

<b>Lesson Title</b>	<b>Lesson 1: History of the Abbasid and Umayyad Dynasties</b>
<b>Background Information</b>	This lesson begins a 5-day unit on achievements of the Islamic Golden Age. Students begin with a historical overview to learn the context and sequence of events that follow.
<b>Time</b>	50 minutes
<b>Purpose/ Rationale for Lesson</b>	Students need a framework for understanding the content on days 2-5. In this lesson, students will create a parallel timeline on which they can place political and cultural events that define Islam's foundational dynasties. The timeline can be used on successive days as context for Abbasid and Spanish achievements.
<b>Curriculum Framing Questions</b>	<p>What events constitute the Abbasid and Umayyad Golden Ages?</p> <p>How are events in distant empires related?</p> <p>When and how did the empires begin and end?</p> <p>What events constitute the Golden Age of Islamic empires?</p>
<b>Goal</b>	Students will understand the historic and cultural connections between Muslim empires in Spain and the Middle East.
<b>Learning Objectives</b>	<p>Students will be able to construct a proportional, parallel timeline to compare political units.</p> <p>Students will be able to identify achievements of the Abbasid and Umayyad Dynasties.</p>
<b>Curriculum Standards</b>	See unit overview.
<b>Implementation</b>  Materials needed in class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Umayyad Dynasty reading</li> <li>• 11x17 paper</li> <li>• Rulers</li> <li>• Pencils</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Explain that for nearly a century, the Muslim world was ruled by a single dynasty, the Umayyad. Give students the one-page reading on the Umayyad Dynasty with dates in bold. Explain vocabulary if needed, then ask students to list important dates in chronological order and to write a short description of events next to each date. Students will place these and other dates on a parallel timeline so they can visualize the sequence of events in the Islamic Golden Age.</li> <li>2) Hand out large sheets of paper (11 x 17) for making a timeline. On the board, model the design and measurements for the timeline. (<i>see example after Umayyad Dynasty reading</i>)</li> <li>3) Students will make a timeline covering three periods: the Umayyad dynasty about which they just read, and the two empires it gave rise to: the Abbasid Empire and Muslim Spain. With a total time period of about 800 years, students can allot <u>two inches</u> to each century. However, the Abbasid and Spanish lines should be parallel to each</li> </ol>

<p>Materials needed for homework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abbasid/ Muslim Spain reading</li> <li>• Timelines</li> </ul>	<p>other.</p> <p>4) Work together to add the Umayyad dates to their timeline, taking care to keep events in a small space. They may write <u>above and below the line</u>, but should be careful to place the dates proportionally in the short space. The biggest challenge for students will be writing short captions which will fit in the 2-inch space. Students will have more room for the next two dynasties.</p> <p>Homework: Give students back-to-back readings on the Abbasid Empire and Muslim Spain. They should place dates on the appropriate timeline. At the latest, students should complete the Abbasid timeline by day 4 &amp; the Spanish timeline by day 5.</p>
<p><b>Assessment &amp; Evaluation of Student Learning</b></p>	<p>Student timeline should be neatly drawn.</p> <p>Space for centuries should be proportional and equivalent on each timeline.</p> <p>Concurrent events in different empires should be on the same vertical plane.</p> <p>All listed events should appear in the correct location on the timeline.</p>

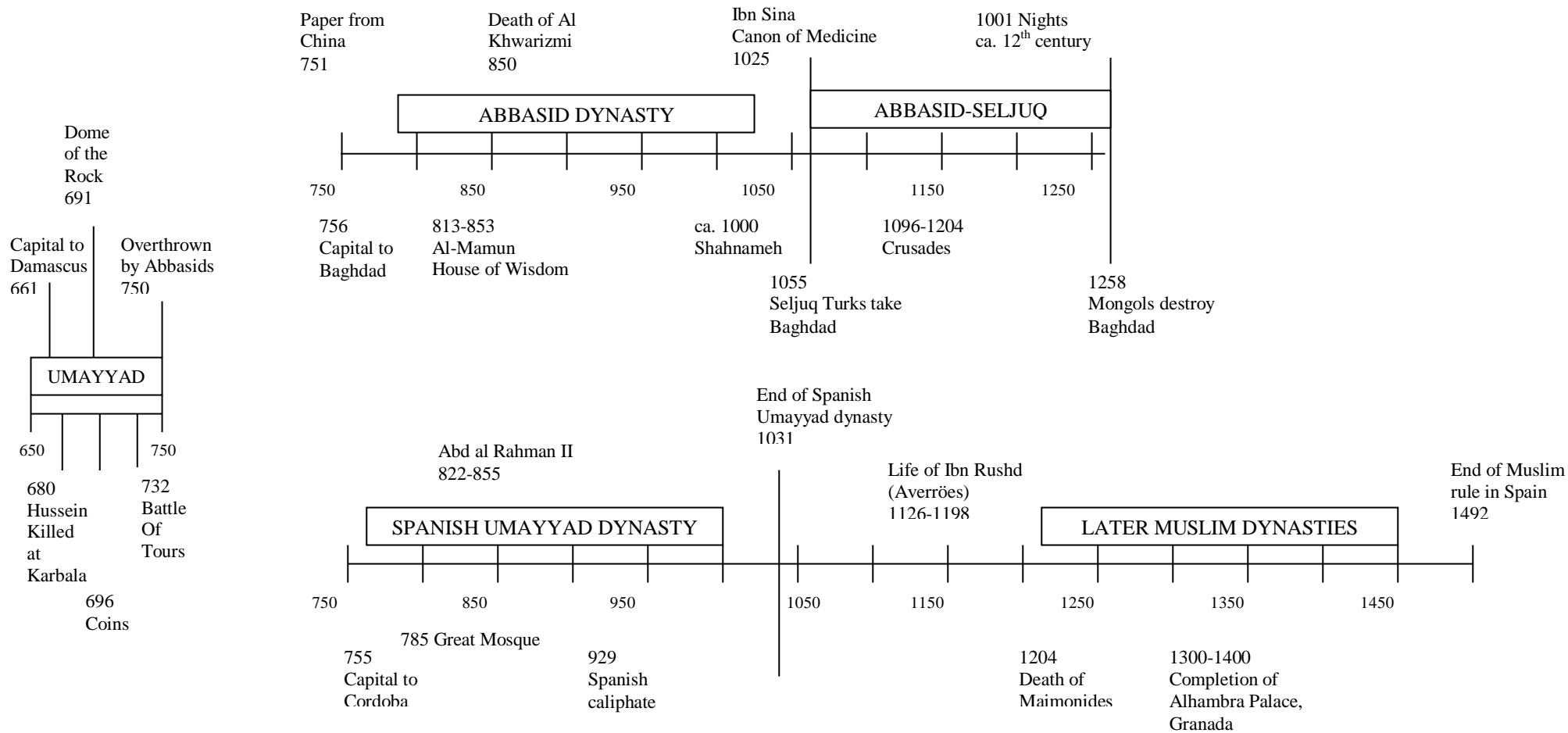
## Umayyad Dynasty (661-750)

After the assassination of Mohammed's son-in-law and cousin, Ali, a group called the Umayyads came to power and chose Mu'awiya as the fifth caliph. Mu'awiya ruled in a time when Muslim factions fought about the nature of their government, and how religious or secular it should be. Mu'awiya emphasized the latter, moved his capital to Damascus in **661** and began to reform the new empire's administration. Mu'awiya modeled his government's organization on that of the Byzantine Empire, which had recently ruled the region, even going so far as to hire Christian administrators. Mu'awiya further changed traditional Muslim governance by identifying his son, Yazid, as his successor, instead of leaving that decision up to the respected elders of the community. The Umayyads were therefore the first dynasty to rule an Islamic empire.

Yazid only ruled for a short time, but is infamous for challenging Ali's son, Hussein. Hussein, as the prophet Mohammed's grandson, represented a symbolic link to the prophet and the fourth caliph, whom Mu'awiya had overthrown. As Hussein traveled with his family and entourage toward the Iraqi city of Kufa, Yazid's troops stopped the travelers and demanded that Hussein take an oath of loyalty to Yazid and the Umayyad Dynasty. When Hussein refused to submit, Yazid's general ordered his soldiers to attack, slaughtering women and children as well as Hussein. The massacre at Karbala in **680** is still mourned annually by Shi'a Muslims, descended from those who felt the caliphate should have passed through the Prophet's bloodline to Hussein and his descendants.

Yazid's son, and the greatest of the eastern Umayyad rulers, was Abd al-Malik, who reigned for 20 years and transformed Muslim lands into a unified empire. Abd al-Malik spread his grandfather's administrative reforms across North Africa and Persia, made Arabic the common language, constructed mosques in all new lands, and perhaps most importantly, unified the coinage of the empire in **696**. By standardizing financial weights and measures, Abd al-Malik ensured that trade would flow smoothly across his vast lands. Abd al-Malik made another significant change when he ended the practice of featuring the ruler's image on coins, and instead used only text, notably verses from the Qu'ran. Also during his reign, the Dome of the Rock, with its distinctive golden dome and beautiful calligraphy, was constructed in Jerusalem by **691**.

Abd al-Malik's heirs completed the expansion of the Umayyad dynasty, extending its borders from the Iberian Peninsula in the west to the Indus River in the east a distance of nearly 6,000 miles. The Umayyad expansion into Europe was stopped in the west by Charles Martel and his Frankish forces at the Battle of Tours in **732**. Umayyad dominance in the east was challenged by a rising faction, the Abbasids, who joined others opposing the empire's secular emphasis. The Abbasids brought down the Umayyads in **750** and sought to kill as many Umayyad family members as possible to avoid its later resurgence. One famous Umayyad who escaped was Abd al Rahman. He fled westward, finally making it to his family's distant territory in Spain, where he established a western Umayyad dynasty that lasted another three hundred years.



## Abbasid-Seljuq Empire (750-1258)

In the 740s, a Persian-Arab coalition from Khorasan, in eastern Iran, challenged the Umayyad dynasty and by **750**, seized power over Muslim lands. The Umayyads had been based in Syria and were influenced by its Byzantine architecture and administration. In contrast, the Abbasids moved the capital to Baghdad in **762** and, although the leaders were Arab, administrators and cultural influence were primarily Persian.

This eastward shift allowed some independent dynasties to form in the west, such as the Spanish Umayyad and later the Egyptian Fatimids. Abbasid expansion to the east also brought them in conflict with the Chinese at the Battle of Talas in **751**. The Muslim army was victorious, and through Chinese captives, learned about paper, which would replace papyrus and parchment, making Abbasid intellectual achievements easier to spread.

The 9th and 10th centuries under Abbasid rule were a golden age of Muslim achievement. In the recently built capital of Baghdad, the caliphs founded centers of study, including the Beyt al-Hikma, or House of Wisdom. Most historians attribute this to Al-Ma'mun, who reigned from **813-33**, but some give credit to earlier caliphs. By the mid-800s, brilliant Muslim scholars—many Persian, but also Arab, Indian and Egyptian—shared their knowledge and writings in Baghdad. Al Khwarizmi (**d. 850**) adapted Hindu numerals and developed the numbering system we use today. He is considered the father of algebra. His works were translated into Latin in the 12th century and formed the basis of western mathematics. Scholars translated ancient Persian, Hindu and Greek texts into Arabic and then spread that knowledge across the vast Muslim lands, as far west as Spain, where they were translated into Latin. These texts helped Europeans become acquainted with the Greek thinkers, such as Aristotle.

The Abbasid dynasty depended on regional governors for military control and the collection of taxes. By the 11th century, this decentralized system proved too weak to defend against nomadic tribesmen from the east. In **1055**, Seljuq Turkmen who had gradually moved into Abbasid territory, took control of Baghdad. Their leader, Tugrul Bey, forced the Abbasid caliph to name him sultan. From that point, the empire was ruled in name by the Abbasids, but in practice by the Seljuq.

The Seljuq expanded westward, defeating the Byzantines in Turkey and even taking control of Jerusalem. These challenges to Christian rule led the pope to call the first crusade in **1096**. Christian knights seized and held Jerusalem until 1187, when the city was retaken by the great Muslim general, Saladin. Europeans maintained a presence in the region until the Crusades ended in **1204** and in spite of the conflict, trade flourished between east and west. It was partly through these exchanges that the learning of Muslim scholars in the Middle East was shared with Europe.

Even as the Abbasid political system weakened in later years, it gave rise to great scientific and literary achievement. Ibn Sina, known as Avicenna in the west, wrote the *Canon of Medicine* in **1025**, an encyclopedia describing diseases and treatments that were far ahead of any medical work done in Europe. Much of the great literature of the period was written in Persian. The Shahnameh (“Book of Kings”) was published around the year **1000** and describes the mythologized history of ancient Persian kings. In the **12th century**, the stories known as *A Thousand and One Nights* were first compiled and printed in Arabic.

The creativity that had flowed from Baghdad for four centuries came to a crashing halt in **1258**, when the Mongol invasion reached Mesopotamia. The conquerors destroyed the city of Baghdad, burning its palaces and its houses of learning. Although the Mongols would eventually convert to Islam and foster their own cultural achievements, the golden age of the Abbasid dynasty had come to a close.

## Muslim Spain (750-1492)

By most accounts, Abd al-Rahman was the lone survivor of the Umayyad dynasty after the Abbasids murdered his extended family. He made his way to Spain within five years, mustered support of the Umayyad governors and generals still in the region, and established a capital in the city of Cordoba in **755**. During his reign, Abd al-Rahman gave most power to Arab Umayyads, enforced Islam as the official religion, and around **785** began construction on the Great Mosque of Cordoba. This mosque, known in Spanish as La Mezquita, would become the architectural centerpiece of the capital, and of the kingdom. One of the building's most distinctive features is the prayer hall. Its high ceiling is supported by a forest of columns and arcades, decorated in red and white.

Under Abd al-Rahman III and his immediate successors, Umayyad rule in Spain reached its peak. He effectively put down rebellions and secured recognition from Europe's political and religious leaders, including Otto I of Germany. In **929**, Abd al-Rahman took advantage of religious conflict in the Middle East and named himself caliph, a title of both religious and political authority. He asserted Umayyad power in North Africa against an Egyptian dynasty called the Fatimids. Cordoba was the largest city in Europe at the time, with half a million people. Many of its roads were paved and lit. Even though the Spanish caliphate challenged Abbasid authority in the east, scholars moved between the two regions. Works of philosophy and science reached Cordoba where libraries and houses of study were formed. Poetry flourished in the 900s; one well-known anthology is the Kitab al-Hada'iq.

The Umayyads were ultimately replaced in **1031** by a succession of other Muslim dynasties in Spain that lasted until **1492**. However, the establishment of Arab culture in Iberia bore fruit for those four and a half centuries. The Muslim scholar, Ibn Rushd, (**1126-1198**) was known in the west as Averroes. He translated Aristotle, wrote about medicine, physics and philosophy. While religious minorities didn't have the same rights as Muslims, Jewish and Christian scholars also made intellectual contributions with the support of Muslim rulers. Moses Maimonides was a brilliant doctor, rabbi and philosopher. He lived in Spain and North Africa, and finally died in Egypt in **1204**. The greatest architectural achievement of this later period is the Alhambra, a palace in Granada, begun in the 11th century, but fully decorated and completed in the **14th century**.

## Teacher key for timeline events:

### Umayyad Dynasty (661-750)

- 661—capital to Damascus
- 680—assassination of Hussein at Karbala
- 691—completion of the **Dome of the Rock**
- 696—**coins** standardized by weight and appearance, used across empire
- 732—defeat at the Battle of Tours in France by Charles Martel
- 750—overthrown by Abbasid faction

### Abbasid-Seljuq Empire (750-1258)

- 750—Abbasid faction from eastern Iran overthrows Umayyad dynasty
- 751—Arab defeat of Chinese army introduces paper to the west
- 762—Baghdad becomes the Abbasid capital
- 813-833—reign of Al-Ma'mun, founder of the House of Wisdom
- 850—death of Al Khwarizmi
- ca. 1000—Shahnameh (“Book Of Kings”) published
- 1025—Ibn Sina’s Canon of Medicine written
- 1055—Seljuq Turks gain control of Baghdad
- 1096-1204—Crusades (please note, this represents the four major Crusades, not the less important earlier and later religious wars that also carried the name ‘crusade’)
- 1187—Saladin recaptures Jerusalem
- 12th century—A Thousand and One Nights first compiled
- 1258—Mongols invade and destroy Baghdad, ending the Abbasid-Seljuq dynasty

### Muslim Spain (750-1492)

- 755—Cordoba established as Abd al Rahman’s capital
- ca. 785—construction began on the Great Mosque of Cordoba
- 822-852—reign of Abd al-Rahman II
- 929—Abd al-Rahman III takes the title of caliph
- 1031—end of the Umayyad dynasty
- 1126-1198—life of Ibn Rushd, Averroes
- 1204—death of Maimonides
- 14th century—completion of the Alhambra Palace in Granada
- 1492—end of Muslim rule in Spain

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