

Why do Muslims Stop and Pray? (5 – 8 years)

Key words and concepts

- **Five pillars:** The basic precepts of Sunni Islam including belief in One God and his prophet Muhammad, prayer, giving of charity, fasting and pilgrimage to Mecca. Shi'a Muslims observe the 5 Pillars plus additional obligatory acts.
- **Salah:** Communication with, and worship of, **Allah**, performed under specific conditions, in the manner taught by the Prophet Muhammad and recited in Arabic. The five daily times of salah are fixed by Allah.
- **Shahadah:** Declaration of faith, which consists of the statement, 'There is no god except Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah'.
- **Minaret:** high tower on the Mosque which is traditionally the place that the call to prayer is shouted from.
- **Adhan:** the words that call Muslims to pray 5 times a day.

Allahu Akbar (four times)	God is most great
Ashhadu an la ilaha illa- Allah (once)	I witness that there is no god except God
Ashhadu anna Muhammadan rasula- Allah (once)	I witness that Muhammad is the messenger of God
Hayya ala-s-salah (twice)	Come to prayer
Hayya ala-l-falah (twice)	Come to salvation
Allahu Akbar(twice)	God is most great
La ilaha-illa-Allah (once)	There is no god except God
- **Muezzin or Mu'adhin:** person who recites the call to prayer, the Adhan.
- **Belief:** a confidence that something is true that is not easily proved and is something that others will have different views and opinions about. The term often refers to people's faith or religious convictions.
- **Prayer:** a way of communicating with the divine. It can take the form of worshipping the divine, asking the divine to intercede on earth or for support or guidance.
- **Commitment:** showing dedication to something that is important to you perhaps a particular belief, activity or cause, even if that commitment means forgoing other things.

Learning activities

- Ask the children what their favourite sound is. Is it the theme tune for a TV programme, the sound of the key in the door when Mum comes in from work, the chimes of the ice cream van or their best friend's voice? What it is that they like about that sound? Does it suggest a particular thing is going to happen or is to do with the people associated with the sound?
- Use a Persona doll to introduce the religious material for this question. Create a doll with an Islamic

persona. He could be called Ahmed. for clothing he should wear a Topi but the rest of his clothes might match your school uniform or clothes that the children in your community might wear. Construct the doll's persona, the following is an example. you will need some appropriate connections to your children and perhaps some local place names:

Ahmed is 7 and lives near the park, on his way home from school with Mum he always goes down the slide. He has one younger sister and a younger brother. He lives in a big house because one of his grandmothers lives there too. He likes that because there is always someone to talk to. His favourite food is cheese and tomato pizza and ice cream.

He helps look after the wildlife garden at school. He particularly likes looking for frogs in the pond. He is also a new member of the school chess club. In the summer he brings his cricket bat and at lunchtime he and his friends play cricket on the school field.

Every school night at 4:40 p.m. he goes with his younger brother to the Madrassa or Mosque school. They both carry a copy of the Qur'an in a bag under their arm. At Madrassa he learns how to read the Qur'an and be a good Muslim. Recently he did really well in his exams at the Madrassa.

Once the children have been introduced to Ahmed and know a bit about his life you should ask what the children think Ahmed's favourite sound is. Take suggestions from the children.

Ahmed should then share from his bag a picture of a mosque with a minaret and show the teacher how to play the children his favourite sound. This is the **call to prayer**, or *adhan*. Find a clip of it being played on YouTube. There are many. Find one you would like to explore with the class.

Explain that this is a really important sound for Ahmed. After the children have heard the sound ask Ahmed to explain its importance to him. He should explain that this sound, called the Adhan, is called out five times a day from his local Mosque.

Ask the children to predict why the Adhan might be shouted from the Mosque five times a day.

Ahmed should explain that in some Mosques it is shouted from the top of a tall tower – a minaret, in others it is said into a microphone.

Ask the children to imagine why a tall tower or a microphone is used; Why do the children think Ahmed has chosen this sound? Is this sound like a sound that is used in any other religious building in their town?

- Explain that the words that they heard are calling Muslims to pray either at the mosque, at home, at school or wherever they are. Muslim people try to pray 5 times every day. People who belong to the Sunni family of Muslims will try to pray 5 separate times, and people who belong to the Shi'a family contract 5 separate prayers into 3 times of the day. However it is not always possible and Muslims can make up their prayers when they get home if they have missed some.
- Ask the children to build somewhere that would be suitable for a Muslim to shout out the call to prayer. Construction equipment in the classroom can be used for this.
- Ask the children to write or record into a talking button what a Muslim might shout if they want people to stop and come to pray.
- Ask the children to draw a series of picture of themselves stopping what they are doing and going to do something important because something or someone has called them.

- Ask the children to write or record into a talking button what they would like to shout from the highest part of the school to the rest of the people in the school. What is it important for everyone in school to know or believe or do? Show a photo of the highest point in your community ask children to write or record what they would shout out to the community. Is it a belief or an instruction or a piece of advice? How are the things that you would shout in your school and your community similar or different to what a Muslim shouts as the call to prayer?
- Introduce the children to the enquiry question, in this example we have suggested the question, 'Why do Muslims stop and pray?' Or 'Why is the call to prayer important to Muslims?'
- Share the words of the Adhan with the children. Explain that they are written in Arabic as this is the language that the Prophet Muhammad spoke.

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- Share **the story of Bilal** with the children in an imaginative way. Ahmed could have a version of the story in his bag. There are various story books that you can use to share this story with the children or there are versions of the story online. Bilal was the first person Muhammad asked to shout the call to prayer.

Take care to tell the story in a way that involves the children in the story telling and helps them to understand why the story is still significant to Muslims today. Ask the children such questions as:

- What sort of person do you think Bilal is?
- Do you think it is fair that Ummayah is making Bilal pray in the same way as him?
- Should you ever disobey someone?
- Do you think you should be allowed to believe in God?
- Why do you think that Bilal was chosen to be the first Muezzin (person who does the call to prayer in the Mosque)?
- Does everyone pray?
- What do people pray about?
- How do people pray in different religions? Who do different people pray to? Do they pray for the same things do you think?
- As a further way of engaging the children in the story you could have a series of items used in the story and ask children to go around the classroom finding them before you tell the story. This will help the children to engage in the story as they listen out for their props. You could use a rock, a broom, some money, some sand, a picture of a mosque with a minaret. Emphasise to the children that Muslims don't draw pictures of people that are important in their religion or of God which is why you haven't drawn a

picture of Bilal.

- Ask the children to do the following activities in turn (carousel arrangement):
 1. Work in a group to find a way of retelling the story to older or younger children to make it memorable. They could make a jigsaw like the one shown in the film. They could make a story map of the plot of the story – how can they do this without drawing people?
 2. Work in a group to create mood pictures of the different feelings of Bilal in the story. Write a description of his moods at different times and as a group use these to retell the story of Bilal.
 3. Draw a picture showing a time when you stood up for something that was important. Why did you stick up for what you think? Why was your belief or idea so important?
- Go back to the enquiry question and ask children to share why they think the call to prayer, the Adhan, is important to Ahmed. Ask all the children to then prepare a series of questions which Ahmed can answer about the call to prayer and its significance in his life and the life of his family such as what happens when it is prayer time in your house? How do you know it is prayer time? Can you hear the call to prayer from your house? Why do Muslim people pray? Why do Muslim people try and pray five times a day?
- Ask the children to draw a picture of Ahmed either at home or near the Mosque with a speech bubble expressing why the call to prayer is important. Ask them to make a speech bubble for themselves too. Pre-print the speech bubbles with a sentence starters such as:
 - The call to prayer is important to me because...
 - The call to prayer is important to my family because...
 - I like to stop what I'm doing and pray because...
 - I like to stop what I am doing to...
 - Prayer is not important to me because...