Objectives

- Explain how Muslims were able to conquer many lands.
- Identify the divisions that emerged within Islam.
- Describe the rise of the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties.
- Explain why the Abbasid empire declined.
Terms and People

• **Abu Bakr** – Muhammad’s father-in-law, the first caliph

• **caliph** – a successor to Muhammad

• **Sunni** – a member of one of the largest Muslim sects; Sunnis believe that inspiration came from the example of Muhammad as recorded by his early followers

• **Shiite** – a member of one of the two major Muslim sects; believe that the descendents of Muhammad’s daughter and son-in-law, Ali, are the true Muslim leaders
**Terms and People** (continued)

- **Sufis** – Muslim mystics who seek communion with God through meditation, fasting, and other rituals.

- **Umayyads** – members of a caliphate that united and greatly expanded the Muslim empire in the 700s.

- **Abbasids** – members of the dynasty that reigned from Baghdad during the flowering of Muslim culture, 750–1252.

- **Baghdad** – the capital of the Abbasid dynasty, built on the Tigris River.
**Terms and People** (continued)

- **minaret** – a slender tower beside a mosque from which Muslims are called to prayer
- **sultan** – a Muslim ruler
How did Muhammad’s successors extend Muslim rule and spread Islam?

The death of Muhammad plunged his followers into grief. The Prophet had been a pious man and a powerful leader. No one else had ever been able to unify so many Arab tribes.

Could the community of Muslims survive without him?
The death of Muhammad left the Muslims with a problem—he had not named a successor.

Muhammad’s father-in-law, Abu Bakr, was chosen to be the first successor to Muhammad, or caliph.
Many Arab tribes refused to follow Abu Bakr and withdrew support from Islam; fighting resulted.

After several battles Abu Bakr succeeded in reuniting the tribes based on allegiance to Islam. Muslims then began converting other tribes, ending war among Arab tribes and uniting them under one leader.
Muslims split over who should be the leader.

**Shiites** believed Muhammad’s true successors were the descendents of his daughter Fatima and son-in-law Ali. Called Imams, they were believed to be divinely inspired.

**Sunnis** became a majority; they compromised on a belief that any good Muslim could be a leader or caliph, and that this role was not divinely inspired.
The division between Shiite and Sunni Muslims continues today.

Both branches believe in the same God, follow the Five Pillars of Islam, and look to the Quran for guidance, but they differ in daily practices and have often fought over wealth and political issues.

About 90% of Muslims today are Sunnis.

Most Shiites live in Lebanon, Yemen, and Iraq.
Among both Sunnis and Shiites, **Sufis** emerged.

Sufis were groups of mystics who sought communion with God through meditation, fasting, and other rituals.

Like Christian monks or nuns, the Sufis spread Islam by traveling, preaching, and setting a good example to others.
Under the first four caliphs, the Arab Muslims had many victories over both the Byzantine and Persian empires.

- They took Syria and Palestine from the Byzantines, including the cities of Damascus and Jerusalem.
- They later captured the weakened Persian empire and swept into Byzantine Egypt.
Muslim lands under the Umayyads and Abbasids
In the 700s, a powerful Meccan clan set up the Umayyad caliphate and ruled from Damascus.

In 711, after conquering North Africa, they took over Spain.

In 731, they invaded France but were stopped in the Battle of Tours.

They also besieged, but failed to take, Constantinople, the Byzantine capital.
**Several factors explain the Muslim success.**

| **Longtime enemies, the Persians and Byzantines had exhausted each other.** |
| **Their armies were efficient fighters with a cavalry of camels and horses.** |
| **Belief in Islam unified Arab Muslims; many welcomed them as liberators.** |
| **The rulers established an orderly and efficient system of administration.** |
Conquered people who did not convert were taxed, but allowed to practice their faith.

- Jews and Christians could hold government positions.
- Islam had no religious hierarchy or class of priests.
- In principle, Islam calls for equality among all believers.
- Many embraced Islam’s equality and converted.
As the empire expanded, problems developed that led to its eventual decline. Umayyad caliphs were not used to running a large and diverse empire.

Discontented Muslims found a leader in Abu al-Abbas; in 750 he conquered Damascus.

The wealthy lifestyle of caliphs was criticized; non-Arab Muslims were not being treated equally.
The Umayyads were removed and the **Abbasid dynasty** began.

The Abbasids created an empire based on Muslim values, and as a result, Muslim culture flourished.

- Military conquests were halted, ending dominance of the military class.
- Discrimination against non-Arabs was ended.
- A more sophisticated bureaucracy was created.
- Learning was encouraged.
- The capital was moved from Damascus to **Baghdad**.
Baghdad, the new capital, was located in Persian territory.

- This gave Persian officials great influence.
- The most important official was the vizier as in Persian tradition.
- Baghdad became a magnificent city of gardens, markets, mosques, and tall **minarets** where the faithful were called to prayer. It was “The City of Peace, Gift of God, Paradise on Earth.”
The surviving members of the Umayyad caliphate fled to Spain, where they remained until 1492.

They oversaw a grand age of art and architecture in Spain, exemplified by such buildings as the Grand Mosque in Córdoba.

Leaders of Muslim Spain were more tolerant of other religions than were Christian rulers at the time.
The Abbasids never ruled Spain; beginning in 850 the rest of their empire began to fragment.

In Egypt and elsewhere, independent dynasties came to power. In the 900s the Seljuk Turks took control of Baghdad.

The Seljuks adopted Islam and created a powerful empire.
In 1216 Genghis Khan led a Mongol invasion. In 1258 Baghdad was looted and the last Abbasid caliph was killed. Later, the Mongols accepted Islam and mingled with local inhabitants.

In the 1300s another Mongol leader, Tamerlane, attacked Muslim and non-Muslim lands in the Middle East as well as in southwest Asia, Russia, and India.
Section Review

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