

Quick Activity

Match an Arabic word with the definition of an English word and identify the modern English word that comes from the Arabic word.

Academic Vocabulary

emphasize • *v.*, stress, mark as important

▼ The poetry of Persian poet Rumi is still read widely today.



How Was Literature Important to Islamic Culture?

As with medicine, Islamic culture put a high value on literature. Literacy, or the ability to read, spread through religion. Many Muslims learned to read in order to study the Quran. Some Muslim writers wrote down folk tales. Others wrote lyrical poetry about love and nature.

History and Geography Muslim scholars wrote about history and geography. The author Ibn Khaldun wrote a famous history of the world that tried to explain the rise and fall of dynasties. Ibn Battuta wrote an account of his travels around many Muslim lands across Asia and Africa.

Folk Tales Muslim folk tales came from a long tradition of storytelling. Some tales featured animals. Others described great heroes and their adventures. Many of these tales appeared in a book titled *The Thousand and One Nights*. This collection includes romantic stories as well as fables that teach lessons. It is popular around the world. These stories have also provided scholars with helpful information about life in early Muslim times, a period described in many of these stories.

Poetry Like folk tales, Muslim poetry began as an oral art form. Arab nomads used spoken verse to praise their tribes and mock their enemies. Poetry was central to early Arab culture. This oral tradition gave rise to many written forms.

The Persians, like the Arabs, also had a long tradition of writing poetry. One of the most famous Muslim poets was a man named Rumi who came from a Persian family. He often wrote about religious themes. Rumi practiced Sufism, which **emphasized** controlling one's desires. He wrote,

Primary Source

"What God said to the Rose

And caused it to laugh in full blown
beauty,

He said to my heart

And made it a hundred times more
beautiful."

—Rumi, "The Rose"

Poetry served as a way for Sufis to express their connection with God.

READING CHECK Summarize Why was literacy important in Islamic culture?