

- Cairo has been conquered many times over the centuries by dynasties such as the Ayyubids, and later by the Ottoman Empire. Many historians reflect that French general Napoleon Bonaparte set out to conquer Egypt in order to challenge British influence in the region and to establish an eastern empire. However, in Napoleon's own memoirs, he explained that the reason he invaded was "glory." Ask students to research Napoleon's 1798-1800 Egyptian campaigns and to write a position paper suggesting why he insisted on conquering Egypt. As part of their papers, students should analyze the importance of the Battle of the Nile in world history. Napoleon's memoirs may be found at this web site: digital.library.upenn.edu/webbin/gutbook/lookup?num=3567
- Hadramaut is the biggest *wadi* in the Arabian Peninsula and is an area that has been settled from around the 3rd century CE. Ask students to define "wadi" and research the geography of Yemen. Students may develop maps, diagrams and descriptions indicating why the region that surrounds the ancient desert city of Shibam is one of the most fertile areas in the Middle East.
- Ibn Chaldun is considered one of the greatest historians in world history, and is the author of *A Universal History*, primarily a history of Arabs in Spain and North Africa. Also a famed economist, sociologist and philosopher, he was a judge of Islamic law in Cairo and died there in 1406 CE. Ask students to read excerpts from the introduction of Chaldun's *A Universal History* and to write journal entries summarizing and evaluating his philosophy on the study of history. Extracts from Chaldun's introduction from *A Universal History* may be found at this web site: www.humanistictexts.org/ibn_khaldun.htm
- The Mamluke dynasty in Egypt is also called the Slave dynasty, as slave warriors from the Caucasus or Central Asia region gained political power under Saladin, took control of Egypt in 1250 and ruled for almost three hundred years. Ask students to research the history of the Mamluke dynasty and discuss why the 14th century is considered the Golden Age of Cairo. Students should also create a detailed time line indicating what caused the city's decline after that time. A good resource for information on Egypt during this time period can be found at this web site: www.metmuseum.org/toah/ht/08/nfc/ht08nfe.htm

Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our web site at www.LibraryVideo.com

- www.mcah.columbia.edu/tarim/html/conservation_project.html
Columbia University's Department of Art History and Archaeology provides extensive reports from 2002 and 2003 on the conservation of Tarim, an old city in Yemen's Hadramaut region.
- link.lanic.utexas.edu/menic/cairo/students/timeline.html
The University of Texas offers a detailed time line of the history of Cairo.
- www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/arabia1.html
Fordham University's "Ancient History Sourcebook" contains excerpts from ancient accounts of Arabia by historians such as Herodotus and Ammianus Marcellinus.
- www.sacred-texts.com/neu/burt1k1/
This extensive site offers the full text of Richard Burton's translation of *A Thousand and One Nights*.

Suggested Print Resources

- Beattie, Andrew. *Cairo: A Cultural History*. Oxford University Press, New York, NY; 2005.
- Hoyland, Robert. G. *Arabia and the Arabs: From the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam*. Routledge, New York, NY; 2001.
- MacKintosh-Smith, Tim. *Yemen: The Unknown Arabia*. Overlook Press, Woodstock, NY; 2000.

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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ANCIENT CITIES OF THE ARAB WORLD, VOLUME II

Grades 7 & up

This guide is a supplement designed for teachers to use when presenting programs in the series, *The Arab World*.

Before Viewing: Give students an introduction to the topic by relaying aspects of the show overview to them. Select vocabulary to provide a focus for students when they view the program.

After Viewing: Review the program and vocabulary, and use the follow-up activities to inspire continued discussion. Encourage students to research the topic further with the Internet and print resources provided.



Program Overview

Cairo, Egypt and Sana'a and Shibam in Yemen are three of the most timeless and remarkable cities in the Middle East. All have played historically pivotal roles in facilitating the east-west spice trade, and have provided evidence of the living traditions and architectural achievements of some of the world's earliest civilizations. Although Cairo is today the largest metropolis in the Middle East and Africa, and Sana'a is the political capital of Yemen, the old sections of these cities, in addition to the ancient walled city of Shibam, have faced neglect over the years and experienced deterioration and destruction. Fortunately, the social and historic value of these cities has been recognized and restoration projects have been initiated to preserve these wonderful examples of the world's common global heritage.

Episode 1: Cairo

With an estimated population of over fifteen million people, Cairo — the capital of Egypt — is the largest city in the Middle East. It was officially founded by an Islamic sect called the Fatimids in 969 CE, but its history goes back to the 5th century BCE when the Persians established a fortress called Babylon in an area now known as Old Cairo. Some of the earliest and best records of the frankincense trade routes come from ancient Egypt, and in the Middle Ages, Cairo prospered as the center of the east-west spice trade. The city began to decline in the 16th century after falling to the Ottoman Empire, but by the 19th century it modernized and grew remarkably into the major world capital it is today.

Vocabulary

mosque — Also known as a *masjid*, a Muslim place of worship.

Mesopotamia — The fertile land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, considered to be the birthplace of civilization.

Allah — A word that means “the God” in Arabic.

Mohammed — According to Muslims, a prophet who received the word of God.

Abbasid — The second great Islamic dynasty which was founded in 750 CE by Abbas, the uncle of Mohammed.

Mamelukes — Slave soldiers that controlled several Islamic states during the Middle Ages. Also spelled “Mamluk.”

eyvan — A large, vaulted hall that opens to a courtyard and is a prominent feature of Islamic architecture.

madrassa — An Islamic religious school.

necropolis — From the Greek, meaning “city of the dead,” an elaborate burial place in an ancient city.

Episode 2: Shibam

With its tall, mud-brick towers rising out of the desert, the city of Shibam in Yemen is known today as the “Manhattan of the Desert.” Shibam was founded in the second century CE on the ruins of an ancient city in the Yemeni province of Hadramout, but many of its unique tower structures date from the 16th century. After several centuries as a major commercial center on the spice and incense routes, Shibam gradually declined and was only rediscovered by the West at the end of the 19th century. Today, Shibam has only 7,000 residents. Although several of the cultural monuments in Shibam are well-maintained, hundreds of the city's earthen houses are particularly vulnerable to the elements, causing heightened international efforts to preserve these unique buildings.

Vocabulary

Shabwa — The ancient capital of the Kingdom of Hadramout in Yemen.

Incense Route — A trade route that connected Europe with the Arab world, which featured Arab merchants trading goods such as frankincense and myrrh.

sultan — A title of honor that has been used for rulers of Muslim countries.

Episode 3: Sana'a

One of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world, Sana'a became the national capital of independent Yemen after the Allied Powers defeated the Ottoman Empire in World War I. The old city of Sana'a, once the intersection of major trade routes, is surrounded by a large defensive wall. At the height of its influence, Sana'a and its many *caravanserais* provided spice and incense traders with valuable accommodations on their long journeys. Today, while the *caravanserais* are merely tourist attractions and the city's marketplace has declined, Sana'a's population has rapidly grown to nearly two million. Because of this tremendous population growth, there are major concerns that this desert capital faces a near-term water crisis.

Vocabulary

souk — A word that means “marketplace” in Arabic.

caravanserai — An important public facility where Middle Eastern merchants rested and stored their animals and goods while traveling on the trans-Saharan and frankincense trade routes.

djambia — From the Arabic, meaning dagger, or sharp-pointed weapon.

minaret — A tall thin tower connected to a mosque from which people of the Islamic faith are called to prayer.

muezzin — The official who calls Muslims to daily prayer.

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qat — A shrub found in the Middle East and Africa that produces leaves which act as a stimulant when chewed or used in tea.

Follow-up Discussion Questions

- The spice trade made Cairo rich. Ask students to discuss the legend surrounding the origin of spices in Egypt and to speculate about the importance of these flavor enhancers in history.
- Ibn Tulun was sent by the Abbasid dynasty to govern Egypt in the 9th century. Ask students to explain why there are no images of people or animals anywhere in the Ibn Tulun mosque.
- In the *Tales of a Thousand and One Nights*, Cairo was referred to as “the mother of the world” and has been called “the mother of all cities.” Ask students to reflect on why Cairo has received these monikers.
- Why did Shibam become the capital of the province of Hadramaut? Discuss the relationship between the spice trade and the city's fortunes.
- Describe the nature of the living conditions in Shibam and discuss its connection to the city's decline and the spread of Islam.
- Sana'a is one of the world's oldest urban settlements. Discuss the legendary tale regarding the founding of this ancient city.
- What is *qat*? Explain its effects and analyze its role in the daily lives of the people of Yemen. Speculate about its positive and negative consequences.

Follow-up Activities

- Buildings and monuments in ancient cities such as Cairo, Egypt and Shibam and Sana'a in Yemen have been imperiled by modern development, neglect, environmental conditions or other threats over the years and have been targeted for restoration by various groups, such as UNESCO. An organization called the World Monuments Fund develops an annual list of the most endangered sites in the world which it actively seeks to conserve for future generations. Ask students to break into small groups and to research a notable location from the most current World Monument Fund list of endangered sites. Groups should develop detailed profiles of their chosen places and outline the causes of their decline. Students may also propose a rationale and plan of action for preserving them. As a follow-up, ask students to brainstorm lists of places in your local community that have historical significance and are worthy of preservation. The World Monument Fund's list of endangered sites may be found at the following web site: www.wmf.org/html/programs/watchlist2004.html

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