

The Islamic Celebration: Eid al-Fitr

What is Ramadan?

Ramadan is in the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Falling between June, July and August on the Gregorian calendar and lasting from dawn until sunset for 29 or 30 days. Ramadan is a very important time for Muslims and is celebrated all over the world. During Ramadan, Muslims ask for forgiveness, pray regularly, and try to teach themselves self-control. It is a time of fasting for the Islamic people as fasting is one of the five duties (or pillars) that Muslims must obey. The Islamic name for this fasting is 'Saum'.

Why do Muslims fast?

Fasting is meant to teach Muslims to be focused, be self-disciplined and generous. It also reminds them of the suffering of the poor, who may not get to eat well. The prophet Muhammad was one of the first Muslims to fast - other Muslims must follow his example. Each day during the month of Ramadan, Muslims all over the world do not eat or drink from dawn until sunset. At the end of the day after sunset, Muslim families will often all eat together and celebrate their day of fasting.



How do Muslims mark the end of Ramadan?

The end of Ramadan is a big celebration called 'Eid al-Fitr': The Festival of the Breaking of the Fast. Muslims celebrate the end of fasting and thank Allah for their strength. Eid al-Fitr officially begins when the first sight of the new moon is seen in the sky. This is thought to be one of the reasons why a crescent moon symbol is important within Islam.



How is Eid al-Fitr celebrated?

On the first morning of the celebration, many Muslims meet for special prayers called Salat al-Eid, and have breakfast. They put on their best clothes for what will be their first meal in daylight for a month. Whilst there, some Muslims will exchange gifts and greeting cards. Celebrations continue for one, two or maybe even three days, and usually include gatherings to view the new moon, decorating homes inside and out, family visits, eating special foods, neighbourhood parties and wearing special, new clothes. People wish each other 'Eid Mubarak' (Blessed Eid) or 'Eid Said' (Happy Eid).

Did you know?

An estimated 2.1 billion Muslims across the globe will celebrate Eid al-Fitr to mark the end of the month-long fasting period of Ramadan - a third of that number are from the African continent.

Photo courtesy of (AMISOM Public Information@flickr.com) & (Syefri Zulkefli via Wikimedia.com) - granted under creative commons licence - attribution

Questions About Eid al-Fitr

Answer the following questions using full sentences that give as much detail as possible.

1. Explain in your own words: What is Ramadan?

2. Why must Muslims show 'self-restraint' during Ramadan?

3. What does 'Eid al-Fitr' mean?

4. Why is the crescent moon a symbol of Islamic faith?

5. List five activities that Muslims may take part in during their Eid al-Fitr celebrations.

6. On which continent of the World do most Muslim people live?

7. Can you think why Ramadan fasting is more challenging to complete when it falls during the summer months?

8. 'Saum' is just one of the Five Pillars of Islam. Research the other four Islamic duties.

Questions About Eid al-Fitr

Answers

1. Explain in your own words: What is Ramadan?

Ramadan is in the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Falling between June, July and August on the Gregorian calendar and lasting from dawn until sunset for 29 or 30 days. Ramadan is a very important time for Muslims and is celebrated all over the world.

2. Why must Muslims show 'self-restraint' during Ramadan?

Each day during the month of Ramadan, Muslims all over the world do not eat or drink from dawn until sunset. This 'fasting' takes great self-restraint.

3. What does 'Eid al-Fitr' mean?

The end of Ramadan is a big celebration called 'Eid al-Fitr': The Festival of the Breaking of the Fast.

4. Why is the crescent moon a symbol of Islamic faith?

Eid al-Fitr officially begins when the first sight of the new moon is seen in the sky. This is thought to be one of the reasons why a crescent moon symbol is important within Islam.

5. List five activities that Muslims may take part in during their Eid al-Fitr celebrations.

Pupils must list five activities from:

- **Meet for special prayers and have breakfast.**
- **Give gifts and cards to each other.**
- **Gather to view the new moon.**
- **Decorate their homes inside and out.**
- **Visit family.**
- **Eat special foods.**
- **Hold neighbourhood parties.**
- **Wear new/special clothes.**

6. On which continent of the World do most Muslim people live?

An estimated 2.1 billion Muslims across the globe will celebrate Eid al-Fitr to mark the end of the month-long fasting period of Ramadan – a third of that number are from the African continent.

7. Can you think why Ramadan fasting is more challenging to complete when it falls during the summer months?

Ramadan fasting is more challenging during the summer months because the sun rises earlier and sets later. This means the daylight hours time period that Muslim people must fast for each day is much longer.

8. 'Saum' is just one of the Five Pillars of Islam. Research the other four Islamic duties.

Shahadah: declaration of faith./Salah: prayer./Zakat: giving a fixed proportion of their money to charity./Hajj: pilgrimage to Mecca.