“Beauty and Belief invites visitors to a world of a wondrous beauty that spills across the centuries in an expression from one of humanity’s great civilizations.”

– Sabiha Al Khemir

The revelation of the Qur’an took place in Arabia starting in 610 CE. By 715 the map of the Muslim world spread west to Europe and east to Asia. The magnitude of the geographical scale of the Islamic world, spanning continents, reflects the rich diversity embraced by Islamic Culture.
[Jeff, please either use this actual timeline if you can make it spill across two pages – which would be preferable – or use the following list below.]

**Timeline of Key Events in the Islamic World**

- **c. 570- **Muhammed the Prophet is born. Muhammed is a merchant by trade known for his skills in diplomacy.

- **c. 610-** Muhammed begins receiving divine revelation and preaches monotheism, the belief that there is only one God. These revelations comprise the Qu’ran, the holy book of scripture for Muslims.

- **622-** Following religious persecution, Muhammed and his followers leave the city of Mecca to settle in Medina. Muhammed gathers followers from surrounding cities and subsequently defeats Meccan armies.

- **630-** Muhammed and 10,000 Muslims take control of Mecca, making it the spiritual center of Islam and re-dedicating the Ka’bah to the worship of God. All Muslims pray facing the direction of this cube-shaped building built by Abraham, and are encouraged to make a pilgrimage to this holy site.

- **632-** Muhammed dies in Medina shortly after completing his final pilgrimage to Mecca.

- **661-750-** Under the Umayyad Dynasty, the center of power shifts from Arabia to Syria. Damascus is the capital, Arabic becomes the official language, and the Islamic world
begins to unify. Umayyad expansion extends to North Africa and Spain in the west and to Central Asia and India in the east.

- 691 - The Dome of the Rock is built in Jerusalem, commemorating the location where Muhammed ascended to heaven. The structure shows strong Byzantine influence in plan and style, but the use of Arabic inscription marks a significant shift. This monument becomes very important for Muslims.

- 711-1031 - A young Umayyad prince escapes the Abbasid massacre of the royal family in Damascus. As the lone survivor, he travels across North Africa and **re-establishes the Umayyad Dynasty in Spain**, bringing Islamic influence to the Iberian Peninsula.

- 715 - The Great Mosque of Damascus is constructed, one of the earliest examples of monumental religious architecture in the Islamic world. It employs a court and hypostyle prayer hall, which become the standard for mosque architecture.

- 750-1258 - During **the Islamic Golden Age of the Abassid Dynasty**, the political center shifts from Damascus to Baghdad, where intellectual scholarship and scientific investigation flourish.

- 785 - The Great Mosque at Cordoba is built in Spain and becomes a crowning achievement of Islamic architecture. This mosque is known for its vast interior polychrome arches.

- 909-1171 - From Tunisia, the Fatimids conquer Egypt in 969. Cairo is established as a cultural capital in the Islamic world and the Fatimid Dynasty oversees an empire that dominates North Africa.

- 970 - The **Al-Azhar Mosque and University** is built by the Fatimids in Cairo. It is one of the oldest continuously run universities in the world and is acclaimed for its scholarship in Islamic law and Arabic studies.

- 1071 - The Seljuks defeat Byzantine armies in Eastern Turkey and maintain power in Persia and parts of Anatolia through 1194. Islamic influence extends westward due to Seljuk expansion into territories formerly ruled by Christian forces.

- 1095 - The Crusades begin as a campaign by Christian military powers to re-capture the holy sites in Jerusalem. A series of crusades continues throughout the 12th and 13th centuries, exposing Westerners to the culture of the Middle East. Many commodities, including textiles and spices, ignite trade networks between Europe and the Near East.

- 1187 - Saladin re-conquers Jerusalem with Muslim forces, establishing the Ayyubid Sultanate (1171-1260), whose power extends to Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. A compromise between Saladin and Richard the Lionheart of England results in granting Christian travelers access to select pilgrimage sites within Jerusalem.
• 1230-1492- **Nasrid Dynasty.** Granada survives as the last Islamic city in Spain. Following the gradual fragmenting of Muslim presence by Christian kings, it falls to Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492.

• 1250-1517- The Mamluk Dynasty begins with former military slaves overthrowing Ayyubid power in Egypt and Syria. The Mamluks bring Mongol expansion in the Middle East to a halt and expel the last of the lingering Crusaders who had settled along the Mediterranean Coast.

• 1206-1368- Mongol Empire. In 1258, Genghis Khan leads Mongol invasions into Iran and Iraq, destroying Baghdad and terminating lingering Abbasid power, and inaugurating cultural exchange with East Asia. Mongol leader Kazan converts to Islam in 1295, making it the official religion of the Empire.

• 1281-1919 The Ottoman Turks conquer Constantinople in 1453 from the last remaining vestiges of the Byzantine Empire and re-name it Istanbul. By the mid-1500s the Ottomans control the Middle East from central Europe to the Indian Ocean. After allying with Germany and facing defeat during World War I, their empire is dismantled.

• 1338-1390- The Alhambra Palace in Granada, Spain is built by Nasrid rulers. The fortified palace is known for its interior stucco, intricately detailed tile-work, and numerous gardens and fountains.

• 1356- The **Mosque-Madrassa of Sultan Hasan** is built by the Mamluks in Cairo. It is notable for its colossal size and spacious courtyard surrounded by *iwans*, or vaulted niches. This extensive funerary complex also contains a mausoleum and four Sunni schools.

• 1379-1506- **Timurid Dynasty.** Of Turko-Mongolian origin; lead by Timur (Tamerlane), they take over the whole of Central Asia, Iran, and present day Afghanistan, parts of India, Mesopotamia and the Caucasus. Timur’s capital Samarkand flourishes under great patronage of arts and architecture. Timur’s son Shah Rukh (1405-47) makes Heart a great cultural center; it maintains its artistic brilliance under Husayn Bayqara (Babur) who becomes the founder of the Mughal dynasty in India.

• 1501-1732- The Safavid Dynasty becomes a dominant power throughout Persia, and Isfahan thrives as a center of architectural opulence.

• 1526-1857- The Mughal Empire rules the Indian subcontinent, resulting in flourishing art and architectural commissions from the royal court. Despite fluctuating conflicts and alliances with Hindu Rajput kingdoms, Mughal art reflects a merging of native and Islamic artistic traditions.

• 1550-1558- The Suleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul, Turkey is built by Sinan, the greatest architect of the Ottoman Empire. The large domes, supported by half domes, are modeled
after Hagia Sophia, the great Byzantine church built by Emperor Justinian in the 6th century.

- 1648- Mughal emperor Shah Jahan constructs the **Taj Mahal** as a mausoleum in memory of his wife Mumtaz Mahal. The striking white marble makes it a distinctive structure in the Islamic world.

- 1805-1848- Muhammed Ali modernizes Egypt through industry, the military, and European education. The need for an independent state results in rising opposition to Ottoman rule.

- 19th century- Many European countries occupy and colonize claims in Africa, seizing control over national resources and key ports. France maintains a heavy presence in Algeria, Tunisia, Senegal, and Lebanon; Britain is involved in Egypt, India, Pakistan, and the Sudan; Italy invades Libya; and Spain takes over parts of Morocco.

- Early 20th century- Beginning with Egypt in 1922, several Middle Eastern countries gain independence and eject Western ruling forces: Turkey (1923), Iraq (1932), Saudi Arabia (1932), Lebanon (1943), Jordan (1946), Syria (1946), Libya (1951), Tunisia (1956), Kuwait (1961), Algeria (1962), and the United Arab Emirates (1971).
Glossary

[Jeff, would you mind placing the glossary at the back of the education packet? Thanks!]

Allah
Word for God

al-Asma al-Husna
The ninety-nine names of God are the specific attributes by which Muslims regard God and which are described in the Qur’an.

Arabesque
A kind of ornament based on a stylized plant form of intertwining stems, leaves, and flowers that can be extended ad infinitum

Aya
Verse from the Qur’an

Barakah
The beneficent force from God that flows through the physical and spiritual spheres as prosperity, protection, and happiness. Creations endowed with barakah, such as physical objects, places, and people, can transmit the flow of spiritual presence from God to other creations of God.

Batin/ al-batin
The invisible, or underlying dimension

Buraq
A mythical steed that transported the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Jerusalem and back. This creature from the heavens is described as a white animal, half-mule, half-donkey, with wings on its sides. In some traditions it became a steed with the head of a woman and the tail of a peacock.

Dervish
A member of one of the Muslim ascetic orders, who renounces earthly goods and is known for his austerity

Dhahir/ al-dhahir
The visible or apparent; the manifest

Dhikr
Invocation for the remembrance of God, a form of prayer consisting of the constant repetition of a name or formula

Hadith
Collection of sayings and deeds attributed to the Prophet Muhammad
**Hajj**  
Annual pilgrimage to Mecca

**Hijra**  
Migration of Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622, marking the beginning of the Islamic calendar

**Ka’bah**  
A cube-shaped building in Mecca; the most sacred site in Islam

**Kashkul**  
A beggar’s bowl used by a dervish to collect alms

**Kiswa**  
Textile covering the Ka’bah, with Qur’anic inscriptions embroidered in gold silk

**Kufic**  
An angular Arabic script with clear vertical and horizontal lines, developed in the seventh century; it is named after the city of Kufa in Iraq, from which the style is believed to have originated.

**Kuttab**  
A school for teaching children the Qur’an

**Madrasa**  
Any type of educational institution, secular or religious

**Mecca**  
Birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad and the location of the Ka’bah

**Mihrab**  
Prayer niche in the wall of a mosque that indicates the qibla

**Mizan**  
The Arabic word for balance; it refers to the metaphorical pursuit of justice and harmony in all human endeavors. The term *mizan*, which appears in the Qur’an, has been interpreted as the concept by which God created nature in a balance. It is mankind’s responsibility to maintain this equilibrium through wise governance and sound personal conduct.

**Mosque**  
A place of worship for followers of Islam

**Muqarnas**  
Developed in the tenth century, architectural ornamentation composed of tiers of niche-like elements resembling stalactites or honeycombs
**Naskh/Naskhi**
The most commonly used Arabic cursive script developed in the tenth century, it means “copying” and is legible and clear. This small script has thin lines and round letter shapes that allow for faster copying of texts, mainly the Qur’an.

**Qibla**
Sacred direction of the Ka’bah in Mecca—the direction toward which a Muslim faces while praying.

**Qur’an**
Literally meaning “the recitation,” the Qur’an is the central religious text of Islam, which Muslims consider the verbatim word of God.

**Salat**
One of the Five Pillars of Islam, this practice of ritual prayer has prescribed conditions, procedures, and times. Obligatory salat occurs five times each day according to the movement of the sun.

**Sawm**
Fasting, or abstaining from food, drink, sensuous pleasures, and any practices against Islamic law. Sawm is observed but not confined to the Islamic holy month of Ramadan and is one of the Five Pillars of Islam.

**Shahadah**
The Muslim declaration of faith in Tawhid and the acceptance of Muhammad as God’s prophet, this Pillar of Islamic faith reads: “la ilaha illallah, Muhammad rasulallah.”

**Sibha**
A string of prayer beads which is used by Muslims to keep track of counting in tasbeeh.

**Simurgh**
A mythical flying creature, this figure can be found in all periods of Persian art and literature. Depicted as a winged animal in the shape of a gigantic bird, it is inherently benevolent and unambiguously female.

**Sunni Islam**
The largest denomination of Islam, the Sunni followers believe that the leadership of the Umrah should be a position to which one is elected by the religious leaders of the community. Sunni refers to the sunnas, or traditions and interpretations of the Qur’an.

**Sufism**
Inner, mystical dimension of Islam.

**Sura/Surat**
A chapter of the Qur’an.
Tasbeeh
A form of *dhikr* that involves repetitively chanting the praise of God

Tawaf
Circumambulation of Muslims around the Ka’bah, one of the rituals of pilgrimage

Tawhid
One of the fundamental concepts in Islam; belief in monotheism or the Oneness of God

Shi’ā Islam
Second largest denomination of Islam, the followers of Shi’ā Islam believe that leadership of the *Ummah* should be dependent on direct lineage from Muhammad. Shi’ā means “party of Ali.”

Tiraz
Fabric with woven, embroidered, or painted inscriptions, made as luxury textiles for the elite. They usually contained the caliph’s name and titles, and sometimes the date and workshop of manufacture. The term is also used to designate the technique of tapestry making.

Tughra
A distinctive and intricately executed seal or monogram; a calligraphic emblem included in all official documents as a symbol of the sultan’s authority

Ummah
Muslim community

Zakat
One of the Five Pillars of Islam, this practice involves giving a portion of one’s wealth to charity (alms).
Circumambulation of the Ka’bah during Hajj