abstain from drinking water during the day. Their breakfast usually consists of meat and bread to provide enough energy for the day, and their dinner usually includes dates and sweets for a quick energy boost. At the end of Ramadan, the biggest celebration of the year occurs: the Eid al-Fitr.

Eid al-Fitr

The Eid al-Fitr, or “festival of breaking the fast,” can last up to five days in Egypt. Most people are excused from work and school to attend the celebrations that occur both day and night. The first morning of the Eid al-Fitr is very solemn and holy. Muslim families wake up, have a small breakfast, and put on new clothes. The adults take baths and wear perfume so they look and smell their best for Allah. After they eat, they meet with their relatives to pray and to ask forgiveness of one another for any wrongs done that year. Once they have asked forgiveness, they give a charitable gift to a sick or a poor person. They do this to cleanse themselves of any sins they have committed during the holy month of Ramadan. When their charitable gifts have been dispensed, they gather together again for a large feast. Every family member helps to prepare the meal. When the feast is over, the adults give the children presents; the most common gift is money. The children use this money to participate in the events held during the next few days. During the Eid al-Fitr, amusement parks are opened, many people hold activities in public parks, and some people even move all of their belongings out of their houses so they can hold big parties inside.

The Eid al-Fitr is one of the safest and most enjoyable times in Egypt. Most everyone is charitable and happy. Many people do not sleep much during the Eid al-Fitr because of the joyful parties every night and day.



Activities

1. Complete the “Finding Islam” word search (see **Traditions Visual 6**).
2. Create your own word search using words that are related to a holiday or tradition that is important to you. Exchange word searches with a classmate and complete his or her word search. When you are finished, tell each other about the holiday or tradition you chose. Compare the holiday you chose to the Eid al-Fitr.
3. Write a letter to an imaginary pen pal in Egypt telling him or her about a religious holiday that you celebrate. Explain why you celebrate the holiday and what you do to celebrate it. Describe the similarities and differences between the holiday you celebrate and the Eid al-Fitr.
4. Write a newspaper article about the Eid al-Fitr. Explain why Egyptians celebrate this holiday and what they do to celebrate it. Create an illustration of an aspect of the Eid al-Fitr to go with your article.
5. Many different games are played during the Eid al-Fitr. Play a game of “Duck, Duck, Goose” using Arabic words: *batta* [bat-ta] for duck and *wizza* [wiz-za] for goose. When you are tagged, go to the middle, called the *wihish* [wih-ish] (bad spot), until the next person is tagged.
6. Bring a small wrapped gift or candy to class. Gather in a circle and read the Islamic story “Ali’s Gift” (see **Traditions Visual 7**). Whenever the word “right” is said, pass your gift to the right; whenever the word “left” is said, pass the gift to the left. At the end of the story, the gift in front of you is the gift you will receive. This activity illustrates the generosity displayed during the Eid al-Fitr.



Discussion Questions

1. Do traditions ever evolve or change? Why might this happen? Think about a tradition that your family has that has changed in some way. Describe to the class how and why it changed.
2. Why is it important to learn about different religions and their beliefs? What aspects of your religion and beliefs would you want other people to know about?
3. How is Islam not only a religion but also a way of life? How do religions influence lifestyles in the United States?
4. Which holidays in the United States are similar to the holiday Eid al-Fitr? Which holidays are different? How?
5. Why is it good to be generous? How can you be generous even if you don’t have much money?
6. What do Muslims do to remember events that are sacred to them? What can you do to remember events that are important to you?

FOLKLORE & LANGUAGE

THE LEGEND OF OSIRIS AND ISIS

The story of Osiris and Isis is one of the most famous legends in ancient Egyptian mythology. This story explains why the ancient Egyptians took great care to preserve and bury their dead loved ones in a special way called mummification. This story also explains why Egyptian kings, or pharaohs, were believed to possess great power.



Starting Points

1. Imagine that you are going on a long trip. What would you need to take with you? The ancient Egyptians believed that life after death was like a long journey and that they would need to bring supplies for their journey with them. In the story of Osiris and Isis, Isis made sure her husband had what he needed for his long journey after death.
2. Look at pictures of ancient Egyptian mummies. What do you notice about the mummies? Why do you think ancient Egyptians did this? The process of preparing a mummy is called mummification; it is a long process that preserves a body so that it does not decay. In the legend of Osiris and Isis, Osiris is mummified, showing the significance of preserving bodies after death.
3. Egypt was one of the greatest civilizations in the ancient world. It was a polytheistic civilization, which means that the people believed in numerous gods and goddesses. There are many stories about their favorite gods and heroes. The following legend tells about Osiris—who was both a king of Egypt and a god—and his wife, the goddess Isis.



Information

Osiris: King of Egypt

Osiris was a great king. He was also a god. He and his wife, the goddess Isis, ruled Egypt and brought prosperity to all the land. Osiris taught the people in his kingdom how to grow crops, make bread, and brew beer. He gave the people laws so they could live happily together. Everyone loved Osiris, except his brother, Set (**see Folklore & Language Visual 1**). Set was jealous of his brother's prosperous kingdom.

When Osiris saw that the people of Egypt were living in peace and prosperity, he decided that they would not miss him if he left Egypt and traveled to Asia. There, he could teach other people how to live civilly. Isis, being a very wise goddess, stayed and ruled in the king's stead.

Set's Trap

While the king was away, his jealous brother devised a plan to get rid of Osiris forever. First, Set secretly obtained the exact measurements of Osiris. Then, he told Isis that

he wanted to hold a banquet in honor of her husband. When Osiris returned home, Set, along with seventy-two other conspirators, prepared a marvelous feast. Osiris ate the delicious food and thanked Set warmly.

At the end of the feast, Set's servants brought out a beautiful box made of precious woods, lined with gold and silver, and painted with beautiful images of animals, birds, and gods. Set announced to the guests that there would be a contest. He declared that whoever could fit perfectly inside the box would receive it as a gift; however, Set had made this box exactly Osiris's size so that only the king would fit into the trap. Each conspirator tried to climb into the box, but each was either too small, too tall, or too fat. No one fit the box. Finally, it was Osiris's turn. As soon as he climbed into the box, Set slammed the lid shut and sealed it with molten lead. He threw the box into the Nile River, and Osiris drowned.

Isis Searches for Her Husband

Isis grieved over her lost husband. She left her kingdom and began to search the land for her husband's body. She knew that if Osiris was not buried properly, he could not be happy in the afterlife. She searched for years without finding a trace of her husband.

Meanwhile, the box drifted out to sea and finally rested near Byblos, an ancient city in modern-day Lebanon. The box settled against a small bush. The bush grew and grew until it became a huge tamarisk tree and engulfed the box. News of the magnificent tree spread throughout the land. The king of Byblos cut the tree down and used it as a pillar to support his beautiful palace (see **Folklore & Language Visual 2**). Isis heard about the tree and instantly knew that such a magnificent tree must contain the remains of her husband. She quickly sailed to Byblos and broke open the wooden pillar. Sure enough, the box was inside. She took the box home and hid it in a safe place along the shores of the Nile River. But that night Set was hunting in the moonlight and stumbled across the wooden box. In a rage, he ripped the body of Osiris into fourteen pieces and scattered them throughout the land.

Sad but determined, Isis searched and eventually found thirteen of the fourteen pieces. With her magical powers, she produced a replica of the missing piece and put the body of Osiris back together. She then wrapped her husband in linen and used her powers to wake him. She could only wake him for a short time—just long enough for Osiris to journey to the underworld. She kissed her husband for the last time and then he departed to the underworld where he became the god and ruler of the dead. Shortly afterward, Isis miraculously gave birth to Osiris's son, Horus.

Horus Rules His Father's Kingdom

Horus became strong and wise, much like his great father. He grew quickly, and when he reached his teenage years, he fought against his uncle Set. They fought and fought until, finally, the gods decided to settle the matter. They ruled in favor of Horus, declaring him king of Egypt. Set was cast out into the desert. The pharaohs, or kings, who later ruled Egypt were said to have Horus's special guidance so they could rule as wisely and as bravely as he did.



Activities

1. See if you can “mummify” each other. Divide into groups of five or six. Choose one person to be the mummy and one to be the overseer. The mummies need to stand with their arms folded across their chests while the other group members pass a roll of toilet paper to each other and wrap it around their mummy. Have a race to see which group can wrap their mummy the fastest. The overseer will direct the wrapping, making sure that no skin or clothing is showing from the shoulders down to the ankles.
2. Go to a library, search the Internet, or visit a museum to learn more about mummies. Write a short essay about how mummies were made, how they were decorated, and why they were important to the ancient Egyptians (**see Additional Resources**).
3. Look at depictions of people in ancient Egypt (**see Folklore & Language Visual 1 and Cross-cultural Contributions Visual 1**). What do you think an image of you would look like if it were drawn in ancient Egypt? How would it be different from the way you really look? Draw an Egyptian-style picture of yourself.
4. Divide into small groups. Each group will illustrate a section of the legend of Osiris and Isis. Draw either on the board or on butcher paper and then explain to the rest of the class what is happening in the picture. Another option is to draw masks to use in acting out the story for the class.
5. Make a list of qualities you think make a legend exciting. After hearing the legend of Osiris and Isis, discuss whether it fits your list of what makes an exciting story.
6. Rewrite the legend of Osiris and Isis from Set’s point of view. Be sure to include descriptions of how he feels and what he does. Share your story with a classmate.



Discussion Questions

1. Why did Isis go to so much trouble to help her husband? Why do people help others even when they are not paid or recognized for their service? Make a list on the board of people who have served others without getting a reward.
2. In the story, Set fought against Osiris and Horus because he was jealous. What would have been a better way for Set to work out his jealousy? Could Osiris or Horus have reacted to Set in a better way? What can you do if you are jealous of someone else? What can you do if a sibling or friend is jealous of you?
3. The legend of Osiris and Isis is very old. It has been remembered only because it was written down. If you could write down only one story about yourself, what would it be? What would you want people to remember about you? Why?
4. Why do legends get passed down? Do legends still get passed on today? How?
5. What are some legends that have been passed down in American culture? When and where did you first hear those particular legends?
6. Have you ever heard different variations of the same legend? How and why do you think legends change over time?

FOOD

ARABIC BREAD

The Egyptians have a wide variety of unique foods and drinks, many of which are made from recipes that are hundreds of years old. Despite this variety, Arabic bread is the most common food in Egypt, and it is served with every meal (see **Food Visual 1**).



Starting Points

1. What are your favorite foods? Why do you like these foods? How do they smell, look, and taste? Egyptian food is a blend of many different cuisines, so these dishes often use an unusual combination of flavors, which create complex smells and tastes.
2. Some common American foods come from other areas of the world. Can you think of some foods that are popular in America that have been influenced by other cultures? Much like American food today, Egyptian cuisine has been influenced by many cultures.
3. List ways bread is used in American food (e.g., sandwiches, pizza crust, toast and eggs, etc.). Egyptians use bread in their meals, too. Since ancient Egyptians were some of the first people to ever grow wheat, Egyptians have been making bread and eating it with all their meals for thousands of years.



Information

Egyptian Food

Egyptian food is a blend of French, British, Greek, Syrian, Lebanese, Palestinian, and Turkish cuisines. It is modified to suit local tastes. Because the people of Egypt have been under the rule of many empires, they have acquired recipes from many cultures. Egyptians enjoy salty foods as well as sweet foods. Egyptian dishes can be very spicy and can use unusual combinations of flavors. Cooking the food is a complex process that can include rolling grape and cabbage leaves or stuffing eggplant and zucchini. The taste of Egyptian food can also be subtle, and it varies according to the current seasonal foods that are available.

There are three staples in a typical Egyptian diet: bread, salted broad beans, and broad bean patties (see **Food Visual 2**). Many Egyptians have beans for breakfast. They may eat bean or bean-patty sandwiches for a snack. The main meal of the day, however, usually includes meat and tomatoes served with rice and cooked with a vegetable such as okra, beans, or peas.

Arabic Bread

The ancient Egyptians excelled in agriculture; most of the people were farmers. They were one of the first nations to ever grow wheat (see **Food Visual 3**), and they were

the first to make leavened bread (bread made with yeast). Egyptian bread was typically formed into triangular loaves and left in the hot desert sand to bake (**see Food Visual 4**). Archaeologists have found loaves of bread that are thousands of years old. Because the loaves were baked in the sand, a lot of sand would mix into the bread. We can see the effects of the sand on ancient Egyptians' teeth; they ate so much of this sandy bread that over time their teeth wore down.

Today, the Egyptians eat bread at every meal, but they no longer use sand to cook their bread (**see Food Visual 5**). *Aish baladi* [i-sh ba-la-dee] is a type of bread made of whole wheat. It is typically thick and chewy and has a "pocket" similar to pita bread. Egyptians not only eat bread at meals, but they also use bread as a utensil. Bread can be used to scoop up food like a spoon or it can even be filled with entrées.

Baladi Bread Recipe

You will need:

1 tsp dry yeast	1 ½ T salt
⅓ tsp sugar	3 C lukewarm water
6 C unbleached white flour	1 T olive oil

Preparation

1. Dissolve yeast and sugar in 1 cup lukewarm water and let sit for 5 to 10 minutes.
2. Mix salt and 5 cups flour in a large bowl, reserving 1 cup flour for kneading. Add oil, 2 cups lukewarm water, and yeast mixture to flour mixture. Stir with a wooden spoon or with your hands until dough sticks together.
3. Put dough on a floured board or cloth and knead well. Gradually add reserved flour to keep dough from sticking. Kneading may take 10 to 15 minutes. Dough is ready when it feels elastic; bubbles will break on the surface when you form it into a ball.
Note: It is important to knead the dough sufficiently. Proper kneading will ensure that the bread will rise during the short baking time. If bread is not kneaded properly, the air pocket that creates the top and bottom layers of bread may not form completely.
4. Place dough in a greased bowl and cover with a dry cloth. Let dough rise in a warm place, undisturbed, until it doubles in size (about 2 hours).
5. Punch dough down. Put oil on your hands and divide dough into 7 to 10 balls the size of small oranges. Cover dough again with a dry cloth and place it in a warm spot to rise for 30 minutes.
6. After 30 minutes, flatten each ball into a 7- or 8-inch circle, one-fourth inch thick or less. Place the circles of dough on flat boards or on a table. Cover with dry cloth and let rise 1 hour. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 450°F.
7. After dough has risen, place two pieces on a baking sheet. When placing the dough rounds on the baking sheets, flip them over so the bottom side is facing up. The exposed, moist surface will rise more easily than the other side, which may have dried out slightly.

8. Bake the bread in the middle of the oven, 2 sheets (4 loaves of bread) at a time for 4 to 6 minutes. After 2 to 3 minutes, the bread will rise and balloon on the baking sheets. Bake 2 to 3 minutes longer, until just slightly brown on the bottom.
9. Slide loaves onto a board to cool and spray them immediately with a small amount of water. Cover with a damp cloth. When completely cool, gently flatten the bread with your hand and stack in a pile. Cover bread with a damp tea towel for 2 to 3 hours. Freezes well.



Activities

1. Roll your own loaves of Arabic bread (see **Baladi Bread Recipe**).
2. Write a poem (e.g., acrostic, haiku, limerick, etc.) about Arabic bread and share it with the class. Make a class poetry collection containing everybody's poems about Arabic bread.
3. Try different types of bread and determine which one is your favorite. Compare them to Arabic bread based on flavor, color, texture, and thickness. Some examples of bread are squaw bread, Hawaiian bread, sourdough bread, pita bread (very similar to Arabic bread), wheat bread, rye bread, and challah.
4. Make a menu for a restaurant that serves foods that are Egyptian staples. Include a section for foods that are American staples.
5. Make a list of possible uses, besides eating, for Arabic bread (e.g., frisbee, skipping stone, paperweight, etc.). Share your ideas with the class and decide as a class who came up with the most creative idea.



Discussion Questions

1. Why is the Egyptian culture a melting pot of many different cultures? Has American culture been similarly influenced?
2. What meals wouldn't exist without bread? Why is bread important to our culture? Why is it important to the Egyptian culture?
3. What are some food staples that you depend on? What meals wouldn't exist without those items? Do you know of any food staples in other cultures?
4. If you were allowed to eat only five different food items for a whole month, which five items would you choose? Why would you choose those particular ones? Do you think that you could survive on just those five items?
5. Why has bread been so important to almost every civilization since the ancient Egyptians' existence?
6. What does food tell about a culture? What does Egyptian food teach about Egyptian culture? What does American food teach about American culture?

CROSS-CULTURAL CONTRIBUTIONS

PAPYRUS

The ancient Egyptian civilization greatly influenced many nations of the world. This civilization excelled in architecture, technology, trade, and warfare. One of its greatest inventions was papyrus. Because papyrus made recording and sharing information easier, its use spread to other civilizations. The use of papyrus allowed the formation of ancient libraries where people could collect many records in one place at a reasonable expense.



Starting Points

1. Do you know of any Egyptian inventions? How have Egyptian inventions such as scissors, sundials, looms, and cosmetics influenced our culture? How would our lives be different without these inventions? Papyrus is an important Egyptian invention that our lives would be very different without.
2. Discuss the different tools we use for writing. How would communication be different if we did not have these tools? The Egyptians revolutionized written communication with their invention of paper called papyrus, making writing possible for us today.
3. List some of the ways the Internet is used (e.g., correspondence, news, business, etc.). Discuss how the invention of the Internet allowed people to spread information more quickly and easily. Just as the Internet has revolutionized communication in modern times, the invention of papyrus in ancient Egypt allowed people to share information more quickly and easily than ever before.



Information

The Invention of Papyrus

The ancient Egyptian invention of papyrus was one of the greatest inventions in human history. The oldest known collections of papyrus were made before 2600 B.C.E., but many scholars believe that the ancient Egyptians made papyrus as early as 4000 B.C.E. Before papyrus, people wrote on stone, wood, or metal tablets by carving into them with sharp utensils. Since this made writing a long and difficult process, very few people did it. Papyrus, however, was a paper-like substance that was easy to make, and it made writing and drawing much easier. The Egyptians would paint and draw on papyrus using various inks they created (see **Cross-cultural Contributions Visual 1**).

Because it was so easy to make and use, papyrus was used by both the royal class and the commoners of Egypt. Archaeologists have found samples of papyrus that were used to write different types of documents such as personal letters, merchant receipts, and even taxation decrees. With the invention of papyrus, Egyptians became more literate and were able to transport news more efficiently.

Papyrus was used for more than just writing: archaeologists have found artifacts indicating that papyrus was used as material for making boats, ropes, and baskets. Because papyrus was so versatile, its use spread to many different civilizations, including the ancient Greek and Roman empires.

One of the most historically significant uses of papyrus was in the Alexandrian Library founded by Ptolemy in 290 B.C.E. Trained scribes and translators copied over four hundred thousand scrolls and stored them in clay jars. The librarians made a copy of every manuscript they knew existed. Scholars working here calculated the circumference of the earth, discovered *pi* [pie] (which allows the accurate measurement of circles), and correctly determined the functions of some human organs. They created a catalog of stars to assist with water navigation, and they were the first to study hydraulics, or the effects of water in motion. Although the library was the largest in the world for nearly seven hundred years, it was eventually destroyed by fire during a time of civil unrest.

The Papyrus Plant

Papyrus is made from papyrus plants, which are reeds found along the Nile River. The plant has long green stalks that can grow up to fifteen feet tall (see **Cross-cultural Contributions Visual 2**). Papyrus plant fibers stick together well because of the adhesive sugar in the plant.

When people began to use other materials to make paper, the cultivation of the papyrus plant stopped. For over a millennium, the papyrus plant was extinct from the Egyptian Nile. It was not until 1969 that an Egyptian scientist brought the papyrus plant back to Egypt. Today, you can get papyrus plants from Egypt or order them from catalogs or on the Internet (see **Additional Resources**).

Papyrus Recipe

You will need:

papyrus reeds	wooden mallet
absorbent material such as cotton cloth	smooth stone or shell
markers or paint	

Preparation

1. Peel off the green outer skin of the papyrus reed.
2. Cut the inner pith (the inside of the reed) into thin strips.
3. Pound the strips to break down the fibers.
4. Soak the strips in water for three days until the pith is clear.
5. Cut the strips and lay one layer of papyrus vertically (the pieces of papyrus should slightly overlap) onto a piece of cloth. Lay the second layer horizontally over the first.
6. Cover the papyrus sheets with an absorbent material such as a sheet.
7. Place the cloth and the papyrus sheets between two flat, heavy objects.
8. Change the cloth every eight hours in order for the papyrus to dry completely within three days.
9. Smooth and flatten the final sheet with a hard stone before writing on it.
10. Write or paint on the side with the horizontal strips.

Cucumber Papyrus Recipe

You will need:

1 cucumber
paper towels

rolling pin
markers or paint

Preparation

1. Cut a cucumber vertically into thin slices and remove the seeds.
2. Soak the slices in water overnight.
3. Take the slices out of the water and flatten them twice with a rolling pin.
4. The following day, lay the cucumber slices overlapping on paper towels. Roll over them many times with a rolling pin and then compress the sheet between two heavy books for 2 to 3 hours.
5. Change the paper towels and press the sheet in between the books for two days. By this time it should be completely dry. If it is not, change the towels and leave the slices under a heavy weight for another day.
6. When the vegetable papyrus is finished, you can draw or paint on it.



Activities

1. Use one (or both) of the recipes to make papyrus (see **Papyrus Recipe or Cucumber Papyrus Recipe**).
2. Draw or paint a picture of something that the ancient Egyptians might have painted on a sheet of papyrus (see **Cross-cultural Contributions Visual 1**).
3. Egyptians wrote using hieroglyphics, or pictures (see **Cross-cultural Contributions Visual 3 and Folklore & Language Visual 1**). Write a story using your own hieroglyphics. Exchange your story with a classmate and try to read his or hers.
4. Prepare and deliver group presentations on why paper is important to us today.
5. Go to the library or look on the Internet to research other Egyptian inventions and how they influence our world today. Make a class book containing your findings.



Discussion Questions

1. How did the development of papyrus influence ancient cultures as well as modern ones?
2. What are some advantages that older writing materials like stone or wood tablets have over papyrus or paper?
3. How is papyrus different from the paper we use today? Although papyrus is stronger and more durable than paper, why don't we use papyrus today? Papyrus was used for many other purposes besides writing. Can you think of any other uses we have for modern paper besides writing? Do you think that papyrus or modern paper is more versatile?

4. Why is paper so important to our society? How would our lives be different if we didn't have paper?
5. As the Internet continues to grow and computers become even more widely used in our day-to-day lives, do you think our society will ever completely stop using paper? Why or why not?
6. Think about all the discoveries we would not know about if papyrus had not been invented (remember the Alexandrian Library). Besides the Internet, what are some discoveries that have affected our lives today? Have they had as big an impact as papyrus? Consider how life would be different without inventors like Thomas Edison and Alexander Graham Bell. As a class, list other inventors and inventions and the effects they have had on society. Discuss each person or invention.

FACTS ABOUT EGYPT

Official Name: Arab Republic of Egypt

Capital: Cairo

Government Type: republic

Area: 1,001,450 sq km, slightly more than three times the size of New Mexico

Land Boundaries: Gaza Strip, Israel, Libya, Sudan

Climate: desert; hot, dry summers with moderate winters

Lowest Point: Qattara Depression
133 m below sea level

Highest Point: Mount Catherine
2,629 m

Natural Resources: petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, phosphates, manganese, limestone, gypsum, talc, asbestos, lead, zinc

Natural Hazards: periodic droughts; frequent earthquakes, flash floods, landslides; hot, driving windstorms that occur in spring; dust storms, sandstorms

Population: 77,505,756 (July 2005 est.)

Ethnic Groups: Eastern Hamitic stock (Egyptians, Bedouins, and Berbers) 99%; Greek, Nubian, Armenian, other European (primarily Italian and French) 1%

Religions: Muslim (mostly Sunni) 94%; Coptic Christian and other 6%

Languages: Arabic (official), English and French widely understood by educated classes

GDP Per Capita: purchasing power parity \$4,400 (2005 est.)

GDP Composition By Sector:

agriculture: 15%; industry: 36.7%; services: 48.4% (2005 est.)

Labor Force: 21.34 million (2005 est.)

Unemployment Rate: 10% (2005 est.)

Industries: textiles, food processing, tourism, chemicals, hydrocarbons, construction, cement, metals

Agricultural Products: cotton, rice, corn, wheat, beans, fruits, vegetables; cattle, water buffalo, sheep, goats

Exports: \$14.33 billion f.o.b. (2005 est.)

Imports: \$24.1 billion f.o.b. (2005 est.)

Trade Partners: U.S., Italy, U.K., France, Germany, India, Spain, Syria, China, Saudi Arabia (2005)

Currency: Egyptian pounds (EGP)

Exchange Rates: 5.78 Egyptian pounds = \$1 U.S. (June 2005)

HISTORY AND HOLIDAYS

TIME LINE

- 3100 B.C.E** Menes, king of Upper Egypt, unites all of Egypt and starts the first dynasty of Egyptian kings; Egypt changes from a tribal society to a nation with a centralized government; Memphis becomes the capital
- 2686** Old Kingdom begins; the first pyramids are built; great kings such as Zoser rule
- 2182** Middle Kingdom begins after much chaos; Mentuhotep rules and reunifies the country
- 1554** New Kingdom begins (the most prosperous time in ancient Egypt's history); pharaohs become gods of the land; great rulers such as Thutmose III, Ramses II and III, Akhenaten, and Hatshepsut rule
- 525** Persians conquer Egypt
- 343** The sovereignty of Nectanebo is established; the last true pharaoh is conquered by the Persians
- 332** Alexander the Great conquers the Persian Empire and takes control of Egypt; Egypt becomes part of the Hellenistic world; Alexandria becomes the capital
- 323** After Alexander dies, Ptolemy Soter, Alexander's favorite general, becomes the ruler of Egypt, Palestine, and lower Syria; he builds many monuments, including the lighthouse at Alexandria
- 290** Ptolemy builds the Library of Alexandria
- 196** Egyptian priests make a decree commemorating Ptolemy in hieroglyphics in both the Greek and Egyptian Demotic languages on a black stone tablet called the Rosetta Stone
- 51** Cleopatra fights against her brother to rule Egypt
- 31** Caesar Augustus conquers Egypt and starts Roman reign
- 641 C.E.** Muslims invade Egypt; in time, most Egyptians are converted to Islam
- 868** Egypt again becomes independent under Ibn Tulun
- 973** Fatimids conquer Egypt and create a prosperous Egyptian nation
- 1168** Crusaders attack Egypt, and Saladin becomes the sultan; he rules over much of Palestine and Syria
- 1250** Mamluks rule Egypt; only the upper class has national rights
- 1798** Napoleon defeats the Mamluks; the Ottomans invade; the French are forced to evacuate Egypt
- 1799** One of Napoleon's men finds the Rosetta Stone; it becomes the key to deciphering hieroglyphics
- 1883** Lord Cromer becomes the British agent in Egypt; British rule begins to be recognized
- 1922** King Tutankhamun's tomb is discovered
- 1952** The British leave Egypt; Egypt becomes a republic

- 1954** Gamal Abdul Nasser, leader of the rebellion against the British, becomes prime minister and afterwards president
- 1956** Egypt claims control of the Suez Canal; Britain, France, and Israel invade; later a cease-fire is declared
- 1958** Egypt and Syria unite to form the United Arab Republic (UAR); Syria later withdraws
- 1967** Israel defeats Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in the Six-Day War; Egypt loses land; the Suez Canal closes for several years
- 1971** Egypt adopts a new constitution and a new name: the Arab Republic of Egypt; the Aswan High Dam is finished
- 1973** Egypt and Syria begin the Yom Kippur War against Israel
- 1979** Egypt and Israel sign a peace treaty
- 1981** President Anwar al-Sadat is killed by Jihad members
- 1989** Hosni Mubarak elected president; Egypt readmitted to the Arab League
- 1995** Attempted assassination of President Mubarak
- 1997** Fifty-eight tourists killed by a gunman in front of Temple of Hatshepsut near Luxor
- 2005** First poll held in which multiple candidates are allowed to stand; President Mubarak re-elected

HOLIDAYS

- 7 Jan** The Coptic Church (the Christian church of Egypt) celebrates Christmas
- Feb** Eid al-Adha (celebration of Abraham's willingness to offer his son as a sacrifice)
- Mar** Muharran (Islamic New Year)
- Mar, Apr** Easter
- 25 Apr** Liberation of Sinai Day (celebration of the regaining of the Sinai Peninsula in 1982 after Israel had taken it in 1967)
- 1 May** National Labor Day
- 23 Jul** Anniversary of the 1952 revolution, when a group led by Colonel Gamal Nasser overthrew the king
- 11 Sep** Coptic New Year
- 24 Sep** Suez Day (anniversary of the restoration of the Suez Canal, also called Popular Resistance Day)
- 6 Oct** Armed Forces Day
- Nov** Ramadan begins
- Dec** Eid al-Fitr

Note: The dates of Islamic holidays vary each year because they use a 354-day lunar calendar.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

EGYPTIAN EMBASSY TO THE UNITED STATES

3521 International Court NW
Washington, D.C. 20008
Phone: (202) 895-5400, Fax: (202) 244-4319
E-mail: embassy@egyptembdc.org
Web site: <http://www.egyptembassy.us/>

MINISTRY OF TOURISM:

Misr Travel Tower
Abbassia Square
Cairo, Egypt
Phone: (202) 285-4509 / 284-1970 (Cairo)
Fax: (202) 285-4363 (Cairo)
E-mail: contact@touregypt.net
Web site: <http://touregypt.net/>

CULTURAL CENTER

1 Magless El-Shaab St
Cairo, Egypt
Phone: (202) 792-9292, Fax: (202) 792-9222
E-mail: feedback@idsc.net.eg
Web site: <http://www.idsc.gov.eg/> (Note: Site in Egyptian, but “English” button transfers you to English version.)

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Cleary, Thomas. *The Essential Koran*, Book Sales, 1998.
George, Nora. *Nora's Recipes from Egypt*, Nora George, 1995.
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Hoyt-Goldsmith, Diane and Lawrence Migdale. *Celebrating Ramadan*, Holiday House, 2002.
Lucas, A. and J. R. Harris. *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries*, Dover Publications, 1999.
Meeks, Dimitri. *Daily Life of the Egyptian Gods*, Cornell University Press, 1996.
Mercatante, Anthony S. *Who's Who in Egyptian Mythology*, Barnes and Noble Books, 1998.
Parkinson, Richard N. and Stephen Quirke. *Papyrus*, University of Texas Press, 1995.
Rossant, Colette. *Memories of a Lost Egypt: A Memoir with Recipes*, Clarkson Potter, 1999.
The 2000 Import and Export Market for Bakery Products, Bread, Biscuits, and Cakes in Egypt, Icon Group International, 2001.

INTERNET SITES

Ancient Egypt Site:

<http://www.ancient-egypt.org/>

A Brief Illustrated Guide to Understanding Islam:

<http://www.islam-guide.com/>

The British Museum:

<http://www.ancientegypt.co.uk/menu.html>

CIA World Factbook:

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/eg.html>

Egypt.com:

<http://www.egypt.com>

Egyptian Cultural and Educational Bureau:

<http://www.eceb.us/>

Egyptian Museum—Official Site:

http://www.egyptianmuseum.gov.eg/frame_bar.html

Egypt State Information Service:

<http://www.sis.gov.eg/>

Institute of Egyptian Art and Archaeology:

<http://www.memphis.edu/egypt/main.html>

Making Paper—How is Papyrus Paper Made?:

http://eoluk.co.uk/papyrus/papyrus_2.htm

Traditions Visual 1: A Muslim at Prayer



Traditions Visual 2: Prayer in an Egyptian Mosque



Traditions Visual 3: An Egyptian Mosque



Traditions Visual 4: After Dark During Ramadan



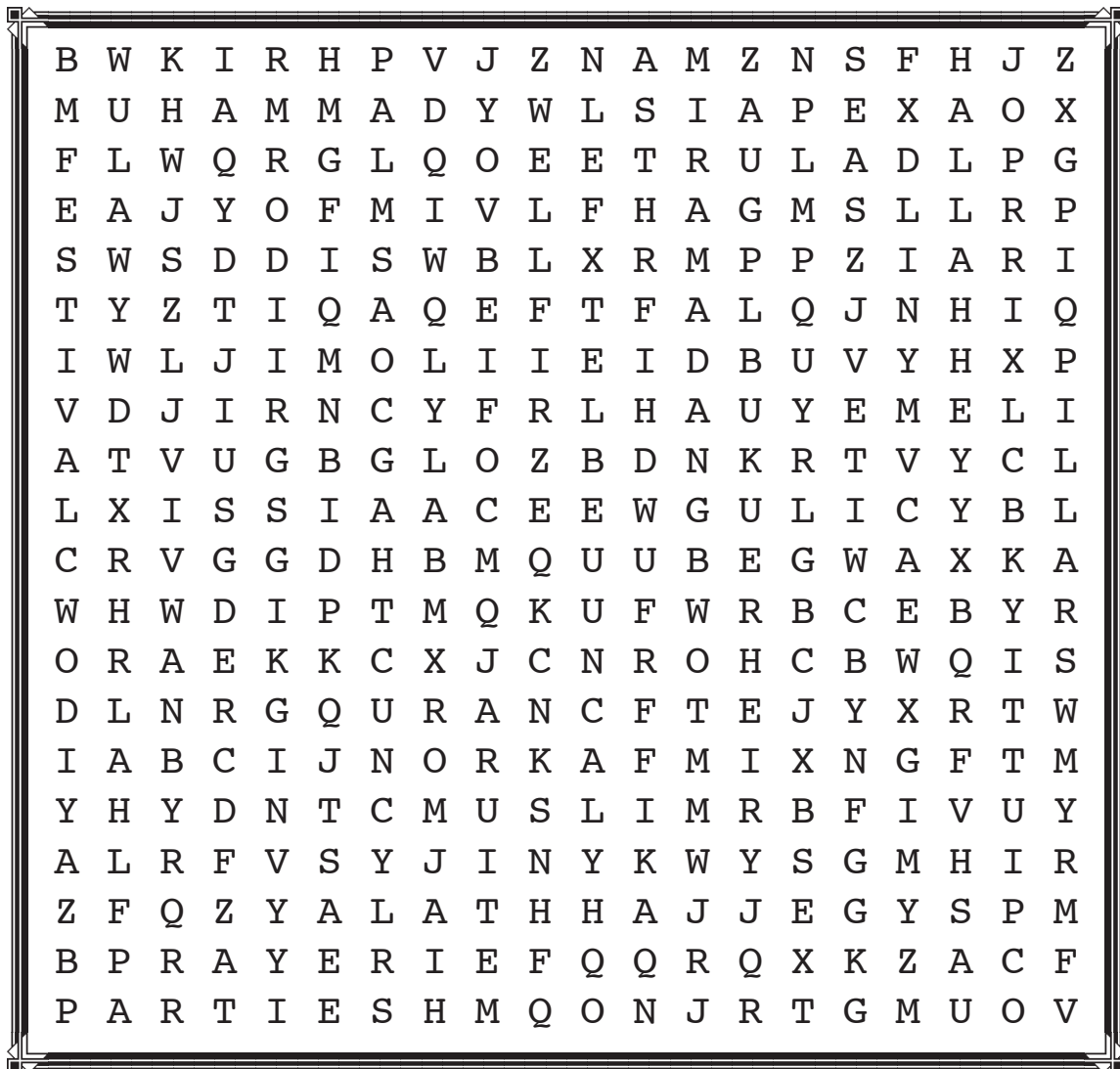
Traditions Visual 5: Ramadan



Name: _____

FINDING ISLAM

Find the twelve words related to Islam in the word search below.



ALLAH
ALMS
CHARITY
EID AL-FITR
FASTING
FESTIVAL

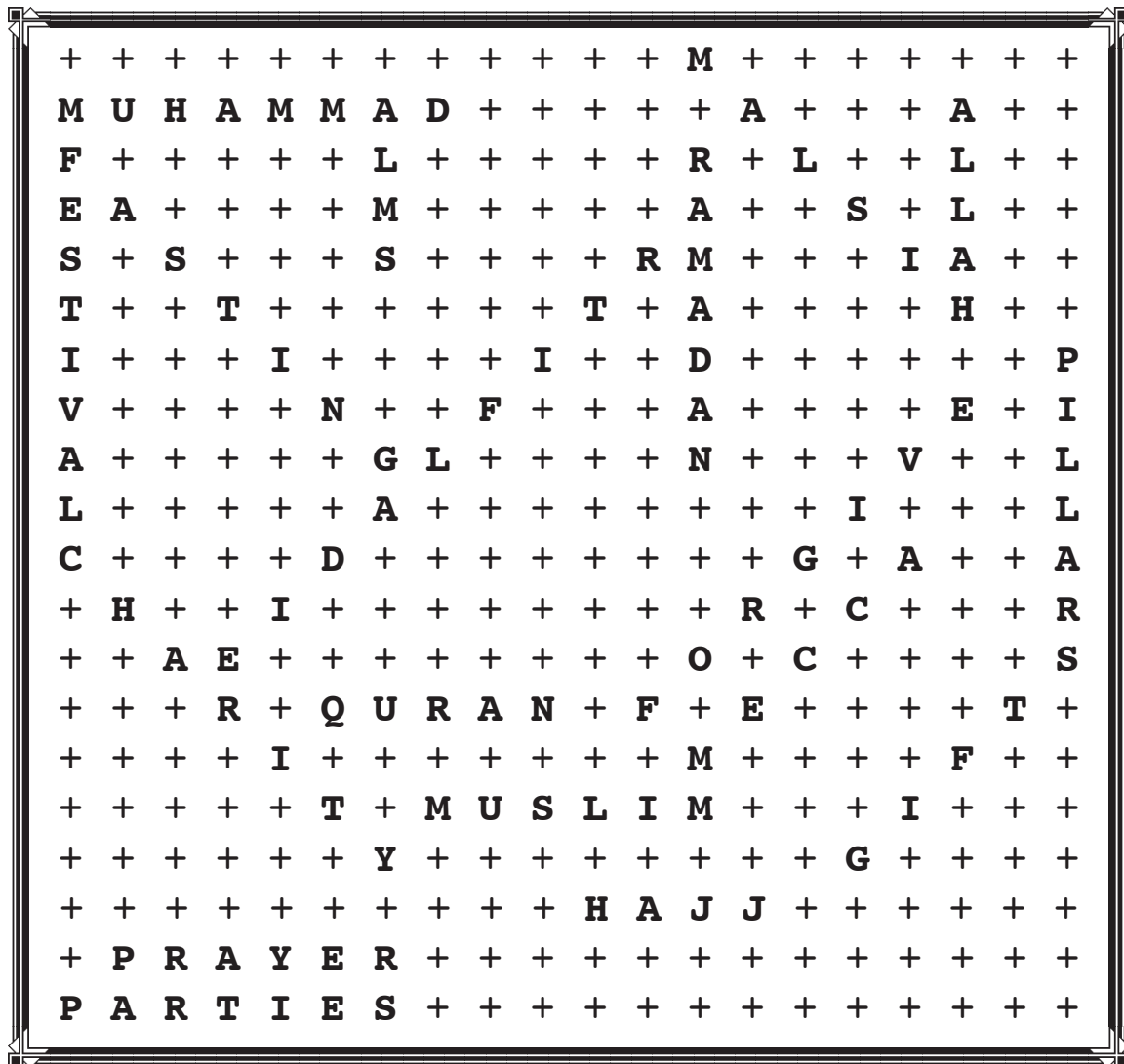
FORGIVE
GIFTS
ISLAM
HAJJ
MECCA
MUHAMMAD

MUSLIM
PARTIES
PILLARS
PRAYER
QUR'AN
RAMADAN

Name: _____

FINDING ISLAM

Find the twelve words related to Islam in the word search below.



ALLAH
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MUSLIM
PARTIES
PILLARS
PRAYER
QUR'AN
RAMADAN

Ali's Gift

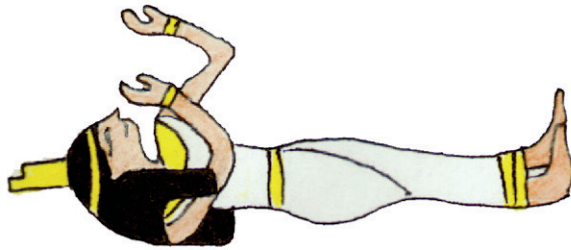
Once upon a time, there lived a twelve-year-old boy named Ali. Ali was a devout Muslim. He lived right in the heart of Cairo on *Ahlan* [aa-lan] Street. His house was a block to the left of the old bakery and just to the right of the Mosque. Ali had dark hair and olive skin. He had green eyes and wore glasses. There was one thing about himself that made him sad: he was in a wheelchair because he did not have the use of his legs. Despite his hardships, Ali, like most Muslims, fasted during the month of Ramadan. Ali was taught by his parents to always make the right choices, like the Qur'an says.

It was almost the last day of Ramadan. Ali was excited for the big celebrations that would occur during the Eid al-Fitr. The next day dragged on and that night Ali could hardly sleep. He could not wait for the delicious food, new clothes, many presents, and great parties that would be a part of the Eid al-Fitr. Eventually, Ali could not hold his heavy eyelids open anymore, and he fell into a deep sleep.

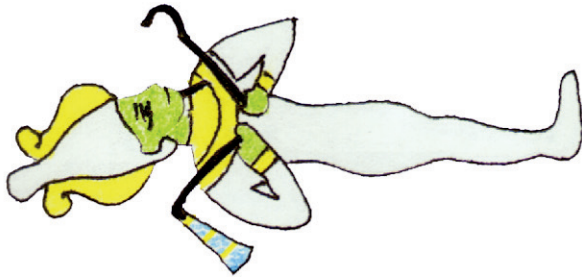
As he slept, Ali had a dream. He dreamed that he was at a party during the Eid al-Fitr and a stranger slipped an envelope into his left pocket. He opened the mysterious envelope and discovered that it was filled with money. There was enough to buy a new pair of glasses, a new wheelchair, and even a great feast that all of his family could enjoy. He pulled out the money and realized that the stranger had left a note inside the envelope. The note read, "If you give this money to someone who needs it more than you do, you will be blessed with more blessings than money can buy." Ali was a very poor boy. His father did not have a job, and Ali could not think of anyone who needed money more than his family. He went out to the store to buy his family some gifts for the Eid al-Fitr and came across a very old and sick man. The man did not have a right hand or right leg, but he was smiling at everyone who passed by. The old man obviously had no home and probably had no friends. He had a piece of bread in his left hand that he had been nibbling on for some time. Ali's first reaction was fright. The man smelled bad and looked thin, like a skeleton. He was dressed in dirty rags, and his hair was long and unkempt. As Ali stared at the man, he realized that perhaps someone else deserved the money after all. He took the money out of his right pocket and gave it to the neglected man. The man jumped up for joy and leaned down to give Ali a big hug. As he hugged Ali, the man's appearance changed. He transformed from the old man into an angel sent from Allah. The angel then took Ali by his right hand and lifted him right out of his wheelchair. Ali felt strength go into his legs, and he leapt with joy because he was cured of his disability.

Ali woke with a big smile on his face, but then realized that it was just a dream; he was still without the use of his legs. Tears welled up in his eyes and he started to cry. He had always wanted to be like the other boys in the neighborhood, but he knew he never would be. He leaned over the left side of his bed to get into his wheelchair and fell. He struggled to push himself back up to the wheelchair, but it was no use—his arms were not strong enough. He then heard a whisper in his head. A man's voice said, "Use your legs, Ali. Use your legs." To his amazement, Ali felt his legs becoming stronger. He slowly pushed himself up with his feeble muscles and then sprang high in the air. Allah had blessed him indeed. From then on, Ali helped anyone less fortunate than himself. He praised Allah every day for the rest of his life. Ali was healed because he had done what was right.

Folklore & Language Visual 1: Egyptian Gods



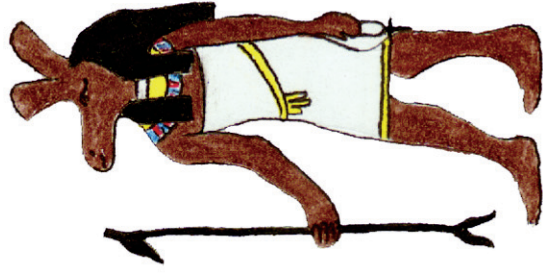
ISIS



OSIRIS



HORUS



SET



Folklore & Language Visual 2: Ruins of an Ancient Palace



Food Visual 1: Typical Aish Bread



Food Visual 2: Egyptian Beans for Sale



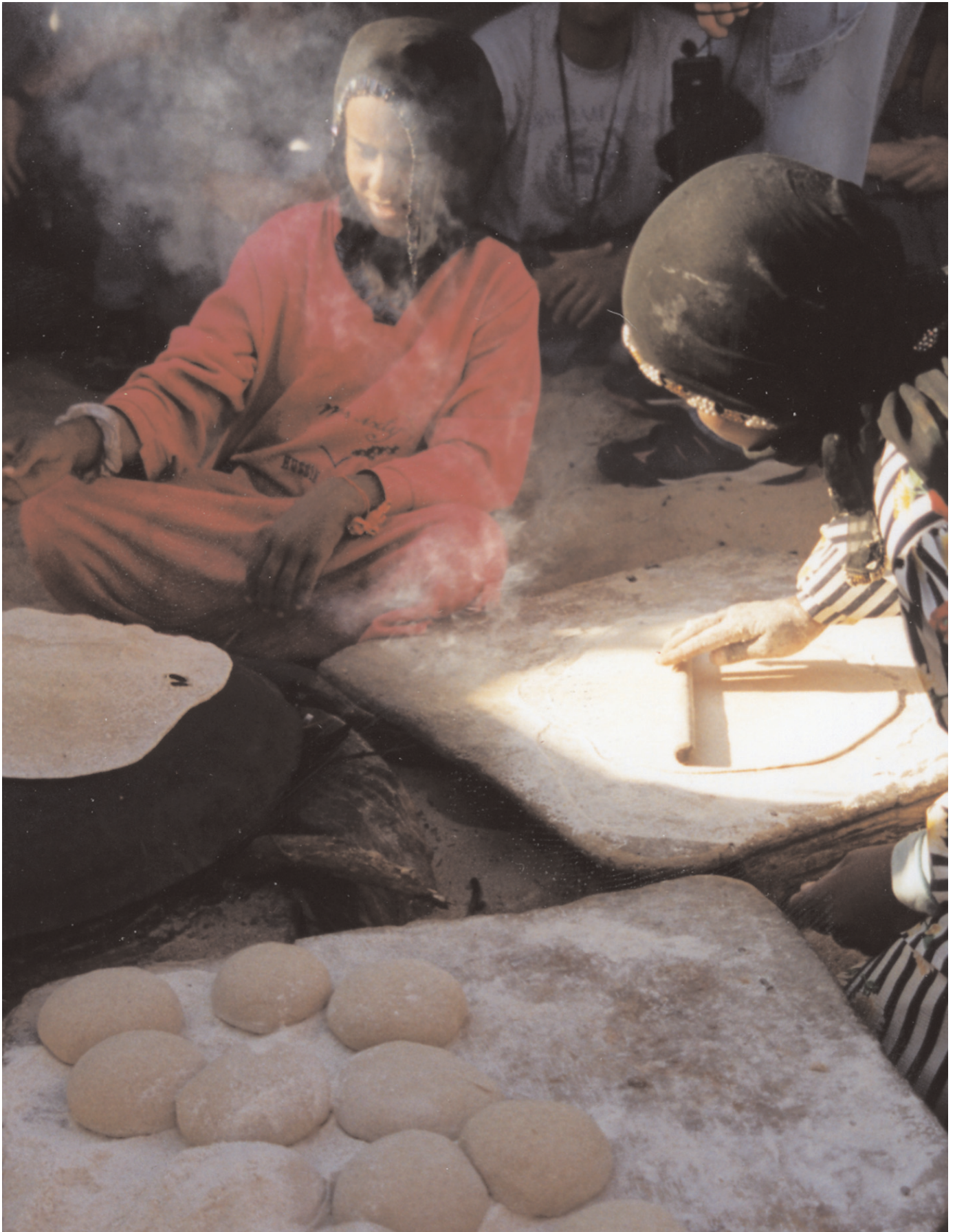
Food Visual 3: Egyptian Farmers Growing Wheat



Food Visual 4: Ancient Egyptian Bread



Food Visual 5: Making Egyptian Bread







Cross-cultural Contributions Visual 3: Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphics





FLAG OF EGYPT

The flag of Egypt has three equal horizontal bands of red (top), white (middle), and black (bottom). The national emblem is centered in the white band: the gold eagle of Saladin with a shield superimposed on its chest above a scroll bearing the name of the country in Arabic.

Map of Egypt

