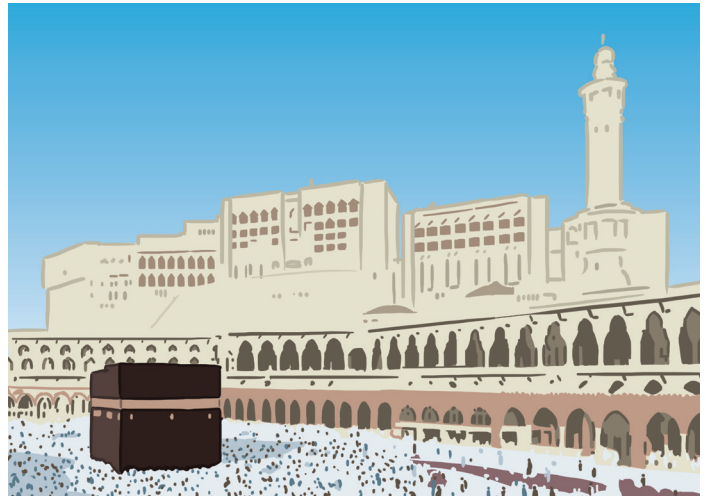


# Mecca



## Pre-Reading

### A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Where is Mecca located?
2. Do you know why Mecca is so important to the religion of Islam?
3. Do you know when the religion of Islam was founded?
4. Have you heard of the spiritual journey to Mecca called the Hajj?
5. Do you know how many people take part in the annual Hajj?

### B. Vocabulary Preview

Match the words on the left with the correct meanings on the right.

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| ___ 1. holy           | a) a religious journey  |
| ___ 2. pray           | b) very forceful  |
| ___ 3. narrow         | c) started, established   |
| ___ 4. valley         | d) religious, spiritual   |
| ___ 5. originally     | e) in good physical condition, not sick                                   |
| ___ 6. founded        | f) to speak to God, to worship  |
| ___ 7. cube           | g) a public gathering to show feelings about something                    |
| ___ 8. able-bodied    | h) at first, in the beginning   |
| ___ 9. pilgrimage     | i) an action performed in connection with a ceremony or religious service |
| ___ 10. ritual        | j) thin, not wide   |
| ___ 11. stampede      | k) a block having six equal square sides                                  |
| ___ 12. violent       | l) a sudden rush of frightened people or animals                          |
| ___ 13. demonstration | m) a piece of land between hills or mountains                             |

## Reading

1. Mecca is Islam's **holiest** city. Muslims turn towards Mecca five times a day to **pray**.
2. Mecca is located in Saudi Arabia in a **narrow valley** about 50 miles (about 80.5 kilometres) from the Red Sea. It was a trading centre **originally**.
3. Islam was **founded** in Mecca by the Prophet Mohammed in the seventh century. The Ka'ba, a **cube**-shaped, black brick building, is the centre of Islam. Al-Haram Mosque (the Great Mosque) surrounds the Ka'ba and the modern city of Mecca surrounds the mosque.
4. Only Muslims are allowed to visit Mecca. All **able-bodied** Muslims who have enough money to make the journey must perform a spiritual Hajj, or **pilgrimage**, to Mecca at least once in their life. During the Hajj, pilgrims must wear special white clothes and cannot do things like shave, cut their nails, wear jewelry, kill or hunt, or fight or argue.
5. More than two million Muslims from 70 countries take part in the annual Hajj. Many travel thousands of miles to reach the holy city. While there, they perform certain **rituals**. After entering al-Haram Mosque, they walk around the Ka'ba seven times in a counter-clockwise direction, a ritual called the Tawaf. They must also run seven times along one of the passageways in the mosque. This ritual honors the search for water by Hajar, the Prophet Abraham's wife.
6. The crowds of people and the heat have created problems in the past. Many pilgrims have died of heat stroke; many others have died after being crushed in **stampedes** or caught in fires or as a result of **violent** political **demonstrations**. The government of Saudi Arabia has set a fixed number of pilgrims who are allowed to come from each country each year to try to overcome these problems.

*After Muslims complete this pilgrimage, they can add the prefix "al-Hajj" (the pilgrimage) or "Hajji" (pilgrim) before their name.*

## Comprehension

### A. True or False?

Read the statements below.

If the statement is true, write T beside the sentence.

If it is false, write F and correct the information.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Mecca is located at the top of a mountain in Saudi Arabia.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Mecca was once a trading centre.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. All Muslims, rich or poor, must travel to Mecca once in their lifetime.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The spiritual journey to Mecca is called the Ka'ba.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Many people have died during their spiritual journey to Mecca.

### B. Ask and Answer

Practise asking and answering the following questions with your partner.

Then write your answers in complete sentences in your notebook.

- 1. Where is Mecca located?
- 2. Why is Mecca so important in the religion of Islam?
- 3. What is the Ka'ba?
- 4. What is the Hajj, and what are some of the requirements of the Hajj?
- 5. How many Muslims take part in the annual Hajj?
- 6. What are some of the rituals associated with the Hajj?
- 7. What are some of the problems associated with the Hajj?

## Vocabulary Review

Complete the sentences using vocabulary from page 1.  
You may need to change the word forms.

1. That is a very \_\_\_\_\_ bridge. Two cars cannot pass each other at the same time.
2. The United Nations was \_\_\_\_\_ in 1945 after World War II.
3. Many houses were destroyed during the \_\_\_\_\_ storm.
4. In many countries, all \_\_\_\_\_ young men have to join the army for one or two years.
5. There is going to be a \_\_\_\_\_ downtown tomorrow to protest against the government's decision to raise taxes.
6. He went to church to \_\_\_\_\_ for his sick child.
7. When the fire started in the barn, the horses began to \_\_\_\_\_ across the field.
8. After hiking in the hills all day, the campers went down into the \_\_\_\_\_ to set up their camp and spend the night.

## Discussion

1. Besides Mecca, what are some other holy sites around the world? What religions are these places associated with? Have you visited any of these places?
2. There are several rituals associated with the Hajj that are mentioned in the reading. Discuss some of the rituals involved in ceremonies or services in your own religion or culture.
3. Many people have died while making the pilgrimage to Mecca because of heat, overcrowding, fires, and demonstrations. What do you think the Saudi government can do to prevent these problems in the future?