**Story about Muhammad from Grade 3 Material**

**Props (optional):**

(see [www.supportingthecoreactivities.org](http://www.supportingthecoreactivities.org) under this lesson for images that correlate with the highlighted words below)

*Today you will share with the children an account of the life of Muhammad. In doing so, you should help them to understand that,* ***through the teachings of Muhammad, the Arab people became renowned for their learning in the arts and sciences and laid the foundations of an enduring civilization****. In this, the children should recognize, as Abdu’l-Baha explained on many occasions, that* ***the sure proof of the Mission of every Manifestation is the education and progress of the people****.*

Muhammad was born in Mecca, Arabia, some 1,400 years ago, at a time when many people in the region had turned away from God and forgotten how to live together peacefully.

Muhammad’s father died before He was born, and His mother passed away when He was only six. For most of His childhood and youth, He was raised by His uncle. There were no schools for formal education in Arabia at that time, and Muhammad was not taught to read and write, but learned the trade of His uncle, who was a merchant. Over time, as He helped His uncle with his business, Muhammad gained a reputation for His integrity. He was called “The Truthful”, because He never told a lie, or “The Trustworthy”, because He never deceived anyone and always kept His word. Once, a man with whom Muhammad worked asked Him to meet at a particular spot at a certain time. Muhammad went there, but the man had forgotten their meeting, and failed to arrive. Three days later, the man passed the place and was surprised to see Muhammad. He had been there for three days, keeping His promise to wait for the man. His noble reputation eventually came to the attention of Khadija, a widow with her own business, who was known for her purity. She came to admire Muhammad’s honest and upright character. At the age of twenty-five, Muhammad married Khadija, and they worked together as merchants.

Muhammad was deeply disturbed by the way the people of Mecca lived. Thousands of years before, a sanctuary had been built in Mecca for the worship of one God as taught by Abraham. But this sacred place, known as the Ka’bah, had long been filled with idols, some say 360 of them, each with a different name and all worshipped by different tribes. These tribes were constantly at war, and when one tribe claimed victory over another, the women and children of the losing tribe were taken captive and suffered greatly as slaves to merciless masters. The region had sunk to the lowest depths of cruelty and despair. Muhammad, unable to bear the godlessness and degradation of life in Mecca, would often retreat to a cave on Mount Hira, just outside the city, where He would pray and meditate. It was in this cave that Muhammad, then forty years of age, became aware of His Divine Mission. All around Him He heard the voice of the Angel Gabriel, calling upon Him to speak out in the name of the Lord, God.

Muhammad returned home and told Khadija what He had experienced. She became the first to recognize His Station as a Manifestation and to accept His Message: that there is only one God, He Who had also spoken to the Manifestations of the past; that people should turn to God with humility, worship Him, trust in Him and be obedient to His Will; and that, in accordance with His Will, all people should be kind to one another, honest, and just. For some time, Muhammad made His Station known only to His close relatives and friends, some of whom chose to follow Him, including His cousin Ali and His dear friend Abu Bakr.

Eventually Muhammad proclaimed God’s Message to the people of His tribe. Only a few, however, understood the import of His Words and began to follow His teachings. They became known as Muslims. The others did not want to give up their old ways and live according to the laws of God. The idea of change angered them. They behaved with the utmost cruelty towards Muhammad and the small but growing band of His followers. When Muhammad spoke of God’s Message, they laughed at Him and attacked Him with stones. For years Muhammad and His followers endured violent persecution. Some of His companions were killed and their property confiscated. From time to time, members of His tribe would try to persuade Muhammad to stop spreading His teachings, in return for wealth and power. He, of course, would refuse. His uncle and His wife were greatly respected in Mecca, and they were able to act as Muhammad’s protectors for a time. But after their deaths, both in the same year, the danger for Muhammad increased. Life for Muslims in the city of Mecca became even more difficult.

After many years of suffering, Muhammad was visited by two leaders from other tribes. They had decided to embrace His teachings and offered Him a safe place, in the city of Medina, for the Muslims to live. Muhammad instructed His followers to move to Medina, and they gradually left Mecca for that city. Meanwhile, however, His enemies decided to put an end to His life while they had the chance, and they plotted to kill Him. But in the middle of the night, just hours before the plan was to be carried out, Muhammad left Mecca with His faithful friend Abu Bakr. Now, Abu Bakr was one of Muhammad’s most trusted companions, and he served Him with devotion. It is said that, in his efforts to protect Muhammad from His approaching enemies, he concealed Him with a large bag. When asked about the bag, Abu Bakr hesitated at first, fearing that Muhammad would be discovered and killed. But then he remembered God’s commandment to speak the truth, and so faithful was he that he told the men the bag was begin used to conceal Muhammad. Thinking that Abu Bakr could not possibly be serious, they let him continue on his way. You realize, of course, that God is the greatest Protector, and not even the most treacherous and powerful enemy can prevent that which God wills.

According to tradition, Muhammad and Abu Bakr then traveled across the desert on camels by night, guided by the moon and stars, towards Medina. They took shelter in a cave, waiting for the danger to pass. By now it had been realized that Muhammad was gone, and His enemies were in fast pursuit of Him. As the sun rose the sound of galloping horses grew louder, and Abdu Bakr was filled with fear. How could he protect Muhammad now, in the desert, he wondered. Abu Bakr held his breath and listened as the enemies drew closer and closer, until there were footsteps just outside the cave. Abu Bakr heard voices, but he could not make out the words. He was sure that they would be found. But Muhammad reassured Abu Bakr, reminding him that God was with them. And, indeed, the search party soon left, without even looking inside the cave. You see, there was a spider at the opening of the cave, and the moment that Muhammad had entered, it had spun a huge web, closing off the entrance. When the men searching for Muhammad reached the cave, they assumed no one could be inside it because the web was perfect and unbroken. It must have been a very long time since anyone entered that cave, they thought. So they continued looking elsewhere, but with no success. Tired, frustrated and confused, they finally returned to Mecca empty-handed. Muhammad and Abu Bakr remained in the cave for three days to make sure the enemies had gone and then left through another opening, preserving the web that had served as their protection. Again traveling by night, they at last reached Medina in safety.

Muhammad’s move from Mecca to Medina is known as the Hijira. From this new home, He was able to teach God’s laws and commandments much more widely, and people from different tribes began to live together in harmony according to His teachings. Those who rejected them, however, were still determined to kill Muhammad and His followers. The Muslims were steadfast in their faith and devoted to God and His laws. They did their utmost to avoid contention. But, they knew the cruelty of their enemies, and at times they were forced to take up arms to defend themselves and protect their children from enslavement. Over time, the sacrifices of the Muslims and their transformed way of life helped people to realize the truth of God’s Message.

There are many accounts that show the transformative effect of the spiritual powers that emanated from the person of Muhammad. In one such account, it is said that Muhammad once awoke to find a soldier armed with a sword standing above Him, intending to take His life. The angry man asked, “Who is there now to save Thee?” Muhammad replied that God would save Him. The soldier became afraid and dropped the sword, which Muhammad picked up. He then asked the soldier who would save him. The man did not follow God’s teachings and realized that he was alone, with no one to come to his aid. Muhammad did not harm the solider but handed the sword back to him, telling him to learn to show forth mercy. The man was changed by this experience and devoted himself to Muhammad and His teachings.

After several years, the people of Mecca agreed to let the Muslims visit the holy sanctuary, the Ka’bah, where they could gather once a year to worship God. But soon the agreement collapsed, and the city was once again closed to the Muslims. The followers of Muhammad now numbered in the thousands, and they went to Mecca en masse, ready to draw arms if necessary. But the people, seeing the waves of His followers approaching the city, surrendered without resistance. Muhammad then made a pilgrimage, or hajj, to the Ka’bah, which He restored to a place of worship dedicated to the praise and glorification of the one true God.

Eventually, many of those who had at first rejected Muhammad’s teachings came to believe in one God and changed their ways, striving to align their will with the Will of God. Through His Words, which were recorded in a Holy Book called the Qu’ran, they learned to turn their hearts to God, especially through prayer and fasting, and to reflect those heavenly qualities that Muhammad had manifested throughout His life. Under His influence the people of the region rose from the sad condition in which He found them to the highest state of civilization. The warring tribes united and systems for organizing communities into well-ordered nations were established. Great universities were founded, knowledge of arts and sciences expanded, and new and beautiful forms of architecture emerged. At a time when other parts of the world were in decline, the Arab world flourished and the effects of Muhammad’s teachings ushered in a whole new era of human civilization.

(<http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/meast/01/29/muslim.inventions/index.html>) shares some of the contributions of Islam to the modern world, that can be shared with students.