

# WHAT IS RAMADAN AND HOW CAN TEACHERS SUPPORT THEIR MUSLIM STUDENTS?

## What is Islam?

Islam is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest monotheistic religion in the world, an extension of the same Abrahamic tradition of Judaism and Christianity.

Islam means to submit and commit to the way of God. It means to live a spiritual life based on the remembrance and devotion to God. It means to live a moral life based on doing good to others and creating a better world for everyone.

In Islam, there is only one God who has sent many prophets to guide humankind. Islam affirms all the prophets of Jewish scripture as well as the life and teachings of Jesus.

The Quran brought to us by Muhammad considers itself a reminder, a confirmation, and an extension of the same message that is contained in the Torah of Moses, the Psalms of David, and the Gospel of Jesus.

Allah is the Arabic word for God. Arabic-speaking Christians say Allah when they refer to God.

## Who is a Muslim?

A Muslim is anyone who has submitted and committed themselves to the way of God.

Different communities of Muslims have emerged over the centuries, each one emphasizing different aspects of a long and rich tradition.

The Shia Muslim communities look to the teachings of the Quran, the Prophet, and the lineage of Imams to guide their understanding of Islam.

The Sunni Muslim communities look to the teachings of the Quran, the Prophet, and the legal schools to guide their understanding of Islam.

## Facts about Muslims:

From the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, Muslim civilization became a global leader in all kinds of scientific and artistic pursuits.

There are 1.8 billion Muslims in the world.

Most of them live in Indonesia.

## What is Ramadan?

Ramadan is the ninth month of the lunar Muslim calendar in which the Quran was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.

Ramadan is the month in which the Quran encourages Muslims to pray intensely, serve others, and, for those who are healthy and able, fast from food and water from sunrise to sunset.

After the end of the month, there is a day of celebration called Eid when families dress up, gather for prayers, give gifts, and share meals.

Note: many Muslims fast, but not all of them. Some emphasize the remembrance and service aspects more. There is room for personal interpretation in how individual Muslims observe Ramadan. Children are not expected to try fasting until puberty, after which it is up to the individual student and their family.

## How can teachers support their Muslim students?

- Learn about Islam, Prophet Muhammad, the Quran, the history and diversity of Muslim civilization as an act of community, cross-cultural empathy, and bridge-building ([reading list](#)).
- Say “Ramadan Mubarak” or “Ramadan Kareem” to your Muslim students. Invite them to share their traditions and experiences with their classmates as an act of cultural literacy.
- Recognize that your fasting Muslim students are hungry and tired. Without regular food and water, a student’s ability to sustain concentration during class and stamina during exercise and sports will be lessened, so they need your support and consideration. (They are not being lazy or not trying hard enough.)
- Minimize class activities and projects involving food.
- Offer alternative spaces for fasting Muslim students to congregate so they don’t have to sit in the cafeteria watching and smelling what their classmates are eating.

## What are the greetings of Ramadan?

During:

### **Ramadan Mubarak**

(“May the blessings of Ramadan be upon you”)

### **Ramadan Kareem**

(“May the generosity of Ramadan be upon you”)

After the month is over, on the day of Eid:

### **Eid Mubarak**

(“May be the blessings of Eid be upon you”)