



Name: _____ Date: _____

SG #27 The Development of Islam

Arabia's Geography. The Arabian Peninsula is a large area in Southwest Asia. Most of the region is desert, but the southwest corner—an area known as Yemen—is green and fertile. Starting in the 1400s B.C., trading and farming kingdoms arose in Yemen.

In the desert regions of the Arabian Peninsula, herders called **bedouins** tended their animals and moved often to find new sources of food and water. Some bedouins settled in oases and started businesses related to the caravan trade—either servicing traders or acting as traders themselves. Over time, the town of Mecca became an important trading center.

Arab Society and Culture. The bedouins and their desert lifestyle had a strong influence on Arabian culture. Family, clan, and tribal ties were very important, reflecting the need for a support network in the harsh desert.

As many desert people moved into the new towns, however, ties loosened. At certain points, different clans within the same tribe came into conflict, a situation that eventually developed in Mecca. As clans clashed and instability mounted, new ideas started to circulate in Arabian society.

The Prophet Muhammad. Muhammad introduced many of these new ideas. Born in Mecca around 570, Muhammad eventually became a caravan leader. He traveled often for his job and was probably exposed to different religious beliefs on his journeys. When Muhammad was about 40 years old, he went to the hills to think. He later reported that the angel Jibreel (Gabriel in English) had appeared to him there. According to Muhammad, God had spoken to him through Jibreel. Over the next 22 years, Muhammad reported receiving many more revelations from God. These became the sacred book of the new Islamic religion, or the **Qur'an**.

Muhammad expressed two main ideas to his followers. First, he said that there was only one God—Allah—not many, as most Arabs believed. Second, he said that people who believed God's message had to follow God's will.

Many of the leaders in Mecca disliked Muhammad and his new religion. After suffering mistreatment and harassment, Muhammad and his followers moved to the city of Yathrib in the **hijrah**, or flight. In Yathrib, which eventually was renamed Medina, Muhammad became both a religious and a political leader. His revelations started to cover social, political, and economic life rather than just religious life.

Over time, many of the desert tribes became Muslim. Muhammad urged new and old Muslims alike to raid caravans from Mecca. Finally, after continuing warfare, the people of Mecca accepted Muhammad and Islam.

Answer the questions below in your own words and in complete sentence. Highlight your evidence.

1. What was Arabia's geography like? How did this geography influence Arab life?

2. How did life in the Arabian Peninsula change after the growth of towns?

3. What were two of Muhammad's earliest messages?

4. In what way did Muhammad's role change after he and his followers moved to Yathrib in the *hijrah*?

5. How did Muhammad spread Islam?
