Activity Challenges in Islam

**In-house disagreements – Sunni vs. Shia**

[Sunni](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunni_Islam) and [Shia Islam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shia_Islam) are the two major [denominations of Islam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_schools_and_branches). It is estimated that 80–90% of the world's [Muslims](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim) are Sunni and 10–20% are Shia.

Large Sunni populations can be found in:



* South East Asia
* China
* Africa
* Some of the Arab world

Large Shia populations can be found in:

* Iran
* Iraq
* Azerbaijan (country near Turkey)
* Pakistan

There hasn’t always been two groups. The historic background of the Sunni–Shia split lies in the schism that occurred when the Islamic prophet Muhammad died in the year 632, leading to a dispute over succession to Muhammad as a caliph of the Islamic community spread across various parts of the world which led to the Battle of Siffin. The dispute intensified greatly after the Battle of Karbala, in which Hussein ibn Ali and his household were killed by the ruling Sunni Caliph Yazid I, and the outcry for his revenge divided the early Islamic community. Today there are differences in religious practice, traditions and customs, often related to jurisprudence. Although all Muslim groups consider the Quran to be divine, Sunni and Shia have different opinions on hadith.

Over the years, Sunni–Shia relations have been marked by both cooperation and conflict. It is a major element of friction throughout the Middle East and has at times escalated to civil war and revolt.

**New words:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **caliph** | The title given to the ruler or leader of a community in Islam |
| **jurisprudence** | A legal system; the theory or philosophy of law |
| **hadith** | A collection of traditions containing sayings of the prophet Muhammad |

**TASK:** Form pairs. One of you will be A and the other B. Student A will investigate the religious practice, traditions and customs of Sunni Muslims. Student B research the same topics but from the point of view of a Shi’a Muslim. Collate your ideas in the VENN Diagram on the next page.

Sunni Muslims

Shi’a Muslims

**Out-of-house disagreements – Shaking off the ‘terrorism’ tag**

There is no doubt that many from all corners of the world associate the word ‘terror’ with Islam. This is an unfortunate stereotype brought about by the actions of a minority of radicals within the faith groups whose beliefs have strayed far from the intentions of the holy doctrine of the Muslim religion.

**TASK:** Work individually, pairs or small groups (under your teacher’s instructions) and use the links below to construct a short video called **‘Stop the Hate’** that sends a positive message about Islam. You can use any program but you must have images, words and some narration. It is important that you reference their belief system (quotes from the Qu’ran).

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/10076096/The-Muslim-faith-does-not-turn-men-to-terror.html>

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/04/201342894844652561.html>

<http://www.masjidtucson.org/submission/perspectives/striving/terrorism_no_religion.html>

<http://discover.islamway.net/articles.php?article_id=47>

<http://islam.about.com/od/terrorism/f/terrorism.htm>

***Did you know*** *that less than 2000 years ago (in the time of Ancient Rome) Christians were persecuted for their beliefs because they were different to the Romans, who were in charge at the time. There’s no reason why the Romans didn’t see Jesus as a terrorist – he was sending messages contrary to the social order – love each other no matter your social class. He would have been a sensation and caused many a conflict between groups. It’s funny how history repeats itself and some people never seem to learn …*

