**Expansion of the Early Islamic Empire Lesson Plan**

**Central Historical Question:**

**How did the early Islamic empire expand?**

**Materials**:

* + - Expansion of the Early Islamic Empire PowerPoint (<https://www.scribd.com/doc/182444126/Expansion-of-the-Early-Islamic-Empire>)
    - Copies of Documents A-C
    - Copies of Guiding Questions

**Plan of Instruction:**

1. Introduction: Use the PowerPoint presentation to review or provide an overview of Islamic expansion in the 7th and 8th centuries.
   1. Slide2: Arabia at the Dawn of Islam. Muhammad was born in about 570CE in Mecca (present-day Saudi Arabia). In his life, he reported receiving revelations from God and preached about them. His revelations form the Quran, the central religious text of Islam.   
       At the time of Muhammad’s birth, the Arabian Peninsula was divided into many competing tribes. By the end of his life in 632 CE, most of the peninsula had converted to Islam and after his death became the first caliphate.   
       The caliphate was the political and religious state of Muslims and the lands in their possession in the centuries after the death of Muhammad. The ruler of the caliphate was called a caliph, who was considered the political successor of the Prophet Muhammad.
   2. Slide3: Expanse of the Umayyad Caliphate. A little more than a hundred years later, the Umayyad Caliphate stretched across the Middle East, North Africa, and into Spain. It covered 5.8 million square miles at its largest extent, more than twice as large as the Roman Empire at its height. It was the largest empire ever up to that point.
   3. Explain to students: Today you will be examining three different documents and making a series of hypotheses to answer the Central Historical Question. Slide 4: Central Historical Question. How did the early Islamic empire expand? In particular, you will be hypothesizing about what strategies Muslims used to expand.
2. Slide5: Expansion of the Early Caliphates. Point out the extent of the empire as it grew during the 7th and 8th centuries. Pass out the Graphic Organizer.
   1. Students examine the map and make a hypothesis about what strategies Muslims used to expand the early caliphates.
   2. Students share out answers.
3. Pass out Document A
   1. In pairs, students read documents and answer the Guiding Questions.
   2. Individually, students use the document to make another hypothesis about   
      what strategies Muslims used to expand the early caliphates.
   3. Students share out answers.

Important to note:

Whose hypothesis changed from their first hypothesis?

Whose hypothesis remained the same or similar?

Is this a reliable source for learning how the early caliphates   
expanded? Is this document alone enough evidence to determine how the early caliphates expanded? Stress that although historians use documents to make hypotheses, they never use only one document to make historical claims.

1. Pass out Document B
   1. In pairs, students read documents and answer the Guiding Questions.
   2. Individually, students use the document to make another hypothesis about   
      what strategies Muslims used to expand the early caliphates.
   3. Students share out answers.

Important to note:

Whose hypothesis changed from their first two hypotheses?

Whose hypothesis remained the same or similar?

The header to this document mentions an invasion, which   
presumably included force.

The terms of this treaty, however, are peaceful and suggest   
that the expansion of Islam involved a level of tolerance and acceptance of differing religious beliefs.

1. Pass out Document C
   1. In pairs, students read documents and answer the Guiding Questions.
   2. Individually, students use the document to make another hypothesis about   
      what strategies Muslims used to expand the early caliphates.
   3. Students share out answers.

Important to note:

Whose hypothesis changed from their first two hypotheses?

Whose hypothesis remained the same or similar?

The stipends described here seem to run counter to Document   
A and are more similar to Document B.

1. Final Discussion
   1. How do these documents shed light on how the caliphates expanded during the 7th and 8th centuries?
   2. Is anyone document more reliable than the other? If so,why?
   3. What other types of sources might you consult to continue investigating how the early caliphates expanded?
2. Final Claim/Summary. For homework students write a paragraph that draws on evidence from the documents to address the question: How did the early Islamic empire expand?

**Citations**  
Document A  
Al-Biladuri: The Battle of the Yarmuk (636) and After. In *Internet Medieval Source Book*. Fordham University. http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/yarmuk.asp.

Document B  
The Treaty of Tudmir. In Olivia Remie Constable (Ed.), Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources (pp. 37-38). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.

Document C  
Donner, F. (1981). *The Early Islamic Conquests*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

**Document A: Battle of the Yarmuk (Modified)**

Muslim forces took control of Syria in 636 CE when they fought the Eastern Roman Empire (which included Greece) at the Battle of Yarmuk. This account, written by Muslim historian Ahmad al-Biladuri in the 800s CE, describes the battle.



The Muslims gathered together, and the Greek army marched against them. The Greeks and their followers in this battle tied themselves to each other by chains, so that none of them would run away. The battle they fought at al-Yarmuk was of the fiercest and bloodiest kind. In this battle

24,000 Muslims took part. By Allah's help, some 70,000 of them [the

Greeks] were put to death, and their **remnants** took to flight, reaching as far as Palestine, Antioch, Aleppo, Mesopotamia and Armenia. In the battle of al-Yarmuk certain Muslim women took part and fought violently. Among

them was Hind, daughter of 'Utbah and mother of Mu'awivah ibn-abi-

Sufyan, who repeatedly exclaimed, "Cut the arms of these non-Muslims with your swords!"

**Source**: Al-Biladuri, “The Battle of the Yarmuk (636) and After,” written in the 800s CE.



**Vocabulary**

remnants: rest of the army

**Document B: Treaty of Tudmir (Modified)**

This treaty was signed in 713 CE between ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, the commander of the Muslim forces invading Spain, and Theodemir, the Christian King of a region in southern Spain.



In the name of God, the merciful and compassionate. We [Abd al-Aziz’s forces] will not harass him [Theodmir], nor remove him from power. His followers will not be killed or taken prisoner, nor will they be separated from their women and children. They will not be **coerced** in matters of religion, their churches will not be burned, nor will **sacred** objects be taken from the realm, as long as he remains sincere and fulfills these conditions that we have set for him: He will not give shelter to **fugitives**, nor to our enemies, nor encourage any **protected person** to fear us, nor **conceal** news of our enemies. He and [each of] his men shall [also] pay one **dinar** every year,

together with four measures of wheat, four measures of barley, four liquid

measures of concentrated fruit juice, four liquid measures of vinegar, four

of honey, and four of olive oil. Slaves must each pay half of this amount.

**Source:** The Treaty of Tudmir, 713 CE.



**Vocabulary**

coerced: forced  
sacred: religious  
fugitives: people running from the law  
dinar: Muslim coins made of gold or silver  
protected person: person under the rule of the empire conceal: hide

**Document C: Fred Donner**

Fred Donner is a historian at the University of Chicago who specializes in early Islam and early Islamic expansion. Below is an excerpt from his book where he challenges some of the common knowledge about early Islamic conquests.



During the conquest period the granting of gifts, which had been practiced by Muhammad, became more regularized and eventually **institutionalized**.

In the first place, there was established a system of **stipends** or direct salary payments ('ata-') to warriors serving in the Islamic armies. . .

Tribesmen in the Islamic armies who rebelled against the **regime** now did so at the cost of losing the stipends that the regime provided. Similarly, stipends were granted to some Persian or Aramean **nobles** (dihqans) who cooperated with the Muslims in Iraq. In most cases, it appears that these individuals were required to embrace Islam in order to receive their stipend.

***Source:*** *Excerpt from Fred Donner,* The Early Islamic Conquests*, 1981.*



**Vocabulary**

institutionalized: established as part of the government stipends: payment  
regime: government in power  
nobles: ruling class

**Graphic Organizer**

# Central Historical Question:

# How did the early Islamic empire expand?



**After examining the map on Islamic expansion make a hypothesis for the following question:** How did the early Islamic empire expand?



**Document A: The Battle of the Yarmuk**

1. (Sourcing) Who was al-Biladuri? Why do you think he wrote this document?

2. (Close Reading) List 3 reasons why this battle was the “fiercest and bloodiest kind.”

2.

3.



3. Do you think this document is a reliable source for determining how the caliphates expanded in the 7th and 8th centuries? Why or Why not?

Hypothesis #2: How did the early Islamic empire expand?

**Document B: The Treaty of Tudmir**



1. (Sourcing) What type of document is this? What is its purpose?



2. (Close Reading) According to this document, how will Muslims treat the people that they conquer?



3. (Corroboration) How is the account of Muslim expansion in Document B similar or different from the account in Document A?



4. Do you think this document is a reliable source for determining how the caliphates expanded in the 7th and 8th centuries? Why or Why not?



**Hypothesis #3:** How did the early Islamic empire expand?

**Document C: Fred Donner**



1. (Sourcing) What type of document is this? What is its purpose?



2. (Close Reading) What was the purpose of the gift-giving that the author describes?



3. (Corroboration): How is the account of Muslim expansion in Document C different from the accounts in Document A and Document B?



4. Do you think this document is a reliable source for determining how the caliphates expanded in the 7th and 8th centuries? Why or Why not?



**Hypothesis #4:** How did the early Islamic empire expand?

**Final Claim/Summary:**

Based on the three documents you looked at, write a paragraph to answer the following question: How did the early Islamic empire expand? Make sure to include evidence from at least **two** different documents.