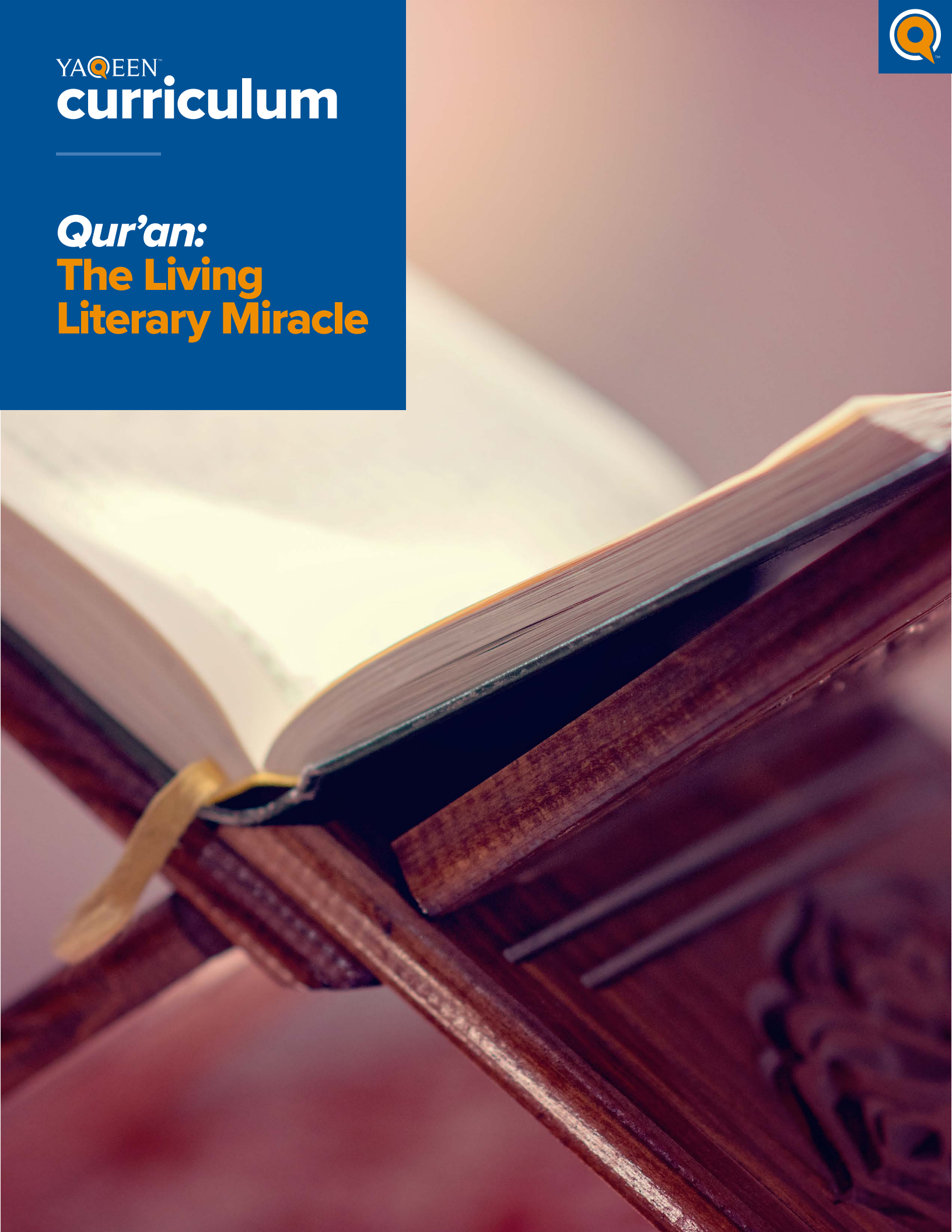


***Qur'an:***  
**The Living**  
**Literary Miracle**



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## Unit overview

As Muslims, we are taught to believe in the Qur'an as a miracle. Often, however, this belief is not upheld with a strong cognitive or emotive basis. In fact, if this conviction is challenged, it may reveal that we are inadequately grounded to sustain the weighty belief of the Qur'an as a miracle. In this curriculum unit, we identify a few major concepts that can function as the foundation and pillars supporting such a belief. Part of the challenges students face in light of this discourse is recognizing that our modern historical context creates unique difficulties in understanding and appreciating the Qur'an as a literary miracle. The first lesson plan in this unit focuses on this specific problem, while exploring the historical context of seventh-century Arabia and the Qur'anic challenge to reproduce the likes of it.

In our discourse of the miraculous nature of the Qur'an, we focus on the Qur'an as a literary miracle as opposed to, for example, a scientific miracle, an archaeological miracle (i.e., the fact that it talks about bygone eras that might be verified by archaeological research) or a predictive miracle (i.e., that it prophesied certain things). The reason for this choice is that the Qur'an presents itself as a literary miracle by challenging others to produce verses like it, and that the discourse of classical scholars around the miraculous nature of the Qur'an was predominantly about its literary nature and qualities. In the second lesson plan in this unit, we identify some of these unique literary characteristics and features of the Qur'an while drawing a distinction between the Qur'an and other pieces of literature. At this stage of the unit, students should have a better appreciation of the Qur'an and its literary miracles.

The focus of the first two lesson plans is on the text and historical context of the Qur'an. Yet, students may claim that even if we are to recognize the literary merits of the Qur'an, for the claim that it was indeed a miracle attributed to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the Qur'an must also be historically verifiable to be from 7th-century Arabia. In the final lesson plan of this unit, we establish the historical veracity of the Qur'an as a text revealed to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, which was codified and distributed across the heartlands of Islam within a few years after the Prophet's ﷺ death. In this final lesson plan, students will learn about the methods devised by Muslim historians and historians in general to verify historical fact and then apply such a method of inquiry to the historical narrative. Students will find that the Qur'an's revelation and compilation narrative fits the highest markers of historical accuracy.

## **Learning objectives**

Toward the completion of this unit, students should be able to:

- 1 Demonstrate the ability to be historically introspective and evaluate their own historical moment as not universal and absolute. *(affective and cognitive)*
- 2 Recognize the discernibility of the world and distinguish between God's habitual practice ('adat/'adiyyat) and a miracle, a break from that habitual practice. *(cognitive)*
- 3 Explain the concept of tahaddi, the Qur'anic challenge to produce the likes of it, to help appreciate the miracle of the Qur'an. *(affective and cognitive)*
- 4 Recognize some of the historical circumstances of the Qur'an's revelation that characterize the Qur'an to be unlike other literary "classics." *(cognitive and affective)*
- 5 Recognize and appreciate some of the literary miracles of the Qur'an and its perfect union of emotive and logical elements in a singular homogenous text. *(cognitive and affective)*
- 6 Apply the ring theory on a short passage of the Qur'an as an analytic framework to better appreciate the unique compositional structure of the Qur'an. *(affective)*
- 7 Understand how historical information is transferred and shall appreciate the concept of tawatur, multiple chain transmission, as a measure that provides knowledge of historical events. *(cognitive and affective)*
- 8 Recognize the historical accuracy of dating the Qur'an to the Prophet's era. *(cognitive and affective)*

## **Standards**

### **CR3.B.9-12**

Explore the connection to a character through mind/body/voice to create a vivid character.

### **SS.IS.1.9-12**

Address essential questions that reflect an enduring issue in the field.

### **SS.IS.7.9-12**

Articulate explanations and arguments to a targeted audience in diverse settings.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.A**

Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

### **NJSLSA.R1**

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences and relevant connections from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

**NJSLSA.R2.**

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

**RI.9-10.8**

Describe and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and reasoning.

**NJSLSA.W2.**

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

**NJSLSA.W9.**

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.2**

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.2**

Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; summarize complex concepts, processes, or information presented in a text by paraphrasing them in simpler but still accurate terms

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.9**

Synthesize information from a range of sources (e.g., texts, experiments, simulations) into a coherent understanding of a process, phenomenon, or concept, resolving conflicting information when possible.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1**

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.E**

Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4**

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

**NJSLSA.SL4.**

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.



Instructions and activities

# ***Lesson 1 • When Allah ﷻ speaks***

Lesson 2

Lesson 3





## Essential Questions

How do modern trends in communication impact our reading of ancient texts?



## Key vocabulary

### Communication medium

a channel of communication by which a message (e.g., information, data, ideas, and so on) is transmitted between a speaker or a writer and the receiver

### ‘Adat/‘adiyyat

discernible customs and patterns in the material world as experienced by humans that constitute God’s habitual practice

### Mu’jizah

a supra-human feat or event; something that is irreplicable or in defiance of natural laws of the universe, wherein people feel incapable of producing the like

### Unlettered

the state of being unschooled and/or untrained in composition, rhetoric, and poetry; the state of being unfamiliar with literature and religious scripture

### Tahaddi

the Qur’anic challenge for humankind and jinnkind to collectively produce a single chapter the like of the Qur’an

## Lesson plan 1

# When Allah ﷻ speaks

## Stage 1: Big ideas and desired results

### Lesson overview

The Qur’an claims to be a literary miracle and the uncreated speech of God. Part of validating this belief is recognizing and exploring that our modern historical context, values, and conventions create some difficulties and barriers for understanding and appreciating the Qur’an as a literary miracle. This lesson plan focuses on this specific issue. In the first part of the lesson, students will gain a better understanding of the difficulties they may have in establishing the Qur’an as a literary miracle and why such difficulties are unique to our historical context. Students will begin with an introspective account of their current relationship with words and image-based mediums of communication. This will guide students to some of the unspoken assumptions that are products of our current social circumstances, including the increasing reliance on social media and the consequent false equivocation between the number of subscribers and value, and the belief that images can serve as an adequate means of communication. This self-knowledge will help students become aware of the challenges and reservations they may hold when approaching the Qur’an as a miracle and also recognize that our historical moment is not universal nor necessarily superior.

In the second half of the lesson plan, after deconstructing some of the difficulties in appreciating the Qur’an, students will learn about the nature of miracles in Islam, their distinction as a sign of God, and the doctrine of i’jāz al-Qur’an, the miraculous nature of the Qur’an. Equipped with greater awareness of our present moment and of the historical context in which the Qur’an was revealed, students will come to better understand and appreciate the Qur’an as a literary miracle. Students will also recognize the inimitability of the Qur’an to be a defining feature of its miraculous nature and will come to appreciate the inability of the Makkans, even with their heightened literary ability, to reproduce the likes of the Qur’an.

### Learning objectives

Toward the completion of this lesson, students should be able to:

- 1 Demonstrate the ability to be historically introspective and evaluate their own historical moment as not universal and absolute. *(affective and cognitive)*
- 2 Recognize the discernibility of the world and distinguish between God’s habitual practice (‘adat/‘adiyyat) and a miracle, a break from that habitual practice. *(cognitive)*
- 3 Explain the concept of tahaddi, the Qur’anic challenge to produce the likes of it, to help appreciate the miracle of the Qur’an. *(affective and cognitive)*



## Stage 2: Learning plan

### Supplies/equipment

- Lesson plan 1 presentation (for teacher)
- Projector/screen/computer/internet connection to display presentation and play videos
- Printout of 1.1 for teacher
- Printouts of 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4 for each student
- Ten post-its per student
- 5-7 pieces of string or yarn per student

### Session 1

**Total time: 60 min**

### Opening activity

#### Slides 1–2

1. Open Lesson Plan 1 presentation and display the **slide 1**. To build students' anticipation, direct their attention to the sequence of emojis and ask, "What is this communicating?" Here is a hint if students struggle with the answer: the emojis are communicating a famous quote by a world-renowned figure. Call on a few students to share their responses.
2. Transition to **slide 2** to display the answer to the trivia question. The sequence of emojis is communicating the famous quote by Mahatma Gandhi, "Be the change you wish to see in the world."
3. Explain that human beings have developed various mediums of communication (emojis and written sentences being just two of those mediums). How we communicate and interact with language has evolved over time and continues to shape who we are as individuals. Miniature icons (emojis), for example, are a modern phenomena developed in the late 1990's to add an emotive layer to what would otherwise be dry, digital text.  
  
Define "communication medium" for students as the following: a channel of communication by which a message (e.g., information, data, ideas, and so on) is transmitted between a speaker or a writer and the receiver.
4. Inform students that they will play a group activity on the topic of communication mediums shortly, and in the course of that activity, they should reflect on the following questions: First, what are the common and popular ways we communicate (i.e., create, deliver, and receive messages) today? Second, how might this impact our interaction with a longer, denser, and more sophisticated text such as the Qur'an?

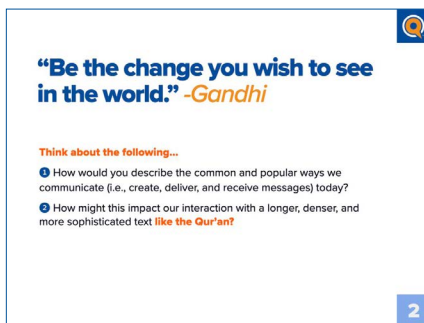
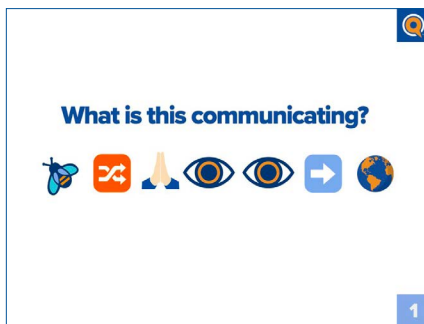


### Teacher takeaway

While the subject of this unit is the Qur'an as a literary miracle, this lesson opens with a critical, self-reflective discussion on our modern mediums of communication—their limitations as short, quick, and image-based mediums, and, more importantly, how they impact on our interaction with longer, more sophisticated texts like the Qur'an. The purpose of this opening activity is to simply sharpen student curiosity about the subject of modern mediums of communication, which they will further explore in the upcoming learning activity.

### Teacher's note

The opening of lesson one invites students to be *historically introspective* by being self-aware and critical of any modern biases/concerns they hold that may inhibit them from meaningfully interacting with the Qur'an. While this lesson focuses on popular communication mediums, you may expand the discourse using the other topics listed on **1.1 "Historical Introspection Teacher Reference"**. For more background information on the content presented in this section, consider reading the following article: [What Would Late Media Theorist Neil Postman Think of "Mobile First" Media?](#)



### Communicate a clear and meaningful message using six different mediums:

1. Emojis and symbols (e.g., 🍌, 🍌, 🍌, 🍌)
2. Abbreviations and acronyms (e.g., idk, gtg, lol, omg)
3. Spoken-word poetry (at least four lines, recited)
4. News headline (between 5-10 words)
5. Academic paragraph (5-6 complete sentences)
6. Instagram photo and caption



3

## Learning activity

### Slide 3

1. Proceed to **slide 3** and pass out a copy of **1.2 “Mediums of Communication.”** Ask students to follow along on their handout while you provide instructions on the activity.
  - a. First, have students form small groups of three. They will choose a specific topic that interests all members of their group (e.g., weekend plans, entertainment, career goals, local current events, sports, friendship).
  - b. Next, they will divide up the list on their handout so that each group member is assigned two of the six mediums of communication: 1) emojis and symbols, 2) abbreviations and acronyms, 3) spoken-word poetry, 4) news headline, 5) academic paragraph, and 6) Instagram photo and caption. Note that these mediums are not all digital; this is so that students can compare the benefits and limitations of various ways we communicate, both past and present.
  - c. Group members will then take turns communicating a clear and meaningful message about their chosen topic using their two chosen mediums of communication. They will record their messages on their handout.
  - d. Finally, group members will complete the two concluding reflection questions and prepare to share their answers with the whole class. They have ten minutes to complete their tasks.



### Teacher takeaway

To understand the messages our society is capable of creating, we must analyze our popular communication mediums and how we collectively interact with language. If our popular mediums are quick, shallow, and image-based, what does that say about our ability to appreciate longer, denser, and more sophisticated texts such as the Qur'an? In this activity, students are comparing the efficacy of various communication mediums for communicating messages about meaningful and thought-provoking content. They may realize that short, image-based mediums are especially limiting for having a conversation about important or dense subject matters. In other words, a person cannot effectively discuss religion or social issues on Instagram, nor can he deeply express his feelings in emojis.

The primary takeaway for students from this activity is threefold. First, it is to showcase how different mediums of communication alter the nature of the message being presented. Secondly, to highlight the limitations of our modern communication mediums over past alternatives. And lastly, to highlight the possibility that perhaps it is due to our popular ways of communicating—short, quick, and image based—that students have difficulties appreciating the Qur'an and its miraculous literary nature. This last point will be further explored in the upcoming class discussion.

### Let's talk!

Reflect on the previous activity. How would you describe the **popular ways** in which we communicate today?



4


### Slides 4–6

1. Proceed to **slide 4** and invite students to share their reflections from **1.2**, specifically the first question, “How would you describe the common and popular ways we communicate (i.e., create, deliver, and receive messages) today?”

To deepen the discussion, ask students to consider how they interact with important and meaningful messages. Do they pick up a dense textbook on the subject matter and mentally exert themselves in its

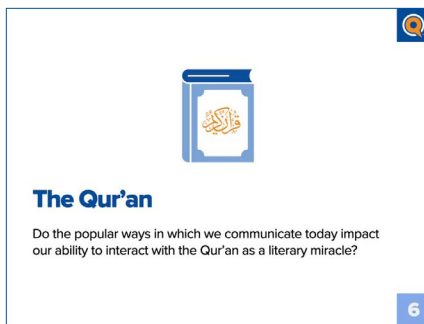
acquisition, or do they prefer to be passive recipients of the message through images, short videos, and stimulating graphics? How often do they communicate with images (e.g., gifs, emojis, memes, and so on) rather than text? What do we lose as a result of these popular ways of communicating?



2. Continue the whole-class discussion by transitioning to [slide 5](#) and explaining some general trends with how we commonly communicate and interact with language. While explaining each point, encourage students to join the conversation.
  - a. **Short:** Through the advent of digital technologies, we are bombarded with messages from all directions. Televisions, computers, smartphones, billboards, social media platforms, digital ads, etc.—people all over the globe have the means to create and deliver messages, and they often do so in the shortest length possible to compete for our distracted, fleeting attention spans. For example, complex news stories are sensationalized and compressed to 280-character tweets moments after their events unfold; political and social analyses are packaged in fifteen-second Instagram stories, or dispensed by non-experts in a single Instagram caption; our interpersonal communication, too, is often reduced to abbreviations, with emojis attempting to capture the full range of human emotion where body language is absent. The result is that long-form messages experience less traffic/interest than their shorter counterparts.
  - b. **Quick, instant, fast-paced:** Furthermore, these modern technologies have provided us the ability to create, deliver, and receive messages instantly. With this push for efficiency, the pace at which information/ messages spread affords us little time to fully digest and be transformed by them. On social media, for example, our feeds are subject to hundreds (perhaps thousands) of messages daily, which we might consider for a moment, at surface-level, before we disengage and continue to the next message. Unfortunately, these shallow communication mediums are not conducive to rich and meaningful discourse. Rather, they create a demand for quick and sensational messages acquired effortlessly. So if a message requires mental exertion or patience, it is common that readers or viewers divert their attention to the next instant message.
  - c. **Image-based:** Even more, short text is often accompanied with images, or replaced by images and symbols altogether. Our e-mail and text message exchanges are laced with gifs, memes, emojis, and symbols that try to communicate as effectively as text, creating a society that generally prefers to see information/messages rather than read. We may believe, as a result, that all important messages can be communicated visually and passively, with little to no effort on our part.
  - d. **“All important messages can be communicated briefly, instantly, and visually.”** In conclusion, our modern interaction with language may lead us to assume that all important information/ messages can be compressed and fully expressed with a handful of words and images, where we entertain them for a few moments before moving on to the next message. 

### Teacher's note

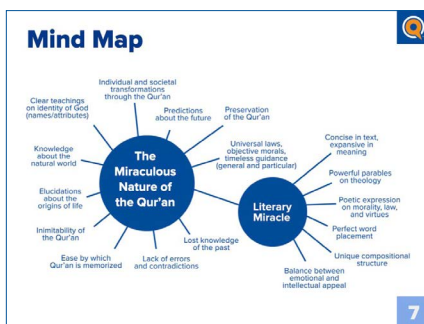
To further expand on evolving communication mediums, the following can be used as an example if needed: As society's communication mediums evolve, the nature and quality of our messages invariably change as well. To understand the interplay between mediums and message content, consider the evolution of presidential debates. At the time of Lincoln and Douglas, debates lasted for hours; candidates formulated their arguments with reason and rhetorical devices. The masses receiving their messages focused exclusively on the content of each candidate's arguments given that radio and television had not yet been invented. With image- based communication today, emphasis is now also placed on physical appearances, and when candidates debate, the camera zooms in on their hairstyles, wardrobe choices, and body language. In fact, in the first nationally- aired presidential debate between Nixon and Kennedy, the winning factor came down to each candidate's appearance. Nixon appeared ill on stage due to a recent hospitalization, and he refused to apply stage makeup as suggested by the producer. On the other hand, Kennedy spent weeks tanning during his campaign trips and allowed his team to apply stage makeup before going live. The result was that Kennedy looked and sounded better, helping him to take the lead in the presidential election.



- Next, transition to **slide 6** and inform students that the subject matter of this unit is the literary miracle of the Qur'an. While the Qur'an is the uncreated, revealed speech of Allah, we interact with it today as a longer, denser, and more sophisticated text: long and short Arabic verses (ayat) strung together into non-chronological chapters (surahs) and unaccompanied by stimulating, eye-catching images. Its early compilation into a written manuscript dates back to seventh-century Arabia in a communication medium vastly different from our short, quick, and image-based mediums today. Unlike the messages we interact with today, the messages found in the Qur'an cannot be received and digested in an instant. The stylistic and compositional differences between the Qur'anic medium and our popular, modern mediums must be acknowledged when seeking to understand the miraculous nature of the Qur'an. Therefore, we must be self-critical of our modern biases, recognizing that our popular communication mediums may impact our ability to pay attention to, understand, and appreciate the Qur'an as a miracle. **In other words, do the popular ways in which we communicate today restrict our ability to see the Qur'an as a literary miracle?**

### 💡 Teacher takeaway

Our study of the miraculous nature of the Qur'an begins with an exercise in critical self-reflection on the biases and barriers that stand between us and the Qur'an. There are many reasons why modern Muslims may feel unresponsive and impervious to the miracle of the Qur'an; and though this lesson focuses on modern communication mediums, you may expand the class discussion to include other subject matters (see **1.1**), such as the Qur'an in the Arabic language, our popular derivations of morality, and the perceived "uncoolness" of religion and its scripture in an increasingly secular society. Once students have met the first objective (i.e., demonstrating self-critical introspection), proceed to the following section where they will learn about what it means for the Qur'an to be a literary miracle, one that employs our language conventions and breaks the custom (kharq al-'adah) of what is humanly possible, thus rendering it an inimitable miracle.



### Slide 7

- Proceed to **slide 7**. Inform students that the mind map highlights the various strands of the scholarly discourse on *i'jaz ul-Qur'an* or "the miracles of the Qur'an." This unit, in particular, explores the literary and inimitable aspects of the miraculous nature of the Qur'an.

### Slides 8-9

- Proceed to **slide 8** and pass out copies of **1.3 "The Living Literary Miracle"**. Read the hadith displayed: "There was no prophet except that he was granted signs that caused the people to believe in him, but what I have been [uniquely] granted is a revelation that Allah has inspired me with [i.e., the Qur'an] and thus I am hopeful to have the most followers among them on the Day of Resurrection."
- Journal, pair, share:** Invite students to first journal their responses on **1.3** before discussing them with a classmate and, afterward, the whole class. After a few minutes, call on some students to share their responses. Sample responses are listed below to assist with the classroom discussion:
  - Why do you think Prophet Muhammad ﷺ made this statement about the Qur'an? Unlike the Prophet's physical miracles, the miracle of the Qur'an is "living" in that it transcends its historical context. Its inimitability,

**Qur'an:**  
the living miracle

"There was no prophet except that he was granted signs that caused the people to believe in him, but what I have been [uniquely] granted is a revelation that Allah has inspired me with,—the Qur'an —and thus I am hopeful to have the most followers among them on the Day of Resurrection."

**Journal, pair, share**


Why do you think Prophet Muhammad ﷺ made this statement about the Qur'an?  
Do you feel that his ﷺ statement relates to you personally?

its guidance, and its explicable eloquence on matters of theology, morality, history, etc., continue to be witnessed firsthand by generations until the end of time. Therefore, it is uniquely effective in guiding people to Islam and inspiring individual and collective transformation, even outside of the prophetic era. For these reasons, the Prophet ﷺ expressed hope and desire to have the most number of followers on the Day of Resurrection.

### **Teacher's note**

It is important to note that although the Qur'an is a timeless miracle and unlike any miracles of previous prophets, it was not the only miracle of our Prophet ﷺ. Additionally, the Qur'an being revealed to our Prophet ﷺ does not indicate that previous prophets had no revelation.



b. Do you feel that his ﷺ statement relates to you personally? (In other words, do you feel personally moved by the miraculous nature of the Qur'an?) While we believe that the Qur'an is a living miracle and inherently capable of transforming our lives, our experience with the Qur'an is wholly a personal one. (For this question, encourage students to respond introspectively, and accept their responses without judgment.) 

3. Proceed to **slide 9** and explain that to understand how the Qur'an is a sign and miracle from God, it is important to step back and explore the terms, "sign" (آية) and "miracle" (مُعْجَزَة). Explain that a sign of God is anything we observe or experience that leads us to further confirm God's existence. Ask students to consider whether or not they experience signs of God in their lives.
3. Direct student attention to the visual of various objects and experiences that commonly serve as signs of God, thus confirming our belief in Him (note: this display is subjective; students may share what they personally perceive as signs of God). Explain the following points to students:
  - a. God has placed signs all around us to draw us back to Him and to manifest His Lordship over us, among other reasons. When we deeply contemplate these signs, we may gain a deeper understanding of God's names, attributes, and intimate role in our lives.
  - b. Direct students to the images and comment on how they may serve as signs of God. Refer to the notes below as a starting point.
    - i. **Smartphone video-call:** With the intellect and problem-solving capacity of the human brain, we developed digital technology that allows us to instantly video-call a friend or family member across the globe and interact with them as though they were standing in front of us.
    - ii. **Birds and aircrafts:** By observing creatures of flight and how birds lift themselves with wings and a light skeleton, we can now be transported across the globe, in groups of hundreds, on metals and plastics, thousands of feet in the air, in a matter of hours.
    - iii. **Language and reading:** Through reading, we can translate arbitrary symbols into meaningful words, and then into mental images and ideas. This amazing process allows us to visualize an entire storyline, an entire cast of characters, an entire plot and a variety of fictional settings from a sequence of lines and dots on a page and be emotionally stirred/transformed along the way.



- iv. **Sailing ships:** Weighing tons of pounds, ships have the ability to seamlessly float on water, allowing us to transport goods across stretches of ocean and benefit from two magnificent creations, wind and water. “It is He who enables you to travel on land and sea until, when you are in ships and they sail with them by a good wind and they rejoice therein...” [Surah Yunus; 10:22]
- c. Before proceeding to the next slide, direct student attention to the center oval which is listed as a miracle of God. While all miracles (*mu’jizah*) are signs (*‘ayat*) of God, not all signs are considered miracles. The Qur’an and the moon splitting are two examples of both. Tell students that the next few slides will explain why and how the Qur’an as a whole is considered a miracle.



### Teacher takeaway

The purpose of this section is two: to help students distinguish between a sign (آية) and a miracle (مُعْجَزَة), and to lay the foundation as to why and how the Qur’an is both a sign of God and a living miracle. It is possible that, for some students, their common usage of the term “miracle” may not align with the Islamic definition; therefore, making the distinction between a sign and miracle from an Islamic perspective will help students understand the upcoming definition on a *mu’jizah* (miracle). Students will also learn that the irreplicability of the Qur’an renders it a miracle in that humankind is incapable of producing the like.

### Slides 10–11

## miracle ↔ مُعْجَزَة

a supra-human feat or event; something that is irreplicable or in defiance of natural laws of the universe, wherein people feel incapable of producing the like

10

## Miracle (مُعْجَزَة)

**First**

the realities of this world (e.g., nature, the human body, even our *language conventions*) follow customs and patterns (*‘adaat*). A miracle is a feat or an event that breaks from an observable pattern.

**Second**

The Qur’an is a literary miracle because its eloquence/linguistic precision breaks from our language conventions and far surpasses the highest literary standard within human ability; the Qur’an as a whole cannot be replicated.

11

1. Proceed to **slide 10** and read the definition of the term “miracle” (مُعْجَزَة): a supra-human feat or event; something that is irreplicable or in defiance of natural laws of the universe, wherein people feel incapable of producing the like.
2. Continue to **slide 11**. Inform students that it is easy to discern a physical miracle, such as the splitting of the moon, a weeping palm tree, or water flowing from human fingertips, **but how can something in the form of language be a miracle?** Use the following instructional points to explain how and why the Qur’an is a literary miracle.
  - a. First, **the realities of this world are discernible**. We, humans, have within us the capacity to recognize patterns (i.e., ‘adat) and work with such patterns for our benefit. Patterns in the Earth’s rotation help us structure our days around work, rest, and worship. Patterns in human development help us set social expectations and navigate our relationships based on what we discern about different age groups. The existence of patterns sustaining our universe is true for the physical world and for human conventions, such as language. We are able to communicate through language because of certain syntactic and grammatical patterns that are recognized and shared between members of a culture.
  - b. Second, the Qur’an is a miracle in language-form in that **it breaks from the language conventions mastered by the most talented poets and rhetoricians** (i.e., kharq al-‘adah); in other words, its literary merits surpass what is humanly possible, based on what we observe through time as the highest possible standard of rhetorical eloquence and precision. That is because the Qur’an employs the best and most precise words to convey meanings and the best compositional structure to organize those words and meanings.

Furthermore, the best and most exhaustive ideas subsist in each passage. So when it is heard or read, the Qur'an impresses upon human consciousness its inimitability, despite using the language conventions of words, syntax, meaning, and literary devices familiar to us. **It is a "living" miracle because its irreplicable nature continues to be witnessed beyond the prophetic era, and until the end of time.**



### Teacher takeaway

When learning about "miracles" within the Islamic tradition, students may recall the physical miracles conducted at the hands of many prophets (e.g., cleaving the moon, resurrecting the dead, blowing life into a clay bird, splitting the sea before it converges to drown Pharaoh's army, and so on). The supra-natural and irreplicability of such events are easy to recognize due to their visible break from the universe's natural laws. In contrast, a linguistic or literary miracle may be harder to understand. The purpose of this section is to explain how a miracle can also exist in the abstract language-form, and with the effect that its audience is rendered powerless in producing its like. The Qur'an is miraculous/supra-human in that its literary merits surpass what is humanly possible, based on what we observe through time as the highest possible standard of rhetorical eloquence and precision. So when it is heard or read, the Qur'an impresses upon human consciousness its inimitability, despite using the language conventions of words, syntax, meaning, and literary devices familiar to us. Its irreplicable nature continues to be witnessed beyond the prophetic era, rendering it a living miracle. We see the Qur'an's ability to "disable" its audience in the stories of the early Makkan Arabs who were master rhetoricians by trade and, therefore, most equipped to evaluate the claim that the Qur'an is miraculous. In the following section, students will learn about the challenge God presents to humankind, i.e., *tahaddi* (تَحَدِّي), and our collective failure to meet such a challenge. ✎



### Teacher's note

If breaking this lesson over a period of two days, this is a good stopping point.

## Session 2

**Total time: 45 min**

### Slide 12

1 What comes to mind?  
2 What are some common reasons why people would participate in a challenge?  
3 What are your personal reasons for participating or not participating in a popular challenge?

**Challenge!**

12

1. Proceed to **slide 12** and point to the term "challenge."
2. **Turn & talk:** Ask students to spend a few minutes thinking about the following questions before sharing their thoughts with an elbow partner. After students complete the turn and talk, invite them to share their responses with the whole class.

- a. What comes to mind when you hear or see the term "challenge"?

*Possible student response:* The term "challenge" today often connotes the viral, trending challenges shared on social media platforms.

- b. Consider some of the modern-day challenges you encountered recently, viral and otherwise. What are some common reasons why people would participate in a challenge?

*Possible student response:* People might participate in a challenge to entertain their curiosity; to satisfy their ego; to gain social validation or recognition; to participate in a trend; to prove or disprove someone's claim; or, perhaps, to defend their honor or the honor of others.

- c. What are your personal reasons for participating or not participating in such challenges?

*Possible student response:* Responses to this question may vary.




## Teacher takeaway

Before learning about tahaddi, God's challenge to creation to produce the likes of the Qur'an, it is important for students to unpack their cultural usage of the term "challenge." In our modern context, a viral "challenge" is a cultural phenomenon whereupon internet users are "dared" to record themselves completing a task and posting the resulting video on social media. These videos attract popularity (i.e., views, likes, retweets, shares, and so on) for their entertainment value and cultural relevance. Unlike the Qur'anic challenge, which serves as a proof of its irreplicability, the trending challenges we encounter today and our reasons for undertaking them are often to fulfill a desire to fit in with peers or gain popularity.

## Slides 13–14

### Tahaddi, the Qur'an's Challenge

1. Proceed to **slide 13**. Briefly introduce students to the Qur'anic challenge (i.e., *tahaddi*) by reciting the verse from Surat al-Baqarah. 
2. Next, tell students that the Qur'an poses this ongoing challenge calling for all of creation, jinn and humankind, to bring forth a literary production like it. Ask students if they can infer why this challenge exists: "What is the point of this challenge?"
3. After students have shared their thoughts, remind them that when verses of Qur'an were first revealed, many of the early Makkans denied the Prophet's claim that the Qur'an was **a divine literary miracle and a proof of Muhammad's claim to prophethood**. The challenge is a response to their rejection: "If you truly believe that a human authored this book, that it is neither divine nor miraculous, then prove it by bringing forth a literary production like it."
4. Inform students that they will now learn about three key factors that informed the first audience that received the miracle of the Qur'an: seventh century Arabia's oral tradition, the early Arabs' reputation as a prideful people, and Prophet Muhammad's identity as the primary purveyor and teacher of the Qur'an.
5. To begin this exploration, redirect students to **1.3** and ask them to record their notes on the table during the following instruction.
6. Continue to **slide 14** and instruct students on each of the three factors:
  - a. **Oral tradition:** As an oral society, seventh century Arabia's most sophisticated communication medium was spoken-word poetry. They regarded this medium as the highest form of human expression and spent generations perfecting numerous poetic forms. It was their poetry, not books and libraries, that served as a storehouse of cultural information; poetry memorialized the morals, traditions, and wisdoms of their ancestors for future generations. Somewhat similar to the social media influencers of today, spoken-word poets captured their community's attention. They used this medium to create a personal legacy and deemed it a tool stronger than a sword on the battlefield. The value of the poet in Arabian society was immense. Ibn Rashid, a renowned eleventh century poet (d. 463 AH) said, "Whenever a poet emerged in an Arab tribe, other tribes would come to congratulate, feasts would be prepared, the women would join together on lutes as they do at weddings, and old and young men would all rejoice at

### challenge ↔ تحدي

In some verses, Allah challenges the creation to bring forth a literary production similar to the Qur'an.

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِثْلِهِ ۚ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

\*And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our Servant [Muhammad], then produce a surah the like thereof and call upon your witnesses other than Allah, if you should be truthful" [2:23].

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وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا  
بِسُورَةٍ مِثْلِهِ ۚ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ  
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

"And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our servant [Muhammad], then produce a surah the like thereof and call upon your witnesses other than Allah, if you should be truthful"  
[Surat al-Baqarah, 2:23]

### Claim: Qur'an is a divine miracle

**Oral tradition:**  
Chosen medium was spoken-word poetry; the height of rhetorical eloquence

**Muhammad's identity:**  
unlettered and untrained in poetry, rhetoric, and composition

**Prideful people:**  
accepted challenges to defend tribal honor, tarnish reputation of opponents, or to prove/disprove opponent's claim


14


the good news—for this was a shield for their honor, a defense of their lineages, and an immortalization of their triumphs. The Arabs used to congratulate each other only on the birth of a child and when a poet rose among them.” Among their elite poets there was a tradition of naqd (literary criticism), a genre in which they would brutally scrutinize each others’ poetry to identify “suboptimal word choices” and other deficiencies in a poem.

At the time of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, these Arabs reached the height of rhetorical eloquence. The master poets of Arabia built their reputations and honor around their rhetorical eloquence. Employing rhyme, rhythm, and strong diction, they composed poetry that would deliver meaning to an oral society in the best expression possible. The Qur’an was revealed in this context, to a people with heightened acumen for rhetoric, composition, and spoken-word poetry.

- b. **Prideful people:** The seventh-century Arabs were reputed as a prideful people who valued the truthfulness of their word. So unlike our modern motives for participating in a viral challenge, the prideful Arabs often accepted challenges to defend their tribal honor, to tarnish the reputation of their opponents, or to prove/disprove an opponent’s claim.

c. **Prophet Muhammad ﷺ’s identity:**

- i. **Unlettered:** As a product of his oral society, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is identified as the “unlettered” prophet by Muslim and non-Muslim (أُنْجِي) historians alike for various reasons. First, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was not fluent in reading or writing. The absence of print/writing technologies in seventh-century Arabia rendered writing and reading skills to hold little economic value; thus, it was common for individuals in this society to be unlettered. Being “unlettered” also implies that he was unfamiliar with literature and the scripture of previous prophets. The Qur’an comments on this subject. 

- ii. **Untrained in rhetoric, composition, poetry:** Orphaned as a young child and raised by multiple adult figures, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was not trained in artistic expression (e.g., rhetoric, composition, poetry, and prose), nor did he exhibit any poetic aspirations as an adult. In fact, before prophethood, he was not known to have ever uttered a line of poetry or prose. His activities as an adult included shepherding, philanthropy/social service, and trade within Arabia, far removed from the world’s scholastic empires. The Qur’an comments on this subject. 



وَمَا كُنْتَ تَتْلُو مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُ  
بِإَمِينِكَ إِذْ لَا زُنَابَ الْمُبِطِّلُونَ

“You never recited any Book before it nor did you write one down with your right hand.”  
[Surat al-‘Ankabut, 29:48]



وَمَا عَلَّمْنَاهُ الشِّعْرَ وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لَهُ ۚ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ  
وَقُرْءَانٌ مُبِينٌ

“And We did not give Prophet Muhammad, knowledge of poetry, nor is it befitting for him. It is not but a message and a clear Qur’an.”  
[Surat Yasin, 36:69]

**Stage 1**



First, "Say: 'Surely, if mankind and jinn were to get together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they will never be able to produce the like of it, howsoever they might help one another.'" [17:88]

قُلْ لَّيْنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَى أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا  
هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا [17:88]

15

**Stage 2**




Second, "Or do they say, 'He invented it?' Say, 'Then bring ten surahs like it that have been invented and call whoever you can beside Allah [for assistance], if you should be truthful.'" [11:13]

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُوْرٍ مِثْلِهِ مُفْتَرِيَاتٍ  
وَأَدْعُوا مَنْ أَشْبَحَ لَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ [11:13]

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**Stage 3**



Third, "Or do they say [about the Prophet], 'He invented it?' Say, 'Then bring forth one surah like it and call upon [for assistance] whomever you can besides Allah, if you should be truthful.'" [10:38]

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِسُوْرَةٍ مِثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا  
مَنْ أَسْطَعَتْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ [10:38]

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## Slides 15–17

### 1. Stage 1

Read (or call on a student to read) the verse on **slide 15** aloud.

قُلْ لَّيْنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَى أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا

"Say: 'Surely, if mankind and jinn were to get together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they will never be able to produce the like of it, howsoever they might help one another.'" [Surat al-Isra, 17:88]

### 2. Stage 2

Read (or call on a student to read) the verse on **slide 16** aloud.

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُوْرٍ مِثْلِهِ مُفْتَرِيَاتٍ وَأَدْعُوا مَنْ أَسْطَعَتْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

"Or do they say, 'He invented it?' Say, 'Then bring **ten surahs like it** that have been invented and call whoever you can beside Allah [for assistance], if you should be truthful.'" [Surah Hud, 11:13]

### 3. Stage 3

Read (or call on a student to read) the verse on **slide 17** aloud.

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِسُوْرَةٍ مِثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا مَنْ أَسْطَعَتْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

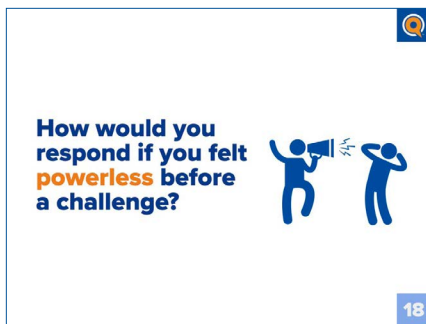
"Or do they say [about the Prophet], 'He invented it?' Say, 'Then bring forth **one surah like it** and call upon [for assistance] whomever you can besides Allah, if you should be truthful.'" [Surah Yunus, 10:38]

- Now that students have read through the various verses around *tahaddi*, ask students how the *tahaddi* challenge evolved throughout the three stages. Begin with facilitating a discussion with students to help them realize that though Quraysh became more aggressive against the Prophet ﷺ and their accusations against him escalated, the challenge the Qur'an presented in each stage became progressively easier. The challenge began by calling all creation, the jinn and humankind, to produce an entire book like the Qur'an in literary merit. In stage two, the challenge decreased to producing just ten surahs. And finally, in stage three, the challenge decreased to producing just one surah like the Qur'an, with the full collaboration of every living member of both creations. The stage breakdown highlights that even though the nature of the *tahaddi* became progressively easier, the poets and Makkan elite were not able to meet the challenge.



### Teacher takeaway

The purpose of this section is to introduce students to *tahaddi*: God's perennial challenge to His creation to disprove the claim that the Qur'an is a literary, living miracle by producing its like. Although this challenge continues today, students will find that its first contenders, the seventh century Arabs, were most equipped to meet it. They were an oral society with heightened acumen for rhetoric, composition, and spoken-word poetry, and given their prideful nature, they would do anything within their capacity to disprove an opponent. The initial challenge, based on the hubris of the Arabs, was to bring forth something similar to the Qur'an. As the Arabs were clearly incapable of producing this, the challenge was lessened and again further lessened. The end result was that the Arabs were not able to even match one surah of the Qur'an. Studying these historical details surrounding the revelation of the Qur'an prompts students to be historically introspective and to recognize why the Qur'anic challenge of *tahaddi* was taken up so seriously in seventh-century Arabia. As a society who prided themselves with their heightened sense of poetry and literary merit, they could not imagine poetry or prose that was of higher complexity and beauty than their own, especially in their own language and words.



### Slides 18–20

1. Proceed to **slide 18**. Explain to students that if any society could meet the tahaddi challenge to disprove the claim of the divine origin/miracle of the Qur'an, it would have been the seventh-century Arabs. They reached the pinnacle of rhetorical expression and were attuned to any errors or deficiencies in spoken-word poetry. When they heard the recitation of the Qur'an, they recognized its unprecedented eloquence, for it was independent and mysterious unlike the poetry they knew and mastered. Additionally, the one reciting it to them, the Prophet ﷺ, was unlettered and had no training in poetry or composition. Rather than taking on the challenge, they felt powerless in producing one surah the like of the Qur'an.

2. Next, engage students in a whole-class discussion around the question, "How would you respond if you felt powerless before a challenge?"

3. During the course of this discussion, transition to **slide 19** and explain to students that Quraysh's response to the tahaddi challenge illustrates their true feelings about the Qur'an. Humiliated by their defeat in their area of expertise, their response is one proof of the miracle of the Qur'an and its ability to render its audience powerless in producing its like.

- They spent fortunes smearing the Prophet ﷺ—ridiculing him and labeling him a possessed poet, a soothsayer/fortune teller, a liar, and a madman—in an attempt to squelch his da'wah efforts. Even though their labels didn't stick, they were relentless in undermining his character.
- During trade season and pilgrimage to Makkah, they tried to prevent a single verse from the Qur'an from reaching the ears and hearts of visitors to Makkah.
- They disavowed their codes of chivalry and tribal honor to boycott and starve the Prophet ﷺ and his followers, torture the weak among them, and wage wars and assassination attempts against their fellow clansmen.



4. Continue to **slide 20** and recite the verse from Surah al-Fussilat. Frustrated that they failed the challenge against an unlettered man, in an area of their expertise, the Makkan elite tried to prevent people from listening to it lest they become overtaken by its miraculous nature.

### Teacher takeaway

The primary message of this instruction is two-fold: first, if the Makkans were capable of producing a text like the Qur'an, they would have done so in an effort to discredit the Qur'an, disprove Prophet Muhammad ﷺ's claim to prophethood, and drive all early Muslims back to their pagan roots; in other words, meeting this challenge would be the easiest way to eradicate Islam and the Muslims. Second, the fact that the Makkan elite abandoned the challenge and resorted, instead, to vicious tactics (such as embargoes, torture, and smear campaigns) further illustrates that they recognized the Qur'an as miraculously irreplicable and outside the capacity of human production.



"The disbelievers say, 'Do not listen to this Qur'an, but drown it in [noise and] frivolous talk, so that you may gain the upper hand.'"  
[Surah al-Fussilat, 41:26]

### Create a mind map

Items needed: post-its, writing utensil, empty desk space, pieces of string

- Write one term on each post-it, along with its definition
- Use the three extra post-its for other words/phrases you learned from the lesson
- Arrange the post-its and string on your desk (in a mind map) to illustrate their relationship with one another

Terms to use:

- literary, living miracle
- tahaddi (challenge)
- Qur'an
- ayah (sign of God)
- irreplicability
- 'adat (observable customs and patterns)
- language conventions

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## Consolidation

### Slide 21

- Proceed to **slide 21**. To wrap up the lesson, distribute ten post-its and pieces of cut-up string or yarn to each student. Students will need a clear, empty desk for this final activity. They will create a mind map on their desk using seven terms from the lesson to demonstrate what each term means and their relationship to one another.
  - First, students will write one term on each post-it, along with its definition. The seven terms are: literary, living miracle; tahaddi (challenge); Qur'an; ayah (sign of God); irreplicability; 'adat or 'adiyyat (observable customs and patterns); and language conventions.
  - Next, they will use the three extra post-its (or more) for other words or phrases they may need to make connections between the first set of terms.
  - Finally, students will arrange the post-its and pieces of string on their desks in the form of a mind map to illustrate their relationship with one another.
- Set the timer to ten minutes while students complete this activity. Upon completion, students may present their mind map to you individually or send you a photo of their mind map for assessment.



### Teacher takeaway

The purpose of this activity is to formatively assess student ability to synthesize the information in this lesson. Having learned about the Qur'an as a sign of God, a literary, living miracle, and a proof of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ's prophethood, students will build a mind map to define various terms and illustrate their relationship to one another.

## Homework

Pass out a copy of **1.4 "Homework"** to each student. In this assignment, they will draft a one-page essay responding to the following prompts:

- Summarize:** *"You can't learn philosophy from a TikTok video."* Think about what this quote means in relation to what we discussed in class about the limitations of modern communication mediums. Write a paragraph summarizing your conclusions from the lesson.
- Reflect & Analyze:** Consider the quote, *"To dismiss [a] theory because it had its flowering in centuries past is to present not a rational argument but a modernistic prejudice that takes for granted the superiority of the present over the past."*—Hans Morgenthau

In other words, it's easy to assume that where we stand today as a society—our ways of communicating important messages, our understanding of morality, etc.—is superior to past societies. Write about the various ways you have witnessed our "modernistic prejudice" impact our interaction with the Qur'an as a text from 1400 years ago.

What could you change, within yourself and your environment, to improve your interaction with the Qur'an as relevant and prescriptive for your needs? On a separate sheet of paper, explain your thoughts in a one-page reflection essay.

name: \_\_\_\_\_

date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Homework

**Summarize:** "You can't learn philosophy from a TikTok video." Think about what this quote means in relation to what we discussed in class about the limitations of modern communication mediums. Write a paragraph summarizing your conclusions from the lesson.

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**Reflect & Analyze:** It is easy to assume that where we stand today as a society—our ways of communicating important messages, our understanding of morality, etc.—is superior to past societies. Write about the various ways you have witnessed our "modernistic prejudice" impact our interaction with the Qur'an as a text from 1400 years ago, especially when reading verses on modesty, criminal punishments, science, women's rights, and inheritance.

What could you change, within yourself and your environment, to improve your interaction with the Qur'an as relevant and prescriptive for your needs? How does your character develop and change to reconcile with modern influences? On a separate sheet of paper, explain your thoughts in a one-page reflection essay.

1.4

name: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Mediums of communication

**First, form a small group of three.** Choose a specific topic that interests all members of your group (e.g., weekend plans, entertainment, career goals, local current events, sports, friendship).

Next, divide up the list below so that each group member is assigned two of the six mediums of communication.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Emojis and symbols (e.g., 🤔, 🤔, 🤔)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Abbreviations and acronyms (e.g., idk, gtp, lol, omg)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spoken-word poetry (at least four lines, recited)
- \_\_\_\_\_ News headline (between 5-10 words)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Well-composed written paragraph (5-6 complete sentences)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Instagram photo and caption

Then, take turns communicating a clear and meaningful message about the topic above using your two chosen mediums of communication. Record your messages below.

Emojis and symbols:	Abbreviations and acronyms:
Spoken-word poetry:	News headline:
Academic paragraph:	Instagram photo and caption:

1.2

## Stage 3: Assessments

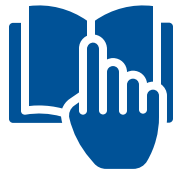
### Performance tasks

#### Formative assessment

1. To informally assess the first objective—the ability to be historically introspective and challenge modern prejudice toward the Qur'an—use the reflection questions from **1.2 “Mediums of Communication”**. The questions are designed to gauge student self-awareness of the attitudes they may passively and uncritically hold as universal truths, specifically regarding the best ways to communicate a message and the best source of relevant, moral instruction.
2. The consolidating mind-map on **slide twenty-one** may be used to formatively assess students on the second and third objectives. By defining and arranging the selection of terms in relation to one another, students will illustrate how the Qur'an, a sign of God and a living, literary miracle, is irreplicable in that it breaks from the *'adah* or the discernible pattern of what humans are capable of producing with the conventions of language. It is this literary aspect of the Qur'an that makes it a *mu'jizah*. No one has yet to meet the tahaddi challenge in producing even a surah like it.

#### Summative assessment

See **1.4 “Homework”** above.



Instructions and activities

Lesson 1

***Lesson 2 • The  
irreplicable masterpiece***

Lesson 3





## Essential Questions

How can a divine miracle exist in literary form?

What does it mean for the Qur'an to be irreplicable?



## Key vocabulary

### Classic

art or literature that is remembered and admired for ages as a standard of excellence whose established value is agreed upon through time

### Emotive potency

the development of an intense feeling that leaves a lasting impression

### Ring composition

sometimes also referred to as a chiasmic structure, is a literary technique in which themes follow a cyclical pattern and mirror each other following an A, B, B, A pattern

## Lesson plan 2

# The irreplicable masterpiece

## Stage 1: Big ideas and desired results

### Lesson overview

Muslims throughout time and space have recognized the miraculous nature of the Qur'an and have authored countless books on the topic. Yet, scholars and non-specialists often appreciate different features that testify to its inimitability. For some, it is the emotive potency and transformative power of the Qur'an. For others, it is the perfect and unique compositional structure of the Qur'an, or the its knowledge of unseen realities.

In this lesson, students will explore how the Qur'an is a literary miracle. A primary distinction between the physical miracles of previous prophets—including those of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ—and the miracle of the Qur'an is that it is not bound to its historical moment but continues to present itself as a miracle until the end of time. This allows readers of every generation to appreciate the Qur'an within their own cultural language and systems of thinking. Our discourse on the miracle of the Qur'an will include three broad aspects: the historical circumstances of its revelation, its internal structure, and its substantive material. Any attempt to recreate the Qur'an must do so by including all such qualities of the Qur'an. However, the ultimate recognition by sincere readers of the Qur'an, including present-day readers is that it is a miracle by the very fact, all things considered, that it is and continues to be irreplicable.


### Learning objectives

Toward the completion of this lesson, students should be able to:

- 1 Recognize some of the historical circumstances of the Qur'an's revelation that characterize the Qur'an to be unlike other literary "classics." *(cognitive and affective)*
- 2 Recognize and appreciate some of the literary miracles of the Qur'an and its perfect union of emotive and logical elements in a singular homogenous text. *(cognitive and affective)*
- 3 Apply the ring theory on a short passage of the Qur'an as an analytic framework to better appreciate the unique compositional structure of the Qur'an. *(affective)*


### Teacher's note


This lesson plan consists of three learning objectives. For planning purposes, this lesson is broken down into three parts (in alignment with the three objectives) and may be taught in the course of three 50-minute periods.



What do you remember about the **historical context** of the Qur'an's revelation?

- Grab a blank sheet of paper and coloring utensil
- Quickly sketch or write all of the details you remember about the historical context of the Qur'an's revelation (e.g., Makkan/Arabian culture, Muhammad ﷺ's identity)
- Once time is up, get ready to share!





## Stage 2: Learning plan

### Supplies/equipment

- Lesson plan 2 presentation (for teacher)
- Projector/screen/computer/internet connection to display presentation and play videos
- Blank sheet of paper for each student
- Printouts of 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5, and 2.7 for each student
- Printouts of 2.3 and 2.6 (optional) for the teacher
- 12 blank sheets of paper, numbered 1-12, for the teacher
- Notecard for each student

### Session 1

**Total time: 45 min**

### Opening activity

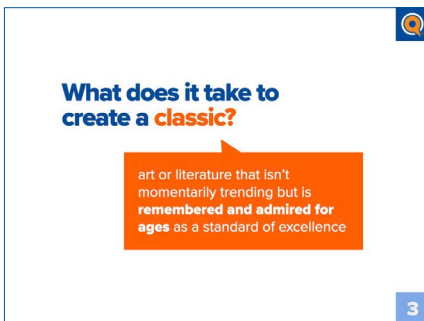
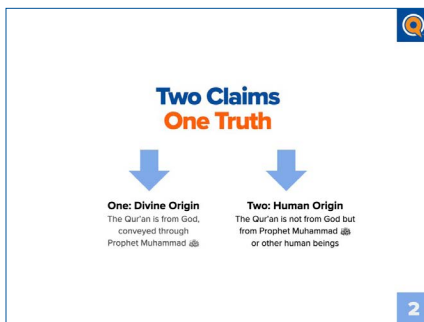
#### Slide 1

1. Open **slide 1**. Pass out a blank sheet of paper and direct students to the “recall” question on the slide: “What do you remember about the historical context of the Qur'an's revelation?”
2. For this opening activity, set the timer to 2-3 minutes and ask students to do the following: first, prepare a blank sheet of paper and coloring/writing utensils; next, quickly sketch or write all of the details you remember about the historical context of the Qur'an's revelation (e.g., Makkan/Arabian culture, Muhammad's identity); then, once time is up, get ready to share!
3. Call on students to briefly share one memorable detail about the historical context in which the Qur'an was revealed, similar to what they recorded on **1.2 “The Living Literary Miracle”**. These details may fall under any one of the categories explored in the previous lesson: seventh century Arabia's **oral tradition**, the Arabs' high regard and heightened acumen for **spoken-word poetry**, and Prophet Muhammad ﷺ identity as **unlettered** and **untrained in rhetoric, composition, and poetry**.



### Teacher takeaway

The purpose of this opening activity is to recall the key historical facts surrounding the Qur'an's revelation, as taught in the previous lesson. Reviewing this knowledge base will help students transition to the upcoming instruction on the two opposing claims made about the Qur'an (i.e., divine origin vs. human origin) and the historical circumstances of the Qur'an's composition that render it a literary miracle, thus disproving the claim of human authorship.



### Teacher's note

This is not a modern proposition. In fact, shortly before the pre-Islamic pilgrimage season began, the Makkan elites worried that the visiting pilgrims would hear about the Prophet ﷺ and the Qur'an and be swayed by its eloquence, so they convened to ensure that their smear campaign issued a unified stance against him. The master poet al-Walid ibn al-Mughirah opened the conference with the following: "Now that the pilgrimage season is approaching, people will start arriving from all over the place. They must have heard about your friend [i.e., Muhammad]. So you had better agree on what to say when you are asked about him. We must guard against having too many opinions, particularly if they are mutually contradictory." Some proposed to label the Prophet ﷺ as a fortune-teller; others wanted to accuse him of being a poet or a madman. Finally, al-Walid ibn al-Mughirah spoke with a decisive opinion. "What Muhammad says is certainly beautiful," he said. "It is like a date tree with solid roots and rich fruit. Every one of the suggestions you have made is bound to be recognized as false. The least disputable one is to claim that he is a magician who repeats magic words which cause discord between a man with his father, mother, wife, and clan"—meaning that Muhammad's core message contradicted the Makkan way of life and created disagreement between Muslims and their families. When they couldn't explain the supra-natural verses of Qur'an, the Makkan elites settled with the claim of human authorship by way of magic. Modern critics of the Qur'an's divine origin may not accuse Muhammad of magic; instead, they liken him to Shakespeare, though the historical circumstances in which the Qur'an was revealed vastly differ from those of Shakespeare's works, or any literary classics for that matter.

## Learning activity

### Slide 2–4

1. Proceed to **slide 2**. Inform students that throughout the Qur'an, bold claims are made about its origin, perfection, and purpose, in a voice as deeply poetic as it is absolute. In fact, the second surah asserts in its opening verse:


أَلَمْ . ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

"Alif Lam Mim. That is the Book, wherein is no doubt [of its divine origin and truthfulness]—a guidance for the muttaqin [people of God-consciousness]" [Surat al-Baqarah, 2:1–2]

2. Interestingly, scholars and thinkers who author books on important subjects often open with acknowledgments, expressing humble gratitude to everyone who assisted them in the making of their book, followed by an apology for any elusive errors. A stark contrast to this verse in the Qur'an:

وَمَا كَانَ هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنُ أَن يُفْتَرَىٰ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَكِن تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ مِن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

"And it was not [possible] for this Qur'an to be produced by other than Allah. Rather, [it is] a confirmation of what was before it and a detailed explanation of the [former] scripture, about which there is no doubt, from the Lord of the worlds" [Surah Yunus, 10:37]

3. Continue explaining that the claims regarding the origin of the Qur'an generally fall under two categories. Because they are contradictory claims, only one of them can be true.
  - a. Claim One: The Qur'an is of divine origin, meaning that it is from God, conveyed through Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.
  - b. Claim Two: The Qur'an is of human origin, meaning it is not from God but from Prophet Muhammad ﷺ or other human beings.
3. **Turn & Talk:** After presenting these two claims, ask students to turn to an elbow partner and discuss the arguments and evidence they may have heard for each claim. If they are not familiar with this discourse, ask them to brainstorm arguments people might make for each claim. After a few minutes, invite students to share their thoughts.
4. Transition to **slide 3** and inform students that proponents of the second claim—that the Qur'an is of human origin—do not deny the inherent eloquence of the Qur'an. Rather, they argue that it is a literary classic, a haphazard stroke of genius, spun together by Muhammad ﷺ in moments of creative inspiration. 

### Teacher's note

The term “classic” here refers to art or literature that isn’t momentarily trending, but is rather remembered and admired for ages as a standard of excellence and whose established value is agreed upon through time.



**Let's talk Classics**


**Literary classics. What we know:**

- **Literacy:** authors know how to read and write and are exposed to written literature
- **Training:** authors are scholastically trained by teachers, mentors, and/or great talents
- **Time and effort:** authors exert themselves in the writing process, researching, drafting, editing, and rewriting for years
- **Feedback:** authors' work endures rigorous critique from peers, editors, and publishers
- **Quality control:** authors improve parts of their work in further published editions

**Qur'an. What we know:**

**?**

**4**


5. Then, pose the question, “What do you know about classics and what does it take to create one?” Call on some students to share their thoughts. 
6. Continue to **slide 4** to explain to students the general process writers undertake to compose a literary classic, in order that they may compare this process with the way in which the Qur’an was historically composed. Read through each point and invite students to contribute their thoughts along the way.
  - a. Literacy: authors know how to read and write and are often exposed to written literature throughout their writing careers.
  - b. Training: generally, authors of classics receive scholastic training from teachers, mentors, and/or great talents within their writing genre
  - c. Time and Effort: authors exert themselves in the writing process, researching their subject matter, mulling over several manuscripts, editing, and rewriting for years on end
  - d. Feedback: authors’ work generally endures rigorous critique from peers, editors, and publishers whose sole task is to spot errors and provide authors with feedback
  - e. Quality Control: authors have the option of improving parts of their work in further published editions
7. After explaining the creative process behind the making of a literary classic, tell students that, in order to evaluate the two contradictory claims about the Qur’an, they will need to compare this process with the historical circumstances of the Qur’an’s composition.

### Teacher's note

If students struggle to appreciate the literary medium of expression, you may explain the creative process within other popular communication mediums. With Instagram, for example, students may recognize the time, effort, and many photograph- attempts necessary to create an aesthetically-pleasing grid, where each photo seamlessly transitions to the next using a uniform color palette and signature theme.

### Teacher takeaway

While the path to renowned authorship may not intrigue many students, the point of this discourse is to demonstrate the time, effort, talent, and human collaboration necessary to craft a single piece of effective and meaningful prose, even for master prose-stylists like Shakespeare. Creators from all mediums of expression will attest that the first draft of anything is hardly impressive; nothing we whip out from our minds welds into perfection upon first attempt. On that note, Ernest Hemingway, who authored many American classics, expressed that for every page of masterpiece he writes, he tosses the other ninety-nine pages in the wastebasket.

Many classics are also built through collaborative efforts. This becomes evident when reading any book’s acknowledgements; authors often feel indebted to their teachers, mentors, and colleagues who extend their time and talents to assist them. With their editors, authors may spend years mulling over multiple manuscripts, consigning their drafts to many peer-reviews, each round shaving off one layer of human error. And even when they release their work into the world, it isn’t guaranteed to rise to the rank of great, classic literature. Millions of books fade from popularity with time and in relation to market trends. In the following section, students will see that none of these characteristics can be said about the Qur’an’s composition. 

Team tasks

Team 1

"untrained, but trying"

Write a poetic sonnet commenting on a serious topic about current events or social issues.

Team 2

"perfectly patched"

Finish writing an essay you began in 7th grade on the topic of global warming.

Team 3

"immortalizing your misjudgment"

Think of many instances in which you acted less-than-ideal.

Team 4

"guess the motive"

Imagine posting something controversial online, inciting an avalanche of criticism.

Team 5

"Qur'an or Hadith?"

Sift through a collection of text and determine if the text is attributed to the Qur'an or the Prophet ﷺ.

Team 6

"permanent speech"

Deliver impromptu, oral speeches that are meaningful and poetic about various topics.

5

## Slides 5–6

1. Proceed to **slide 5**. To explore some of the historical circumstances of the Qur'an's composition, students will collaborate with a team to complete a unique task, followed by a supplementary reading. The task and reading will culminate with a reflection question in which they will evaluate the veracity of each claim about the Qur'an's origin. Below are the six tasks in this learning activity:

- "untrained but trying": write a sonnet commenting on a serious topic about current events or social issues
- "perfectly patched": finish writing an essay you began writing in seventh grade on the topic of global climate change
- "immortalizing misjudgment": think of many instances in which you acted less-than-ideal
- "guess the motive": imagine posting something controversial online, inciting an avalanche of criticism
- "Qur'an or Hadith?": sift through a collection of text and determine if the text is attributed to the Qur'an or the Prophet
- "permanent speech": deliver impromptu, oral speeches that are meaningful and poetic about various topics

2. After the class is divided into six teams, distribute a copy of **2.1 "Two Claims, One Truth"** to each student, but only the section related to their team number. Set the timer to ten minutes while they complete their team activities.

3. Once time is up, call on each team to briefly summarize their conclusions after completing the activity, reading, and reflection question.

4. Transition to **slide 6**. Remind students of the prerequisite conditions that facilitate the making of a literary classic. Generally speaking, the author is literate and trained by teachers, mentors, and great talents; they are often exposed to masterpieces within their genre. While composing their own classic, they exert themselves in the writing process: researching, drafting, editing, and writing for years and often with the help of trained colleagues. And when they have something of a final product, their work endures rigorous critique from editors and publishers who provide feedback for improvement. Furthermore, authors have the option to revisit their work for quality control, omitting parts and improving upon other parts, through newly published editions. Ask students to compare this with the historical circumstances of the Qur'an's composition:

- The Qur'an was recited by an unlettered prophet, untrained in rhetoric, composition, and poetry, yet its literary merit surpassed the best known works celebrated by the prideful Arab poets. The students who were tasked with composing a sonnet (team one) may recognize the time, effort, and skill needed to create something meaningful and poetic about an important subject matter. To produce an entire collection of sonnets without the writing and editing technologies afforded to us today, especially when untrained, is nearly impossible.
- Despite being orally "puzzled" together in the span of twenty-three years, the Qur'an maintains stylistic, structural, and thematic

**Qur'an**

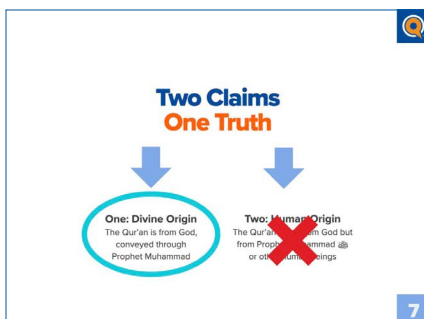
Human or divine origin?  
What we know...

- Recited by an unlettered prophet, untrained in rhetoric, composition, and poetry to a society of master poets
- Maintained stylistic, structural, and internal consistency though orally "pieced" together in 23 years
- Highlighted and immortalized the Prophet's ﷺ misjudgments, insults/abuse he endured, and trauma he experienced
- Exhibited stylistic difference between Qur'an and prophetic speech (hadith)
- Remained permanent; was not "edited" for quality control

6

consistency within its surahs and the book as a whole. This is uncharacteristic of human authorship, where a person progresses from novice to expert with time and practice. The students who were asked to puzzle together an essay on global climate change, combining sentences from a seventh grader with their own may recognize how difficult it is to maintain a standard of excellence without a noticeable growth period.

- c. If the claim of human authorship were true, and the Prophet ﷺ composed the Qur'an to gain power and popularity, we would have to reconcile this motive with some counterintuitive content in which the Qur'an is admonishing the Prophet for his misjudgments or recounting the traumatic events he endured. The students who studied these verses (teams three and four) may realize that a person seeking fame would not document such events, knowing that they would be recited by his community around the clock.
- d. When contemporary language experts conducted a stylometric analysis of the Qur'an and hadith traditions (to check if the two texts were written by the same author), they found that the Qur'an drastically departed from the Prophet's speech. They also concluded that it would be impossible for any person to police his speech for a lifetime in order to prevent his style and vocabulary from permeating his writing. The students who compared some Qur'anic verses with hadith traditions on the same subject matter (team five) may recognize their stylometric differences. Both works could not have originated from the same author.
- e. The Prophet ﷺ recited the verses of Qur'an to address unpredictable events and questions in real-time. Yet unlike the editing opportunities afforded to all poets, past and present, whatever the Prophet uttered was permanent speech, memorized and orally transmitted instantly by his companions; he could not retract or edit any verses for quality control—not even a single letter. The students who delivered poetic, impromptu speeches on unplanned subject matters may realize how difficult it is to craft a meaningful speech without preparation, without the convenience of writing technologies, and without the chance to edit. It is impossible to consistently speak with a standard of perfection upon first attempt.



5. After explaining the five points above, continue to [slide 7](#) and pass a notecard to each student. Ask students to spend a few minutes writing 5-6 sentences in defense of claim one, "The Qur'an is from God, conveyed through Prophet Muhammad." They must include details about the historical circumstances in which the Qur'an was revealed. When they are finished, collect their notecards as a formative assessment.



## Session 2

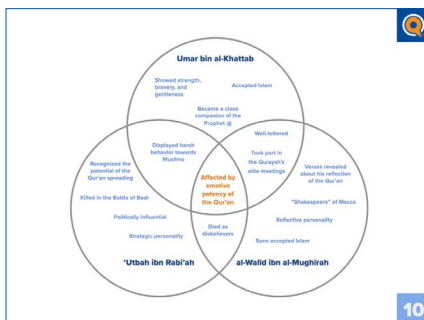
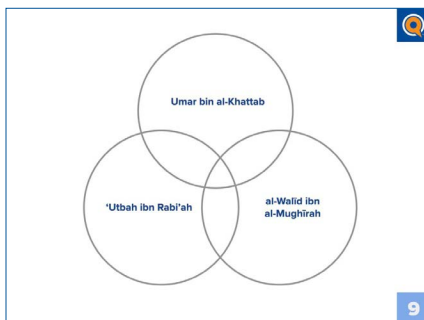
### Slide 8–9

### Step inside

- Read your assigned story with your partner.
- Reflect, discuss and fill in your graphic organizer.
- Be prepared to share your conclusions with the class!

8

- Proceed to **slide 8** and inform students they will read one assigned story with an elbow partner. Pass out copies of **2.2 “Step-Inside”** and ensure that each pair of students receives one of the three available stories (options: al- Walid ibn al-Mughirah, Utbah ibn Rabiah, Umar bin al-Khattab), followed by copies of the “Step Inside” graphic organizer.
- Set the timer to ten minutes while students complete the following tasks with their elbow partners:
  - Read your assigned story, perhaps more than once to ensure you understand the story’s key takeaways.
  - Complete the “Step Inside” graphic organizer by placing yourself in the situation of your story’s main character and experiencing events from his point of view. Consider the following: What does this individual see, observe, or notice? What might he believe? What is something he cares about deeply? What might he be wondering?
  - Be prepared to share your conclusions with the class!



- After ten minutes, continue to **slide 9** and inform students that, together, the class will fill out a triple Venn diagram to determine the similarities and differences between al-Walid ibn al-Mughirah, Utbah ibn Rabiah, and Umar bin al-Khattab.
- While students share some facts from their handouts, fill in the triple Venn diagram on the slide. After hearing from students, you may supplement student responses with the information from the Venn diagram on **slide 10**.


### Teacher takeaway

This Step Inside activity invites students to place themselves in the shoes of three powerful Makkan figures in order to gain insight into how people around the Prophet ﷺ reacted to the revelation. The goal is to reach the conclusion that all three men, despite their convictions, decisions, and personality differences, were impacted by the Qur’an’s emotive potency and recognized it as something deeply perplexing. Regardless of their end convictions, the three men were internally moved by the Qur’an’s recitation, as illustrated in the Venn diagram. They collectively conceded to the Qur’an’s unique literary force, its unsurpassed eloquence, and its ability to seamlessly blend emotive and logical elements on various subject matters. It is important to point out the way the emotive potency of the Qur’an specifically changed Umar bin al-Khattab in these stories. Of the three men explored in this activity, he was the only one who accepted Islam. His transformation demonstrates the way the Qur’an can penetrate the hearts of humans and guide their lives towards beauty. This characteristic of the Qur’an, its impact on the hearts of Muslims and non- Muslims alike, is an additional proof of its divine origin. In fact, numerous conversions to Islam occurred from the recitation of the Qur’an.





### Slide 11

1. Proceed to **slide 11** and pass out a copy of **2.4 “Logical or Emotive”** to each student. Remind them that in the previous “Step Inside” activity, they learned about three prominent individuals who were emotionally stirred by the recitation of Qur’an—listening to its verses provoked intense feelings inside of them and left a lasting impression.
2. Point to the buckets on the slide and briefly explain that texts are often described in one of two ways—“logical,” meaning that the text uses logic and reasoning in order to appeal to our intellects, or “emotive,” meaning that the text uses emotive language to provoke intense feelings (e.g., comfort, fear, hope, wonder, relief, sadness, and so on) and lasting impressions.
3. Then, ask students to indicate with a thumbs up or a thumbs down if they believe that the Qur’an is strictly an emotive text, meaning that it appeals exclusively to our emotions and not our logic and reasoning.
4. **Activity:** To further explore this question, students will work with an elbow partner to study the verses on **2.4** and then determine if each verse is logical or emotive in content. Allow students 6-8 minutes to complete this activity. If time is limited, you may assign each set of partners 2-3 verses instead of all six.
5. Once time is up, invite all students to a whole-class discussion. Call on students to share where they placed each verse and why. The goal is to prompt students to conclude that the Qur’anic verses cannot be strictly contained in one bucket; they are neither strictly logical nor strictly emotive.
6. After the whole-class discussion, explain the following: one aspect of the Qur’an’s literary magnificence is its perfect fusion of two often- conflicting forces, logic and emotion, and it does so without straying from its primary goal of dispensing timeless guidance. You may illustrate this point using this verse from Surah al-Anbiya .



أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا آلَ الْهَيْمَةِ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ هُمْ يُنْشِرُونَ. لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلَ الْهَيْمَةِ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ. لَا يُسْأَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْأَلُونَ

“Or have men taken for themselves other gods from earth who are [capable of] resurrecting the dead? Had there been within the heavens and earth gods beside Allah [ruling, competing for power, establishing their own systems for sustaining the creation], they would have both been ruined [from competing]. So exalted is Allah, Lord of the Throne, above what they describe. He is not questioned about what He does, but they will be questioned.”

[Surah al-Anbiya, 21:21–23].

These verses present a logical argument for the existence of One, all-Powerful God by establishing the logical implications of multiple competing gods. Had there been gods beside Allah, ruling independently of one another, competing for power, and establishing their own systems for sustaining the creation, we would have witnessed contradiction and conflict between their decree; their competing governance would lead to their ultimate corruption (fasad). In simple terms, a universe and its systems cannot, by definition, function smoothly with two absolute masters. However, this appeal to human logic isn’t without emotive force. After conveying a logical argument, the Qur’an provokes feelings of humility and awe by informing us that, unlike God, whose will and decree are above questioning, we will all be questioned for the beliefs we hold and actions we commit. Seamlessly weaving logical guidance with emotive potency, as illustrated in this example, is just one aspect of the Qur’an’s literary magnificence. See the teacher takeaway below for further class instruction.

## Teacher's note

Part three of this lesson introduces students to a handful of literary gems within the Qur'an, beginning at the micro-level (words and verses) and then at the macro-level (the internal structures within and the thematic coherence between whole chapters). Discourse on the Qur'an's literary gems can be found in the classical sources of Qur'anic commentary but are not explicitly stated in the Qur'an and Sunnah as such.

## Teacher takeaway

One aspect of the Qur'an's potency is its perfect fusion of persuasive arguments and emotive forces. In contrast, human expression never fails to disrupt this balance. When scientists and philosophers levitate in their technical discourses, their language orbits in the intellectual stratosphere that struggles to accommodate the warmth of emotion. And when poets and novelists embark on their journeys to evoke the thrill and passions of their audience, they quickly swerve from reality to fantasy and feel forced to stretch facts to escape "the cold truth" which works against their objective. As for the Qur'an, it fuses truth and beauty in a way that only Allah, the Almighty, can; its rhetoric depth appeals to the intellectual, and its poetic appeals to the masses, but neither force detracts from the other. The effect is that the Qur'an's audience receives intellectual conviction and emotional satisfaction from a single, homogenous text.

### Slide 12-13

#### Palindromes and word placement

1. Proceed to **slide 12** and inform students that one literary device employed by talented writers and rhetoricians is called the "palindrome."
2. Define "palindrome" as a word, number, phrase, or sentence that reads the same backwards as forward. A few examples of palindromes are listed on the slide: e.g., mom, dad, radar, pop, 404, "Was it a car or a cat I saw?"
3. **Quick write:** Set a timer for 90 seconds and challenge students to come up with as many palindromes as they can. Encourage them to move beyond one-word palindromes and to experiment with palindrome phrases and/or sentences as well. Once the timer ends, call on a few students to share what they came up with, and ask them to reflect on the experience. How many did they come up with? What was their experience developing longer palindromes?
4. Continue to **slide 13** to showcase examples of palindromes and creative word placement within the Qur'an.
  - a. **Palindromes:** When taking apart the phrases **وَرَبَّكَ فَكَبِّرْ** and **كُلُّ فِي فَلَكٍ**, we find that the phrases are spelled the same backward as they are forward. The Qur'an was revealed and transmitted orally, so once the Prophet ﷺ recited a verse, it was permanently stored in the community's collective consciousness. There was no "writing process": he ﷺ did not edit or retract verses for quality control. The fact that the Qur'an weaves palindromes into its verses seamlessly and without editorial effort is one aspect of its literary merit.
  - b. **Word placement:** Surat al-Baqarah comprises of 286 'ayat and was orally revealed over a period of ten years in piece-meal. This means that the 'ayat in the Qur'an, and Surat al-Baqarah specifically, were not revealed in the chronological order we recite them today; rather, the Prophet ﷺ instructed his companions where to place each selection of 'ayat and in which surahs. It is in verse 143, exactly in the middle of Surat al-Baqarah where Allah says "And thus, We have made you a middle nation..." **وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا** This precision in word placement attributes to the Qur'an's miraculous nature and divine origin. If the Qur'an was forged by a man, establishing a literary gem such as this example would be impossible without writing technologies and undergoing a lengthy writing and editing process.

**Palindrome: a word, number, phrase, or sentence that read the same backwards as forward.**

Examples:

Dad	Radar
Mom	404
Pop	Was it a car or a cat I saw?

**Literary miracles in the Qur'an**

**Palindromes:** **وَرَبَّكَ فَكَبِّرْ** → **ر ب ك ف ل ك ب ر**  
**كُلُّ فِي فَلَكٍ** → **ك ل ف ي ل ك**

**Word Placement:** **أُمَّةً وَسَطًا** → Verse 143 out of 286, directly in the middle of Surat al-Baqarah



وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا

"And thus, We have made you  
a middle nation..."  
[Surat al-Baqarah, 2:143]

### Teacher takeaway

The purpose of this quick-write is to emphasize the challenge in composing literary gems while under a time constraint. Regardless of their skill-level, students will find that achieving literary eloquence—even on a micro-scale, as in the case with palindromes—requires mental exertion, time, and an editing system in place. The Prophet ﷺ had none of these. He recited verses with palindromes, imagery, parables, similes/metaphors, and much more without pre-writing or editing any of it, further supporting the claim of the Qur'an's divine origin.

### Slide 14



1. Proceed to **slide 14**. Briefly remind students, using their prior knowledge on the technical definition of mu'jizah, of the definition of a literary miracle, or a miracle in language- form:
  - a. **Literary classic:** art or literature that isn't momentarily trending but is remembered for its substantive value and admired for ages as a standard of excellence. Earlier in this lesson, students learned about the prerequisite conditions often required to make a literary classic. With training, effort, time, mentorship, peer collaboration, and opportunities to edit for quality control, a person can produce a timeless literary classic within a specific genre. The Qur'an, in contrast, is recognized as an irreplicable literary masterpiece without having undergone these conditions, lending credence to the claim of divine origin.
  - b. **Miracle:** a suprahuman feat or event; a feat that is irreplicable or in defiance of natural laws of the universe, wherein people feel incapable of producing the like. In the previous lesson, students learned to distinguish between a sign of God ('ayah) and a miracle from God (mu'jizah). So while the Qur'an is a sign of God, it is also Prophet Muhammad's greatest miracle in that no society, past and present, has produced its like.
  - c. **Literary miracle:** a divine text whose literary merit (meaning its harmonious composition, syntactic precision, internal structure, and use of literary elements) far surpasses the highest literary standard within human ability, rendering it suprahuman and irreplicable. Bringing the two definitions together, the Qur'an is labeled as a literary miracle due to our human inability to improve upon it or produce something of its literary caliber.

### Slide 15–17

#### Ring Composition

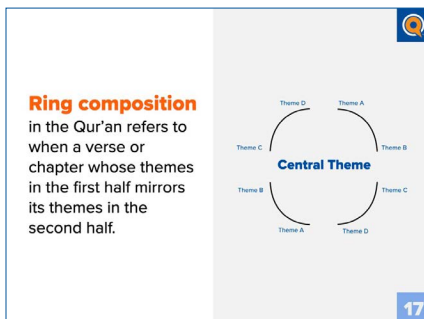
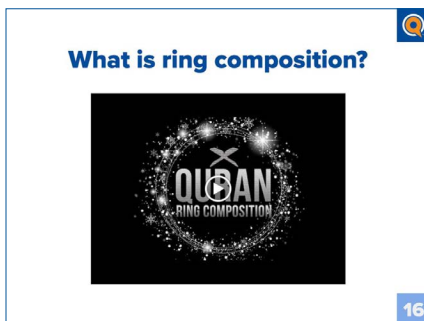


1. Proceed to **slide 15** and ask students to share some of the ways we commonly find text organized in books. Hint: students may consider fictional narratives, reference books, informational texts, manuals, etc. You may use the notes below to prompt student thinking and to navigate the class discussion:
  - a. Chronology: some texts, like novels, fictional narratives, and biblical scripture, are sequenced in a linear fashion, by order of events as they occurred in time
  - b. Classification: some texts, like factual or expository essays, are structured topically, beginning with a subject's main idea and then transitioning into its subcategories

- c. Cause/Effect: some texts are structured by juxtaposing events in relation to other events by order of cause and effect
  - d. Process: some texts are structured by listing passages as linear steps or phases of a process
5. Then, ask students to explain whether or not they feel that the verses of Qur'an are organized within a cohesive structure. While students share their honest experiences with the Qur'an, explain that it is common to feel that the Qur'an bounces around, perhaps incoherently, in the subject matters of each surah; its organizational structure isn't easy to follow.

### **Teacher takeaway**

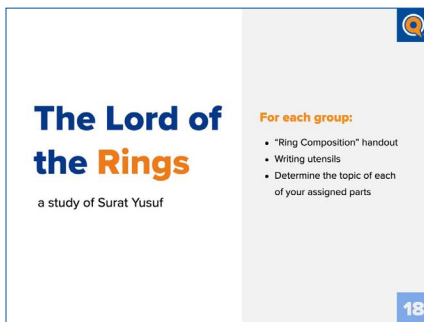
The purpose of this discussion is to address a popular Orientalist attitude that the Qur'an is seemingly "incoherent"—both as an entire codex and each singular surah—and, therefore, compositionally "flawed." Undoubtedly, the Qur'an is a non-linear text. It does not conform to the conventional text-structures common to us in the West, most of which are linear. Doctrinal beliefs, stories of the prophets, and legal instructions on particular subject matters are not collected and packaged thematically, nor are they sequenced in the order of their revelation; rather, they appear disjointed and scattered throughout various surahs. In the following activity, students will learn that while the Qur'an is indeed non-linear, it maintains subtle yet complex cohesion using uncommon organizational structures such as ring composition.



6. Transition to **slide 16**. Tell students that they will watch a ten-minute video about a unique organizational structure, i.e., ring composition, found within the Qur'an. The Qur'an employs this structure on a macro and micro level, as they will see.
7. Next, play the video.
8. Continue to **slide 17** and call on some students to briefly recap the video's key takeaways about the Qur'an's compositional structure within Surat al-Baqarah, ayat al-kursi, and the Qur'an as a whole. The following notes may be used in the course of the discussion:
  - a. The Qur'an is not organized chronologically, with the first verses revealed placed in the beginning and the last verses revealed placed in the end.
  - b. Surat al-Baqarah, for example, was not revealed starting with verse one, followed by verse two, then three, and so on; rather, its verses were revealed out of sequence, over a span of many years, and interspaced with the revelation of verses from other chapters. The Qur'an's unusual manner of revelation makes implementing ring composition much more difficult than conventional books, especially as the Prophet transmitted the Qur'an orally and from memory, without the convenience of writing technologies.
  - c. Conventional books follow an editorial process which allows the author to gradually refine the text over time. However, the Qur'an did not undergo an editorial process. Prophet Muhammad would place the verses in their positions as soon as they were revealed to him. With each new verse, he would not review what was previously revealed to see where he could position them in order to maintain a ring structure. Rather, spontaneous revelation was immediately followed by the placement of the verse, its position fixed.

- d. Unlike conventional books, the content of the Qur'an was revealed circumstantially and tied to events which were out of the Prophet's control; he could not plan a structure (like ring composition) ahead of time.
5. After recapping the video's key takeaways, remind students that ring composition is when the verses in the Qur'an are structured around a central theme so that the topic(s) in the first half mirror the topic(s) in the second half of that section or surah. Use the diagram on the slide to illustrate this point.
6. Inform students that, in an upcoming activity, they will practice mapping out ring composition in Surat Yusuf.

### Slides 18–19



7. Proceed to **slide 18**. To set up the student activity, complete the following:
  - a. Break the class into six groups and pass out one copy of **2.5 “Ring Composition”** to each group. Tell students that their handout (2.5) contains the English translation of Surat Yusuf, broken into twelve parts.
  - b. Assign each group a total of two parts of varying lengths from 2.5.
  - c. Instruct each group to study their two assigned parts from Surat Yusuf, and to determine the topic that ties the verses of each part together. They will record the topic of each part on their handout.
  - d. While the groups are collaborating, place the twelve sheets of numbered paper in a ring where they are visible to all students. You will use this ring of numbered paper to create a large visual of the ring structure within Surat Yusuf.
  - e. After 7–8 minutes, bring all of the students near the ring of paper. Ask each group to share the topics of their two assigned parts. Record each topic on its respective numbered paper until all twelve parts of Surat Yusuf have been identified and recorded within the ring. Use the following answer key during the activity:

Part one, verses 1-7: Yusuf's dream

Part two, verses 8-20: Yusuf's brothers plot against Yusuf

Part three, verses 21-29: the minister's wife is tempted by Yusuf

Part four, verses 30-35: the Egyptian ladies are tempted by Yusuf

Part five, verses 36-42: Yusuf's imprisonment

Part six, verses 43-46: the king's dream

Part seven, verses 47-49: the king's dream is interpreted

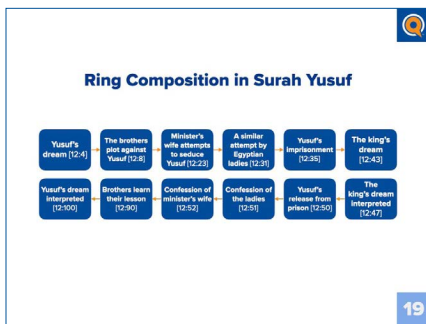
Part eight, verses 50: Yusuf's release from prison

Part nine, verses 51: the confession of the Egyptian ladies

Part ten, verses 52-53: the confession of the minister's wife

Part eleven, verses 54-79: Yusuf's brothers learn their lesson

Part twelve, verses 94-103: Yusuf's dream is interpreted



- Continue to **slide 19** to display another visual of the ring structure within Surat Yusuf. Explain how the topics within the first half of the surah, the series of unfortunate events Yusuf endured, perfectly mirror the topics in the second half where each of his hardships were resolved.
- Ask students to share how recognizing and studying ring composition has impacted their appreciation of the literary miracle of the Qur'an.

Teacher takeaway: Ring composition or ring structure, as it is also known, is not required to be present in Qur'an. However, it is one of the many literary miracles and displays of Divine precision and syntactic intention within the Qur'an. Students should neither assume ring composition exists everywhere nor that it must exist everywhere. Rather, ring composition is one method by which we can see another perspective of the beautiful, comprehensive message of the Qur'an.

### Slides 20 - 21

#### Cohesion between surahs

**Connect...**

**Surat al-Fatiha (1:6-7)**  
Guide us upon the straight path, the path of those on whom You have bestowed Your grace, not of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray.

اهدنا الصراط المستقيم صراط الذين أنعمت عليهم غير المغضوب عليهم ولا الضالين

➔

**Surat al-Baqarah (2:1-2)**  
Alif. Lam. Mim. That is the Book wherein there is no doubt, a guidance for the God-conscious.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

**...the dots**

20

- Proceed to **slide 20**. Explain how there are more examples of structural coherence in the Qur'an beyond ring composition. In particular, there is thematic coherence between the surahs and their placement in the Qur'an, how one ends and the next one begins.
- Example:** The first two surahs in the Qur'an are al-Fatiha and al-Baqarah; the end of the former surah coheres with the beginning of the latter. Recite the two passages aloud:

- The end of Surat al-Fatiha reads, "Guide us upon the straight path, the path of those on whom You have bestowed Your grace, not of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray." [1:6-7]
- The beginning of Surat al-Baqarah reads, "Alif. Lam. Mim. That is the Book wherein there is no doubt, a guidance for the God-conscious." [2:1-2]

#### Teacher's note

For more instructional material on this subject, you may conduct an extension activity using 2.6 "Gallery Walk". Please note that the content of that material, the thematic coherence between the last ten surahs, is advanced and may not be suitable for all student bodies. The activity instructions, the gallery walk posters, and the answer key are all provided on that document. If you choose to omit this activity, skip slide twenty-one and proceed to the consolidation.


**Gallery walk**

**How are the surahs thematically connected?**

Read the translations of each pair of surahs, focusing on the thematic coherence between them. How are the two surahs connected thematically?

Record your response on a post-it note and stick it on the poster.

21

- Next, ask the students to identify the thematic coherence between the end of al-Fatiha and the beginning of al-Baqarah. After a few students have attempted an answer, explain the following: Surat al-Fatiha ends with a supplication for divine guidance. Subsequently, Surat al-Baqarah opens with a response to that supplication: if we are truly sincere in our quest, we would seek it from the Qur'an, the ultimate Book of guidance. 
- Optional** [for advanced students]: Continue to **slide 21**. To further explore the thematic coherence between surahs, conduct a gallery walk using 2.6.



### Teacher takeaway

When studying the Qur'an closely, thematic coherence can be found between preceding and succeeding verses and chapters. Throughout the Qur'an, Allah's presumed intentionality of the Qur'an's order becomes apparent through close examination. Given the historical context and circumstances of the Qur'an's compilation, the organization and sequencing of the Qur'an is evidence of its Divine origin. Studying the placement of surahs is meant to give students a new appreciation of the inimitability of the Qur'an, and to discredit Western criticism of the Qur'an's apparent incoherence.

## Consolidation (5 min)

### Slide 22

1. Proceed to **slide 22**. For their exit ticket, ask students to form an opinion about something they learned about the Qur'an's literary significance. They may choose one of the following topics from the lesson:
  - a. The divine origin of the Qur'an
  - b. The Qur'an's emotive and rational elements
  - c. The Qur'an's unique structural composition

Write down your opinion and support it with facts and reasonings from the lesson. For example, a student's opinion can be: "The literary elements in the Qur'an help further my conviction in its divine origin." They can further support their opinion by using facts from the lesson such as: "Surat al-Baqarah was revealed and puzzled together over a period of ten years, orally and on the tongue of an unlettered human being. Yet the exact middle verse in that surah speaks of 'the middle nation.' No human could work out such precise word placement without the tools of editing at his disposal. This is one evidence that supports the claim that the Qur'an is divine."

### Teacher takeaway

This exit ticket is designed to invite students to consolidate the key concepts from the lesson and to articulate the substantive evidence behind the claims made about the Qur'an.

## Homework

Pass out a copy of **2.7 "Homework"** to each student. In this assignment, they will select one of three claims about the Qur'an established throughout the lesson:

- The Qur'an was not authored by a human; it is of divine origin, conveyed through the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.
- The Qur'an is a living miracle in literary form; its literary merits far surpass what is possible for humans to accomplish with our shared language conventions.
- The Qur'an is not jumbled; rather it contains unique structural and thematic coherence between its verses and surahs.

Students will write a page-long summary explaining and articulating the substantive evidence toward that claim.

**Exit Ticket**

This lesson looked into the **literary magnificence of the Qur'an**. Taking what you learned today, form an opinion about one of the topics discussed:

- The divine origin of the Qur'an
- The Qur'an's emotive and rational elements
- The Qur'an's unique structural composition

Write out your opinion and support it with facts and reasonings from the lesson.

22

name: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Homework**  
**The Qur'anic Miracle**

**Claim:** Choose one of the pre-written claims to support, question, and summarize.

- The Qur'an was not authored by a human; it is of divine origin, conveyed through the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.
- The Qur'an is a living miracle in literary form; its literary merits far surpass what is possible for humans to accomplish with our shared language conventions.
- The Qur'an is not jumbled; rather, it contains unique structural and thematic coherence between its verses and surahs.

**Support:** Provide supporting evidence for your claim. What do you see, feel, or know that lends evidence to your claim?

**Question:** Raise a question regarding your claim. What else are you wondering? What is left unanswered about your claim?

2.7 ASSIGNMENT

2.7



## Stage 3: Assessments

### Performance tasks

#### Formative assessment

1. Use the whole-class discussion and the notecard submissions following the **2.1 “Two Claims, One Truth”** activity to assess the first objective: students’ ability to recognize the historical circumstances of the Qur’an’s revelation that characterize the Qur’an to be unlike other literary “classics.”
2. Use the **2.4 “Logical or Emotive?”** activity to informally assess the second objective: students’ ability to recognize the Qur’an’s perfect union of emotive and logical elements in a singular homogenous text.
3. Use **2.5 “Ring Composition”**, student discussions, and the gallery walk activity to informally assess the third objective: apply the ring theory on a short passage of the Qur’an as an analytic framework to better appreciate the literary magnificence of the Qur’an.

#### Summative assessment

Students will complete take-home assignment **2.7 “Homework”**. They will select one of the three claims and articulate substantive evidence for that claim based on the class lesson.

name: \_\_\_\_\_

date: \_\_\_\_\_

Two Claims, One Truth

Team “untrained but trying”

First, your task...

Your team is going to write a sonnet! It must read as a poetic commentary on a serious topic, such as a social issue or something from current events. After consulting your team, write your topic here: \_\_\_\_\_

How do you compose a sonnet? The first characteristic of a sonnet is that there must be three sets of four lines, followed by a couplet (one set of two lines), for a total of fourteen lines. A set of four lines is called a quatrain. The first quatrain will rhyme like this: a-b-a-b, for example, train, race, cane, face. In the second quatrain, you will use different words and it will rhyme like this: c-d-c-d, for example, grow, van, show, fan. In the third quatrain, you will use different words again and it will rhyme like this: e-f-e-f, for example, fun, shine, sun, dine. Together, your three quatrains will form twelve lines. The last two lines (thirteen and fourteen) will be a rhyming couplet, which follows the pattern g-g and uses words you haven't used in your rhyming so far. An example is howl and owl. The second characteristic of a sonnet is that each line must have ten syllables. An example of this is from Shakespeare's famous sonnet, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" And finally, the third characteristic is that each line is written in iambic pentameter, or five metrical feet, each consisting of one short (or unstressed) syllable followed by one long (or stressed) syllable, as in above. The sonnet will look something like this:

First quatrain: \_\_\_\_\_ train  
\_\_\_\_\_ race  
\_\_\_\_\_ cane  
\_\_\_\_\_ face

Second quatrain: \_\_\_\_\_ grow  
\_\_\_\_\_ van  
\_\_\_\_\_ show  
\_\_\_\_\_ fan

Third quatrain: \_\_\_\_\_ run  
\_\_\_\_\_ shine  
\_\_\_\_\_ sun  
\_\_\_\_\_ dine

Couplet: \_\_\_\_\_ howl  
\_\_\_\_\_ owl

On a separate sheet of paper, go ahead now and collaborate with your team to write a sonnet. When you are finished, discuss the following questions.

2.1 WORKSHEET 1

2.1

name: \_\_\_\_\_

date: \_\_\_\_\_

Logical or Emotive?

Read the following definitions.

<b>Logical</b>	<b>a message whose content uses logic and reasoning in order to appeal to our intellects</b> Ask yourself, "Does this verse provoke me to think critically and apply my logic and reasoning to a serious subject matter?"
<b>Emotive</b>	<b>a message whose content provokes intense feelings and lasting impressions</b> Ask yourself, "Does this verse elicit strong emotions inside of me, like comfort, fear, hope, wonder, relief, sadness, etc.?"

With your partner, study each verse from the Qur'an and determine if its content is strictly logical or emotive, and record that number (0-7) in its respective bucket below. If you believe that a verse cannot be contained in one bucket, you may record it in the third bucket as undecided.

Logical

Emotive

Undecided

2.4 WORKSHEET 1

2.4

name: \_\_\_\_\_

date: \_\_\_\_\_

Ring composition

Surat Yusuf

Task: With your team, study your assigned selection of verses from Surat Yusuf and then determine the topic that ties those verses together. Be prepared to present your conclusions with the class.

Part one: verses 1-7

1 Adh-Lam-Ra. (These letters are one of the miracles of the Qur'an, and none but Allah (alone) knows their meanings). These are the verses of the Clear Book (the Qur'an that makes clear the legal and illegal things, legal laws, a source of guidance and a blessing). 2 Verily, We have sent this Qur'an down as an Arabic Qur'an in order that you may understand. 3 We relate unto you (Muhammad) the best of stories through Our revelations unto you, of this Qur'an. And before this (i.e. before the coming of Divine inspiration to you), you were among those who know nothing about it (the Qur'an). 4 (Remember) when Yusuf said to his father, "Oh my father! Verily, I saw (in a dream) eleven stars and the sun and the moon. I saw them prostrating themselves to me." 5 He (the father) said, "Oh my son, relate not your vision to your brothers, lest they arrange a plot against you. Verily, Shaytan is to man an open enemy." 6 Thus will your Lord choose you and teach you the interpretation of dreams (and other things) and perfect His Favour on you and on the offspring of Ya'qub (Jacob), as He perfected it on your fathers, Ibrahim (Abraham) and Is'hake (Isaac) (beforeme). Verily, your Lord is All-Knowing, All-Wise." 7 Verily, in Yusuf and his brethren, there were 'ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) for those who ask.

Selection topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Part two: verses 8-20

8 When they said, "Truly, Yusuf and his brother (Benjamin) are loved more by our father than we, but we are 'Is'hak (a strong proof). Really, our father is in a plain error." 9 "Yusuf or cast him out to some (other) land, so that the favor of your father may be given to you alone, and after that you will be righteous folk by intending repentance before committing the sin!" 10 One from among them said, "Do not kill Yusuf, but if you must do something, throw him down to the bottom of a well; he will be picked up by some caravan of travellers." 11 They said, "Oh our father! Why do you not trust us with Yusuf, when we are indeed his well-wishers?" 12 Send him with us tomorrow to enjoy himself and play, and verily, we will take care of him." 13 He (Ya'qub) said, "Truly, it saddens me that you should take him away. I fear lest a wolf should devour him, while you are careless of him."

2.5 WORKSHEET 1

2.5

37



Instructions and activities

Lesson 1

Lesson 2

***Lesson 3 • Promised  
preservation***



## Essential Questions

What does it mean for a report to be *mutawatir*?

How does understanding the concept of *tawatur* strengthen our conviction of the Qur'an's historic authenticity?



## Key vocabulary

### **Qur'an**

the revealed, unchanged speech of God that was transmitted to us from the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ through Angel Jibril within the two covers of the mushaf (codex), according to the seven well-known *ahruf* (recitals) through *tawatur*

### **Mushaf**

the physical copy of the Qur'anic codex that signifies the uncreated word of God

### **Tawatur**

a chain of transmission so large, generation after generation, that it becomes inconceivable that the report is based on a corroborated lie

### **Mutawatir**

an undeniable report transmitted by a large number of reliable narrators to another, generation after generation, so that it becomes inconceivable that the report is based on a corroborated lie

## Lesson plan 3

# Promised preservation

## Stage 1: Big ideas and desired results

### Lesson overview

The focus of the first two lesson plans has been on the text and historical context of the Qur'an. The first lesson plan started with an exercise to push us to be more historically introspective by critically examining social distinctions between our society and that of seventh-century Arabia. We then dove into the nature of miracles in Islam and highlighted—from a micro level (ayat) to a macro perspective (surah)—some aspects of the Qur'an's literary excellence and beauty. At this stage of the unit, students should have a better appreciation of the Qur'an and its miraculous nature. However, they may claim that even if we are to recognize the literary merits of the Qur'an, for the claim that it was indeed a miracle of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to be true, the Qur'an must also be historically verifiable to be from seventh-century Arabia. In the final lesson plan, we will resolve this question and establish the historical veracity of the Qur'an as a text revealed to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the codex (mushaf) that was codified and distributed across the heartlands of Islam.

In the beginning of this lesson, we will explore how historical information transfers from one generation to the next and explore the epistemic considerations Muslim theologians and historians in general have outlined to verify such knowledge. In the second and final part of the lesson plan, students will recognize how the revelation of the Qur'an and its compilation falls within verifiable knowledge due to its compliance with *tawatur*. This lesson will establish that each verse, chapter, and compilation narrative of the Qur'an into a codex is historical fact and is verifiable with the highest degree of certainty with regard to historical knowledge.

### Learning objectives

Toward the completion of this lesson, students should be able to:

- 1 Understand how historical information is transferred and shall appreciate the concept of *tawatur*, multiple chain transmission, as a measure that provides knowledge of historical events. *(cognitive and affective)*
- 2 Recognize the historical accuracy of dating the Qur'an to the Prophet's era. *(cognitive and affective)*

## Stage 2: Learning plan

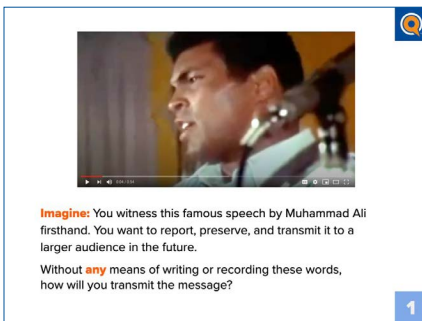
**Total time: 50 min**

### Supplies/equipment

- Lesson plan 3 presentation (for teacher)
- Projector/screen/computer/internet connection to display presentation and play videos
- Printouts of 3.1 for each pair of students
- Printouts of 3.2 and 3.3 for each student

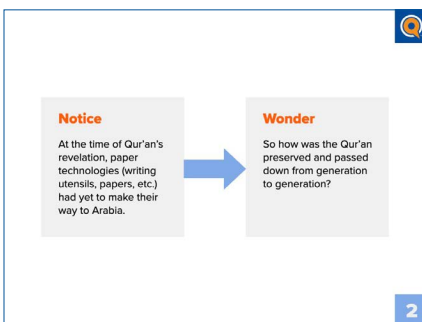
### Opening activity (10 min)

#### Slide 1–2



**Imagine:** You witness this famous speech by Muhammad Ali firsthand. You want to report, preserve, and transmit it to a larger audience in the future.

Without **any** means of writing or recording these words, how will you transmit the message?



**Notice**


At the time of Qur'an's revelation, paper technologies (writing utensils, papers, etc.) had yet to make their way to Arabia.

**Wonder**

So how was the Qur'an preserved and passed down from generation to generation?

1. Open **slide 1** and ask students to imagine the following situation: “You witness this famous speech by Muhammad Ali firsthand. You want to report, preserve, and transmit it to a larger audience in the future. The caveat is that this speech takes place in a historical era where there is no print, writing, or digital technology available. Without **any** means of writing or recording these words, how will you transmit the message?”
2. Next, play the audio clip of Muhammad Ali’s speech. While listening to the clip, students may find that a speech devoid of text and images demands auditory and mental acuity from listeners, so that what was heard is not forgotten.
3. After the clip is played, ask students to share their responses to the question on the slide, “Without **any** means of writing or recording these words, how will you transmit the message?”
4. Continue to **slide 2** to connect the opening activity with the context of the Qur’an’s revelation. Remind students that the way we transmit information today, digitally and through writing, is neither universal nor absolute. Before the advent of writing technologies, people celebrated oral traditions whereupon cultural knowledge was preserved and transmitted through memory and by word of mouth. This was the case at the time of the Qur’an’s revelation; writing technologies (writing utensils, paper, etc.) were scarce and had yet to make their way to seventh century Arabia. With limited access to animal hide, animal bones, and parchment, the early Muslims preserved the Qur’an in a method unlike ours today.
5. Invite students to wonder about the following question: “So how was the Qur’an preserved and passed down from generation to generation?” They may turn and talk with an elbow partner to discuss their thoughts.

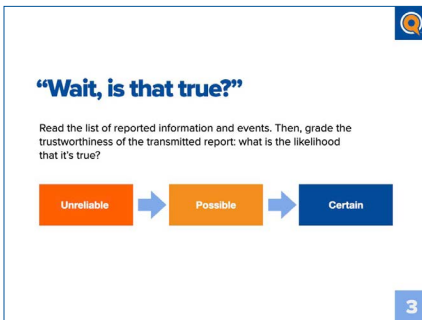
### **Teacher takeaway**

The purpose of these activities is to place the students within the historic context of seventh century Arabia and to reflect on the Qur'an's compilation history—how it moved from orally-revealed verses to a single Qur'anic codex we interact with today in book-form. As a society, seventh century Arabia was based on orality and memory rather than written literature. An absence of print and digital technologies meant that literacy—the ability to read and write—had very little economic value. Consequently, the intergenerational cultural transmission of knowledge, values, attitudes, ideas, cultural material and beliefs occurred by word of mouth and were received, preserved and transmitted orally from one generation to another. Though some companions (the Prophet's  scribes) did record the verses on animal hide, animal bones, parchment, and scrolls, these materials were scattered and incomplete. Unlike today, where information is stored in a “cloud” in our technological devices, the Arabs of the time depended heavily on their memory as a primary means of retaining information. If information wasn't memorized, it would be lost forever.

To complete this unit, this final lesson explores how the Qur'an was preserved by the earliest generation of Muslims, how it was compiled in three distinct stages, and what led to the production of a physical copy of the Qur'an.

### **Learning activity (35 min)**

#### **Slide 3**



**“Wait, is that true?”**

Read the list of reported information and events. Then, grade the trustworthiness of the transmitted report: what is the likelihood that it's true?

Unreliable → Possible → Certain

3

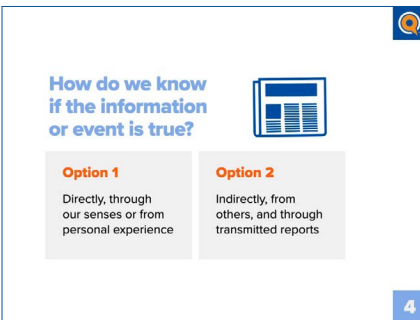
1. Proceed to **slide 3**. To begin exploring the question of the Qur'an's compilation and preservation, students will complete a quick activity, **3.1 “Wait, is that true?”**
2. Explain the following directions to students:
  - a. Pair up with a partner and grab one copy of **3.1** to share.
  - b. Quickly read through the list of reported information and events.
  - c. Then, grade the trustworthiness of the transmitted report: what is the likelihood that it's true? Choose between the three listed options (unreliable, possible, or certain).
  - d. Finally, briefly respond to the reflection question at the end of **3.1**.
3. Give students five to seven minutes to complete this activity.
4. Next, invite students to discuss their responses to the following question, located at the bottom of their table: How can you tell whether or not the reported information and events above are true? How can you be certain that some reports are truthful without having personally experienced them or witnessed them firsthand? They may also share how they chose to grade some of the reports and their reasoning behind it.
5. During the discussion, prompt students to think critically about the sources of our knowledge: is all of our knowledge acquired individually, through our senses and/or personal experiences?

### **Teacher takeaway**

The purpose of this activity is to prepare students for a larger discussion on the subject of ‘ilm al-naqli (knowledge acquired through trustworthy, transmitted reports) and tawatur in light of the Qur’an’s collation and preservation. In this activity, students will examine a list of reported information and events and grade the truthfulness of the report. All of the reports relate to information and events that have not been experienced or witnessed firsthand by students, nor derived through their individual senses. Despite this, many reports from the list are believed with certainty, such as the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the U.S.A. moon landing, and the transatlantic slave trade. Just as we believe the occurrence of such events—with certainty, established through a succession of reliably-transmitted reports—so too can we believe that the Qur’an was preserved from the Prophet’s era to the present day. The following section introduces students to the concept of tawatur as a method of verifying that a historic event occurred, such as the collation and preservation of the Qur’an dating back to the Prophet’s era.

### **Slide 4–6**

#### **Tawatur Reports**

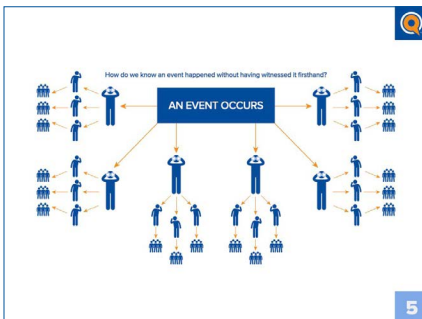


How do we know if the information or event is true?

**Option 1**  
Directly, through our senses or from personal experience

**Option 2**  
Indirectly, from others, and through transmitted reports

4



1. Proceed to **slide 4**. To conclude the whole- class discussion, explain to students that our knowledge of certain information or events can either be:
  - a. acquired directly, through our senses/from personal experience, or;
  - b. acquired indirectly, from others and through transmitted reports (e.g., the news media, subject experts, educators, trustworthy family and friends, reference material, and so on).

Most of our knowledge is acquired indirectly, as they may have concluded in the previous activity.

2. Continue to **slide 5**. Explain to students that we do not need to witness an event firsthand in order to believe with certainty that it happened. We believe, for example, the occurrence of World War II, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the Prophet’s physical miracles not because we were direct witness to them, but because many trustworthy reports of their occurrence reached us indirectly as transmitted knowledge (‘ilm al-naqli).
3. To illustrate this concept, direct students to the graphic on the slide and use the present-day example of a car accident to explain how we come to believe an event occurred, despite not having witnessed it firsthand:
  - a. Imagine that several credible individuals, traveling on the same freeway, in different cars and from different directions, approach you at various times of the day reporting a major car accident that shut down the traffic flow.
  - b. You have not witnessed the accident yourself, but due to the sheer number of credible people reporting the same facts and details, your confidence grows in the veracity of the report.
  - c. You conclude that all of these individuals approaching you at differing times with corroborating details could not have conspired upon a fabrication.



### Words to know

**Tawatur:** a chain of transmission so large, generation after generation, that it becomes inconceivable that the report is based on a corroborated lie

**Mutawatir:** an undeniable report transmitted by a large number of reliable narrators to another, generation after generation, so that it becomes inconceivable that the report is based on a corroborated lie



6

4. Transition to **slide 6**. Tell students that this process of verifying the truthfulness of a transmitted report, confirming that an event did certainly happen, applies to our Islamic history as well. And the strongest grade of truthfulness assigned to a transmitted report is mutawatir.

- Define tawatur as “a chain of transmission so large, generation after generation, that it becomes inconceivable that the report is based on a corroborated lie.”
- Define mutawatir as “an undeniable report transmitted by a large number of reliable narrators to another, generation after generation, so that it becomes inconceivable that the report is based on a corroborated lie.” This provides confirmation that the report is authentically attributed to its source at a level above reasonable doubt, as it is beyond historical possibility that narrators could have conspired to fabricate that report.



### Teacher takeaway

The purpose of this section is to introduce students to the concept of tawatur. The codex of the Qur'an is considered a mutawatir text because of its process of preservation which relied on both what was dictated by the Prophet ﷺ directly and what the Muslims committed to memory. Companions of the Prophet, including Zayd ibn Thabit and Umar bin al-Khattab worked together to compile the Qur'anic codex, and would not accept any written material unless there were at least two witnesses that could testify to its authenticity. Every verse was corroborated by multiple chains of transmission, putting a meticulous process in place to avoid altering words of the Qur'an. Verses of the Qur'an written down on parchment would only be accepted if it was written down in the presence of the Prophet ﷺ. In classifying a text as mutawatir, each successive stage has a multitude of people receiving and transmitting information. We know the information to be true because at each stage, there are a number of people reporting the same (or very similar) information. It's simply impossible that they could all conspire to fabricate the information.

### Slide 7

- Proceed to **slide 7** and ask students to ponder the following question: “How can we be sure that the Qur'an we have today is the same Qur'an that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ recited to his companions over 1400 years ago?”
- Call on some students to share their thoughts as a way of gauging their prior knowledge on the Qur'an's compilation history. Explain that this question is central to the legitimacy of Islam as a religion.

How can we be sure that **the Qur'an we have today** is the **same Qur'an** that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ recited to his companions **over 1,400 years ago**?



7

## Slide 8–12

**Graphic organizer**

"Indeed, upon Us is its collection and recitation. So when We recite it [upon you, oh Muhammad], follow its recitation." (75:17-18)

إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْآنَهُ

Part 1 The Prophet's Era  
Part 2 Abu Bakr's Caliphate  
Part 3 Umar & Uthman's Caliphate  
Part 4 Present Day Mushaf



8




إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْآنَهُ

"Indeed, upon Us is its collection and recitation. So when We recite it [upon you, oh Muhammad], follow its recitation."  
[Surat Al-Qiyamah 75:17–18]

**The Prophet's Era:**  
preserving the Qur'an in memory and writing

**PROOF THE QURAN HAS BEEN PRESERVED**




9

### Teacher's note


Provided for each clip is a bullet list summarizing the key points from that stage of the Qur'an's collation. The notes are taken from the video clip as well as external sources of information. You may reference the additional information (italicized) at your own discretion.

1. Proceed to **slide 8** and give students a copy of **3.2 "Graphic Organizer"**. Tell them that in order to answer this question, they will need to understand the three stages in which the Qur'an was collated into a single mutawatir book, followed by our modern-day interaction with the Qur'an as a standardized published text.

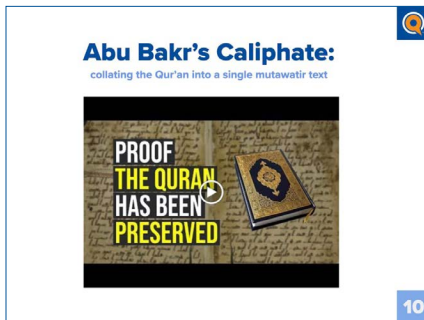
- a. **Stage 1** The Prophet's Era, preserving the Qur'an in memory and writing
- b. **Stage 2** Abu Bakr's Caliphate, collating the Qur'an into a single mutawatir text
- c. **Stage 3** Umar and Uthman's Caliphate, publishing standard copies of the master-text for the Islamic world
- d. **Present-Day:** Present-Day Mushaf, standardized text published worldwide

2. Continue to share the verse from Surat al-Qiyamah in which Allah guarantees the preservation of the Qur'an—a divine promise that was fulfilled under the leadership of Prophet ﷺ and his rightly guided companions. 

Explain that the Qur'an is a mutawatir text in that the pronunciation and placement of each verse was corroborated by multiple chains of transmission, as they will see.

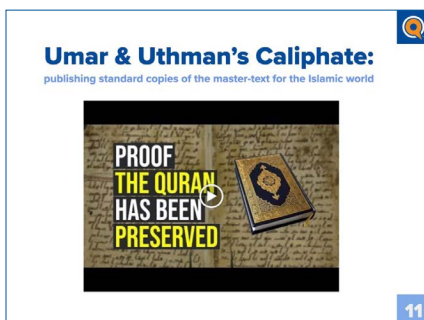
3. Transition to **slide 9** and direct students to their graphic organizer. As you play each clip (there are four total), instruct them to fill out the correlating box with important and insightful information about how the Qur'an was collated and preserved specifically during that time period. 
4. Play the first clip titled "The Prophet's Era." ([The Prophet's Era](#) 0:35-2:00) Once the clip is complete, give students a couple of minutes to fill in their graphic organizer with information that supports the Qur'an's preservation during the Prophet's lifetime. To ensure students are on the right track, the following list may be used:
  - a. The Qur'anic verses were revealed in the timespan of twenty-three years.
  - b. The Prophet ﷺ received them through Angel Gabriel, in dreams, or directly from God. He recited the verses to his companions as soon as they were revealed.
  - c. His companions immediately memorized them —this was easy, as the early Arabs relied on memory for all matters of life—and cemented them to memory during the five daily prayers, both private and congregational. The companions would correct one another in the event of a mistake.
  - d. The Prophet ﷺ appointed scribes who would write down the revelation on dried palm leaves, dried camel bone, thin stones, scrolls, wood, and pieces of hide. Among his scribes were the four rightly guided caliphs, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali, as well as al-Zubayr ibn al-Awwam, Zayd ibn Thabit, Ubayy ibn Kaab, and many others. Zayd ibn Thabit said, "We used to put the Qur'an together joining scrolls."

- e. When the Prophet ﷺ received a new revelation, he would summon a scribe and say, “Place these verses in the surah that includes such and such...” so that the complete order of the verses and surahs were dictated under his authority.
- f. Every Ramadan, the Prophet ﷺ reviewed what was revealed from Qur’an by reciting it every night to Angel Gabriel. He reviewed the entire Qur’an with Angel Gabriel twice in his last Ramadan, just before he ﷺ passed away.
- g. In summary, the Prophet ﷺ and his companions relied on oral and written means to preserve the Qur’an.



5. Continue to **slide 10** and play the second clip titled “Abu Bakr’s Caliphate” ([Abu Bakr’s Caliphate](#) 3:08-4:35). Once the clip is complete, give students a couple of minutes to fill in their graphic organizer with information that supports the Qur’an’s preservation during Abu Bakr’s caliphate. To ensure students are on the right track, the following list may be used:

- a. Military conflict led to the death of many huffadh (memorizers of the entire Qur’an), specifically the Battle of Yamama during Abu Bakr’s reign. Umar and Abu Bakr summoned Zayd ibn Thabit to lead a public project for collating the Qur’an into a single book so that the complete recitation of Qur’an wouldn’t be lost upon the next generation.
- b. Umar aided Zayd in this project by summoning all remaining huffadh to recite what they preserved to memory. Zayd ibn Thabit said, “I pursued my task, collecting the Qur’an written on dried date branches and thin stones, and kept in people’s memories.” His two sources were: what was memorized by the Prophet’s companions, and what the scribes had written under the Prophet’s dictation. For the latter, he required two external witnesses to testify that the verses on the written material were recorded under the Prophet’s dictation.
- c. The order of verses and surahs were confirmed by oral and written records, each corroborating the other, and by a large number of transmitters; this renders the first Qur’anic codex a mutawatir text.
- d. Abu Bakr kept a master-copy of the Qur’an— the complete and certified copy that was collated under the supervision of a large number of huffadh and scribes—in his possession. When he died, this master-copy was given to Umar.



6. Continue to **slide 11** and play the third clip titled “Umar and Uthman’s Caliphate” ([Umar & Uthman’s Caliphate](#) 4:35-5:44). Once the clip is complete, give students a couple of minutes to fill in their graphic organizer with information that supports the Qur’an’s preservation during Umar and Uthman’s caliphates. To ensure students are on the right track, the following list may be used:

- a. After Umar’s death, the master-copy of the Qur’an was given to Hafsa, the daughter of Umar and the Mother of the Believers.
- b. Because Islam was spreading far beyond Arabia, to speakers of different languages and dialects, Uthman decided to standardize the master-copy of the Qur’an for the entire ‘ummah in order to eliminate disputes over its recitation. This standard version would remain in

the Qurayshi dialect, per the decision of Uthman's council with the remaining muhajirin and 'ansar

- c. Uthman requested for the Qur'an's master-copy, held with Hafsa at the time, to be sent to him. He then summoned Zayd ibn Thabit and three others to make copies of it.
- d. One standard copy was sent to each Islamic province, to be accessible to the masses, and the private collections of the Qur'an were burned. He then returned the master-copy back to Hafsa.



7. Continue to [slide 12](#) and play the fourth clip titled "Present-Day Mushaf" ([Present Day Mushaf](#) 5:43-7:56). Remind students that the terms mushaf refers to "the physical copy of the Qur'anic codex that signifies the uncreated word of God" rather than the Qur'an's recitation. Then, with the help of students, recap the following notes:

- a. The standard copy of the Qur'an from Uthman's caliphate is considered to be exactly like the Qur'an we read today.
- b. Diacritical marks were added after the time of Uthman to assist non-Arab Muslims in properly reading it.
- c. Every Qur'an printed today has a 1,400 year mutawatir chain, giving us confidence that it is the same book recited by the Prophet ﷺ himself.

#### Teacher takeaway

One of the central tenets in Islam is that the Qur'an will remain preserved for all generations. The Qur'an states: "Indeed, it is We who sent down the Qur'an and indeed, We will be its Guardian" [Surat al-Hijr, 15:9]. The purpose of this activity is to have students consider three points. First, realize that the Qur'an came down in parts and not as complete chapters or as a complete text. Second, understand how the Qur'an was preserved through memory (as committing things to memory was a common cultural practice of the time) or recorded on animal hide over a span of twenty-three years. And lastly, accept the historical accuracy of the Qur'an dating back to the Prophet's ﷺ era as a fulfillment of God's promise to preserve the Qur'an. At the end of the activity, students should see the preservation of the Qur'an as additional support for its miraculous nature.

It is also important to note that despite the significant political differences among early Muslims, Muslims far and wide have always unanimously accepted the text of the Qur'an as it is today.

#### Consolidation (5 min)

##### Slide 13

- 1. Proceed to [slide 13](#) and give students a couple of minutes to examine the two Qur'anic texts. Then, ask them to share what they notice.
- 2. Students may notice that the text on the parchment is difficult to read because it lacks diacritical marks. Upon close examination, they may notice that both texts are from Surat Taha, the twentieth surah of the Qur'an.



3. Inform students that the parchment is the oldest known copy of the Qur'an, found at the University of Birmingham. It is believed that the manuscript was written about 1,300 years ago, soon after the death of the Prophet ﷺ, likely by one of his companions.
4. Exit ticket: Pass out a blank notecard to each student. In a few sentences, they will respond to the following question: "How and why is the Qur'an we have today a *mutawatir* text, and how do these pictures support that belief?"



### Teacher takeaway

The passage of time continues to testify to the authenticity of the preservation of the Qur'an. The manuscript being held at the University of Birmingham is written on sheep-skin and dated to be over 1,300 years old. Because of the manuscript's similarity to our present mushaf, it supports the fact that the Qur'an has been unchanged since the time of the Prophet ﷺ.

## Homework

1. Pass out copies of **3.3 "Infographic"** to students. In this homework assignment, students will create an infographic to visually and factually explain the topic of this lesson: *mutawatir*.

name: \_\_\_\_\_
date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Infographic

Design an infographic that communicates how the Qur'an is a *mutawatir* text.

**Step 1 Explore infographics**

View examples of infographics found here: <https://www.instituteforresearch.org/research/infographics>. Record notes about organization, colors, graphics, etc. in the space below.

**Step 2 Reflect on topic**

Your infographic will be a visual explanation of the claim, "the Qur'an is a *mutawatir* text."

**Step 3 Plan the infographic**

	Notes and information
Summarize the content of the topic.	
List seven relevant facts about the topic. (What verifiable facts do you know about your topic?)	
Select your graphics. (How can you provide a visual of your topic?)	

3.3 ASSIGNMENT
**3.3**

name: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

## “Wait, is that true?”

Unreliable → Possible → Certain

Reported information or event	Level of trustworthiness
Men Land on the Moon: American astronauts walk on the moon for the first time in history	
Atomic Bomb Hit - A City Vanished: during World War II, Americans dropped the first ever atomic bomb on two Japanese cities	
Aereo 51: Storming of secretive Nevada base to “see aliens” fails to materialize: a top secret military base believed to have a crashed alien aircraft	
Oldest Qur’an Fragments Found in Birmingham University: the earliest written textual evidence of the Qur’an	

3.1 WORKSHEET 1

## Stage 3: Assessments

### Performance tasks

#### Formative assessment

1. Use the **3.1 “Wait, is that true?”** activity combined with the whole class discussion around tawatur and mutawatir to assess the first objective of this lesson. Through the activity and discussion, students should understand and appreciate how information is transmitted to provide future generations with knowledge of historical events.
2. Use the **3.2 “Graphic Organizer”** to formatively assess student understanding of the accuracy of the Qur’an dating back to the Prophet’s era, and how the preservation process led to the Qur’anic codex we have today.

#### Summative assessment 3.3

1. Students will take home a copy of **3.3 “Infographic”**. Using the online platform Piktochart, students will work to visually and factually explain why the Qur’an is a mutawatir text. A rubric has been provided to formally assess student understanding of both lesson objectives in three areas: definition, information, and visuals.

name: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Graphic organizer

Methods of preserving the Qur’an may have changed over time, but the text of the Qur’an remains unchanged to the present day. Take note of preservation methods during each leader’s time and how it led to the *mushaf* we have today.

Prophet's Era → Abu Bakr's Caliphate → Umar & Uthman's Caliphate → Present-day Mushaf

3.2 WORKSHEET 1

name: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Infographic

Design an infographic that communicates how the Qur’an is a *mutawatir* text.

**Step 1 Explore infographics**

View examples of infographics found here: <https://pageoneinstitute.org/research/infographics>. Record notes about organization, colors, graphics, etc. in the space below.

**Step 2 Reflect on topic**

Your infographic will be a visual explanation of the claim, “The Qur’an is a mutawatir text.”

**Step 3 Plan the infographic**

	Notes and information
Summarize the content of the topic.	
List seven relevant facts about the topic. (What verifiable facts do you know about your topic?)	
Select your graphics. (How can you provide a visual of your topic?)	

3.3 ASSIGNMENT 1





Additional readings

# References

# References and resources

## Quranic references

### Lesson plan 1

وَمَا كُنْتَ تَتْلُو مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُ بِيَمِينِكَ إِذَا لَأَزْتَابَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ

You never recited any Book before it nor did you write one down with your right hand. [Surat al-Ankabut, 29:48]

وَمَا عَلَّمْنَاهُ الشِّعْرَ وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لَهُ ۚ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ وَقُرْءَانٌ مُبِينٌ

And We did not given him (Prophet Muhammad ﷺ), knowledge of poetry, nor is it befitting for him. It is not but a message and a clear Qur'an. [Surat Yasin, 36:69]

هُوَ الَّذِي يُسِيرُكُم فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ سَحْقَىٰ إِذَا كُنْتُمْ فِي الْفُلِكِ وَجَرَيْنَ بِهِم بِرِيحٍ طَيِّبَةٍ وَفَرِحُوا بِهَا جَاءَتْهَا رِيحٌ عَاصِفٌ وَجَاءَهُم الْمَوْجُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَظُنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ أُحِيطَ بِهِمْ ۖ دَعَوُا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ لَئِنْ أَجَبْنَاهُمْ مِنْ هَذِهِ لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ

It is He who enables you to travel on land and sea until, when you are in ships and they sail with them by a good wind and they rejoice therein... [Surat Yunus, 10:22]

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِثْلِهِ ۚ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our servant [Muhammad], then produce a surah the like thereof and call upon your witnesses other than Allah, if you should be truthful. [Surat al-Baqarah; 2:23]

قُلْ لَئِنْ أَجْمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ ۚ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا

Say: 'Surely, if mankind and jinn were to get together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they will never be able to produce the like of it, howsoever they might help one another.' [Suratal-Isra, 17:88]

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُورٍ مِثْلِهِ ۚ مُفْتَرِيَتٍ وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

Or do they say, 'He invented it'? Say, 'Then bring ten surahs like it that have been invented and call whoever you can beside Allah [for assistance], if you should be truthful. [Surat Hud, 11:13]

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِثْلِهِ ۚ وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

Or do they say [about the Prophet], 'He invented it'? Say, 'Then bring forth one surah like it and call upon [for assistance] whomever you can besides Allah, if you should be truthful.' [Surat Yunus; 10:38]

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَسْمَعُوا لِهَذَا الْقُرْآنِ وَالْغَوْا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَغْلِبُونَ

The disbelievers say, 'Do not listen to this Qur'an, but drown it in [noise and] frivolous talk, so that you may gain the upper hand.' [Surat Fussilat; 41:26]

## Lesson plan 2

ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَٰبُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

Alif Lam Mim. That is the Book, wherein is no doubt [of its divine origin and truthfulness]—a guidance for the people of God-consciousness.  
[Surat al- Baqarah, 2:2]

وَمَا كَانَ هَٰذَا الْقُرْءَانُ أَن يُفْتَرَىٰ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَكِن تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ  
مِن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

And it was not [possible] for this Qur'an to be produced by other than Allah. Rather, [it is] a confirmation of what was before it and a detailed explanation of the [former] scripture, about which there is no doubt, from the Lord of the worlds. [Surat Yunus; 10:37]

وَمَا كُنْتَ تَتْلُو مِن قَبْلِهِ مِن كِتَابٍ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُ بِيَمِينِكَ إِذًا لَّا يُزَاتِبَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ

And you did not recite before it any scripture, nor did you inscribe one with your right hand. Otherwise, the falsifiers would have had [cause for] doubt.  
[Surat al-Ankabut, 29:48]

فَقَالَ إِنَّ هَٰذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّؤْتَر

He said, "This is not but magic imitated [from others].  
[Surat al-Muddaththir, 74:24]

عَبَسَ وَتَوَلَّى  
أَن جَاءَهُ الْأَعْمَىٰ  
وَمَا يَدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّهُ بَزَّغَىٰ  
أَوْ يَذَّكَّرُ فَتَنْفَعَهُ الذِّكْرَىٰ  
أَمَّا مَنِ اسْتَغْنَىٰ  
فَأَن تِلْهُ تَصَدَّىٰ

[The Prophet] turned away and frowned, Because there came to him the blind man, [interrupting]. But what would make you perceive, [O Muhammad], that perhaps he might be purified, or be reminded and the remembrance would benefit him? As for he who thinks himself without need. To him, you give attention. [Surat 'Abasa; 80:1-6]

وَإِذْ تَقُولُ لِلَّذِي أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِ أَمْسِكْ عَلَيْكَ زَوْجَكَ وَاتَّقِ اللَّهَ وَتُخْفِي فِي نَفْسِكَ مَا اللَّهُ مُبْدِيهِ وَتُخْفِي النَّاسَ وَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَاهُ ۖ فَلَمَّا قَضَىٰ زَيْدٌ مِنْهَا وَطَرًا زَوَّجْنَاهَا لِكَيْ لَا يَكُونَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ حَرَجٌ فِي أَزْوَاجِ أَدْعِيَائِهِمْ إِذَا قَضَوْا مِنْهُنَّ وَطَرًا ۚ وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ مَفْعُولًا

And [remember, O Muhammad], when you said to the one on whom Allah bestowed favor and you bestowed favor, ‘Keep your wife and fear Allah,’ while you concealed within yourself that which Allah is to disclose. And you feared the people, while Allah has more right that you fear Him. So when Zayd had dissolved [his marriage] with her, We joined her in marriage to you in order that there may be no discomfort upon the believers concerning the wives of their adopted sons when the latter are no longer married to them. And ever is the command of Allah accomplished. [Surat al-Ahzab, 33:37]

لَوْ كَانَ عَرَضًا قَرِيبًا وَسَفَرًا قَاصِدًا لَاتَّبَعُوكَ وَلَكِنْ بَعَدَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّعَةُ ۚ وَخَالِفُونَ بِأَلْفِهِ لَوْ اسْتَطَعْنَا لَخَرَجْنَا مَعَكُمْ يُهْلِكُونَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْكَ لِمَ أَذْنَتْ لَهُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكَ الْإِذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَتَعْلَمَ الْكَاذِبِينَ

Had it been an easy gain and a moderate trip, they hypocrites would have followed you, but distant to them was the journey. And they will swear by Allah, ‘If we were able, we would have gone forth with you,’ destroying themselves [through false oaths], and Allah knows that indeed they are liars. May Allah pardon you, [O Muhammad], why did you give them permission [to remain behind]? [You should not have] until it was evident to you who were truthful and you knew [who were] the liars. [Surat al-Tawba; 9:42–43]

لَيْسَ لَكَ مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ أَوْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ أَوْ يُعَذِّبَهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ

You have no business in the matter [oh Muhammad], whether He should [cut them down] or forgive them or punish them, for indeed, they are wrongdoers. [Surat Ali ‘Imran; 3:128]

لَوْلَا كِتَابٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ سَبَقَ لَمَسَّكُمْ فِيمَا أَخَذْتُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

If not for a decree from Allah that preceded, you [O Muhammad] would have been inflicted with a great punishment for what you took [as ransom]. [Surat al-Anfal; 8:68]

وَلَوْ تَقَوَّلَ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضُ الْأَقَاوِيلِ  
لَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُ بِالْيَمِينِ  
ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنَا مِنْهُ الْوَتِينَ  
فَمَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ عَنْهُ حَاجِزِينَ

And if he [Muhammad] had fabricated a false statement about Us, certainly, We would have seized him from his right hand; and then We would have cut off his life-artery [aorta]; and none of you could have shielded Us from [punishing] him. [Surat al-Haqqah, 69:44–47]

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

Muhammad is not the father of [any] one of your men, but [he is] the Messenger of Allah and last of the prophets. And ever is Allah, of all things, Knowing. [Surat al-Ahzab; 33:40]

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ لِمَ تُحَرِّمُ مَا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ لَكَ تَبْتَغِي مَرْضَاتَ أَزْوَاجِكَ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

O Prophet, why do you prohibit yourself from what Allah had made lawful to you, seeking to please your wives? And Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful. [Surah at-Tahreem; 66:1]

وَرَبِّكَ فَكَبِّرْ

And your Lord, glorify. [Surah al-Muddaththir; 74:3]

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۚ وَاللَّهُ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ ۚ وَالْأَرْحَامُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

Oh mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer. [Surat an-Nisa; 4:1]

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ ۖ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَب بَّعْضُكُم بَعْضًا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا ۖ  
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَبْطُلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَىٰ كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ  
الْآخِرِ ۖ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْبًا ۖ لَا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا ۚ وَاللَّهُ  
لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ

O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it. And fear Allah ; indeed, Allah is Accepting of repentance and Merciful. [Surat al- Hujurat; 49:12]

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَبْطُلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَىٰ كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ  
الْآخِرِ ۖ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْبًا ۖ لَا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا ۚ وَاللَّهُ  
لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ

O you who have believed, do not invalidate your charities with reminders or injury as does one who spends his wealth [only] to be seen by the people and does not believe in Allah and the Last Day. His example is like that of a [large] smooth stone upon which is dust and is hit by a downpour that leaves it bare. They are unable [to keep] anything of what they have earned. And Allah does not guide the disbelieving people. [Surat al-Baqarah; 2:264]

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ  
الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكُظُمِينِ الْغَيْظِ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a garden as wide as the heavens and earth, prepared for the righteous. Who spend [in the cause of Allah] during ease and hardship and who restrain anger and who pardon the people—and Allah loves the doers of good. [Surat Ali 'Imran, 3:133–134]

وَيَوْمَ تَشَقُّ السَّمَاءُ بِالْعَنَمِ وَنُزِلَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ نَزِيرًا  
 الْمَلِكُ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْحَقُّ لِلرَّحْمَنِ وَكَانَ يَوْمًا عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ عَسِيرًا  
 وَيَوْمَ يَعْصُ الظَّالِمُ عَلَى يَدَيْهِ يَقُولُ يَلَيِّنَنِي أَتَّخَذْتُ مَعَ الرَّسُولِ سَبِيلًا  
 يَوْمَئِذٍ لَيِّنَی لَیِّنَی لَمْ أَتَّخِذْ فَلَانًا خَلِيلًا

And [mention] the Day when the heaven will split open with [emerging] clouds, and the angels will be sent down in successive descent. True sovereignty, that Day, is for the Most Merciful. And it will be upon the disbelievers a difficult Day. And the Day the wrongdoer will bite on his hands [in regret] he will say, “Oh, I wish I had taken with the Messenger a way. Oh, woe to me! I wish I had not taken that one as a friend. [Surat al-Furqan, 25:25–29]

### Lesson plan 3

إِنْ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعُهُ وَقُرْآنُهُ  
 فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْآنَهُ

Indeed, upon Us is its collection [in your heart] and [to make possible] its recitation. So when We have recited it [through Gabriel], then follow its recitation. [Surat al-Qiyamah; 75:17–18]

### Hadith resources

#### Lesson plan 1

مَا مِنْ مَوْلُودٍ إِلَّا يُولَدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ، فَأَبَوَاهُ يُهَوِّدَانِهِ أَوْ يُنَصِّرَانِهِ أَوْ يُمَجِّسَانِهِ، كَمَا تُنْتَجُ الْبَيْمَةُ بَهْمَةً جَمْعًا،  
 هَلْ تُحْسِنُونَ فِيهَا مِنْ جَدْعَاءَ

“There was no prophet except that he was granted signs that caused the people to believe in him, but what I have been [uniquely] granted is a revelation that Allah has inspired me with,”—the Qur’an—“and thus I am hopeful to have the most followers among them on the Day of Resurrection.” [Bukhari and Muslim]

#### Lesson plan 2

مَا مِنْ مَوْلُودٍ إِلَّا يُولَدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ، فَأَبَوَاهُ يُهَوِّدَانِهِ أَوْ يُنَصِّرَانِهِ أَوْ يُمَجِّسَانِهِ، كَمَا تُنْتَجُ الْبَيْمَةُ بَهْمَةً جَمْعًا،  
 هَلْ تُحْسِنُونَ فِيهَا مِنْ جَدْعَاءَ

“The example of a good companion (who sits with you) in comparison with a bad one, is like that of the musk seller and the blacksmith’s bellows (or furnace); from the first you would either buy musk or enjoy its good smell while the bellows would either burn your clothes or your house, or you get a bad nasty smell thereof.” [Bukhari]

لَيْسَ الشَّدِيدُ بِالصُّرْعَةِ إِنَّمَا الشَّدِيدُ الَّذِي يَمْلِكُ نَفْسَهُ عِنْدَ الْغَضَبِ

“The strong man is not the good wrestler; but the strong man is he who controls himself when he is angry.” [Bukhari and Muslim]



تَبَسُّمُكَ فِي وَجْهِ أَخِيكَ لَكَ صَدَقَةٌ وَأَمْرُكَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهْيُكَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ صَدَقَةٌ وَإِزْشَادُكَ الرَّجُلَ فِي أَرْضِ الضَّلَالِ لَكَ صَدَقَةٌ وَبَصْرُكَ لِلرَّجُلِ الرَّدِيِّ الْبَصَرَ لَكَ صَدَقَةٌ وَإِمَاطَتُكَ الْحَجَرَ وَالشَّوْكَةَ وَالْعَظْمَ عَنِ الطَّرِيقِ لَكَ صَدَقَةٌ وَإِفْرَاغُكَ مِنْ دَلُوكَ فِي دَلْوِ أَخِيكَ لَكَ صَدَقَةٌ

“Your smiling in the face of your brother is charity, commanding good and forbidding evil is charity, your giving directions to a man lost in the land is charity for you. Your seeing for a man with bad sight is a charity for you, your removal of a rock, a thorn or a bone from the road is charity for you. Your pouring what remains from your bucket into the bucket of your brother is charity for you.” [Tirmidhi]

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، وَابْنُ، حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، عَنِ الْعَلَاءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ قَالَ “أَتَدْرُونَ مَا الْغَيْبَةُ”. قَالُوا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ. قَالَ “ذِكْرُكَ أَخَاكَ بِمَا يَكْرَهُ”. قِيلَ أَفَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَانَ فِي أَخِي مَا أَقُولُ قَالَ “إِنْ كَانَ فِيهِ مَا تَقُولُ فَقَدْ اغْتَابْتَهُ وَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ فِيهِ فَقَدْ بَهْتَهُ”.

“Do you know what is backbiting? They (the Companions) said: Allah and His Messenger know best. Thereupon he (the Holy Prophet) said: Backbiting implies your talking about your brother in a manner which he does not like. It was said to him: What is your opinion about this that if I actually find (that failing) in my brother which I made a mention of? He said: If (that failing) is actually found (in him) what you assert, you in fact backbited him, and if that is not in him it is a slander.” [Muslim]

## Textual resources

### Lesson plan 1

#### Teacher Pre-Reading:

[What Would Late Media Theorist Neil Postman Think of “Mobile First” Media?](#)

## Multimedia resources

### Lesson plan 1

#### Muhammad Ali: “I’ll Show You How Great I Am” Speech:

[Muhammad Ali - “I’ll Show You How Great I Am” speech](#)

#### Plant Growth Timelapse:

[I Could Watch Time Lapses Of Seeds Growing All Day](#)

### Lesson plan 2

**Ring Theory:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=2&v=b5Y5gMc\\_XZo&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=b5Y5gMc_XZo&feature=emb_logo)

### Lesson plan 3

#### Qur’anic Preservation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n281Zyywyn4&t=42s>

#### Oldest Fragments of the Qur’an:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-33436021>