

4.3 Is Life a Test?

The Two Types of Jihad

Learning Objectives

In this unit you will:

- analyse the belief held by some Muslims that life is a test
- identify and explore the two meanings of jihad
- reflect on what you do when you face difficulty.

Starter

- Talk to a partner about a time when you were pushed to the limit. In your pairs, discuss both of your situations and evaluate the self-control you both showed.

Case Study



Many Muslims believe that life is a test. They believe that specific tests are set by Allah to help them develop qualities they lack. Because of this, they accept that sometimes life is a struggle – but they look forward to becoming more and more like the kind of person Allah describes in the Qur'an.

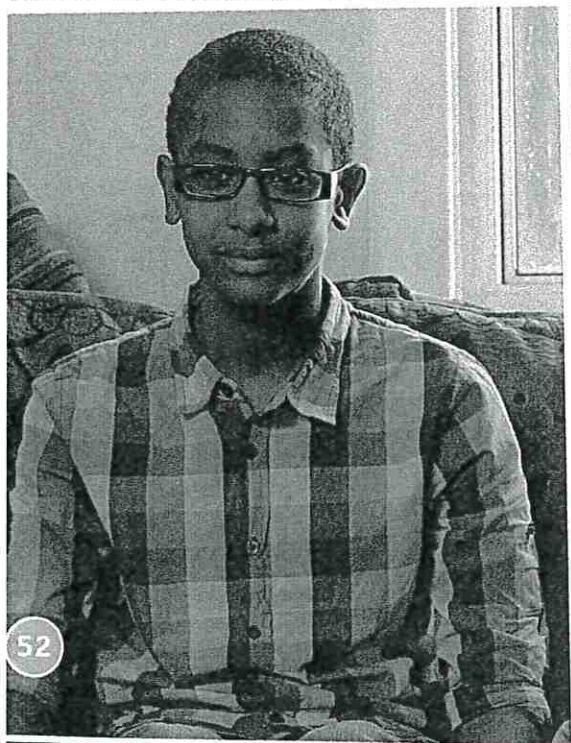
Rahaf Ahmed says that living far away from her family and friends feels like a test, 'because most of my family live in Africa'. She says 'it's hard being away from them and not talking to them every day, like other families do'. Many Muslims believe that tests like this develop patience and courage in a person.



Rahaf's brother, Saad, says that a personal struggle for him is 'exams, and not having time to do other things like go out with friends'. However, he thinks that being 'patient in hard times' gives him hope. He says that it's possible to know when a person has passed a test, because they 'keep believing in Allah, and don't give up on Him'.



Rahaf and Saad believe that life is a test. What impact does this belief have on them?



Surveys of Muslim populations across the world show jihad is understood to mean different things. Jihad means the inner spiritual struggle, the duty to strive in the way of God against sin. Saad and Rahaf describe this 'greater jihad' as a way in which Allah develops good qualities within them. This might mean being just or honest.

Jihad is the struggle to make a good living and so contribute to a good society. To strive for a good society might include a struggle or protest against persecution and oppression. For some jihad can be a defence of the faith, even using violence. However, this is controversial because violent extremists use jihad to justify things that seem to go against Islam.

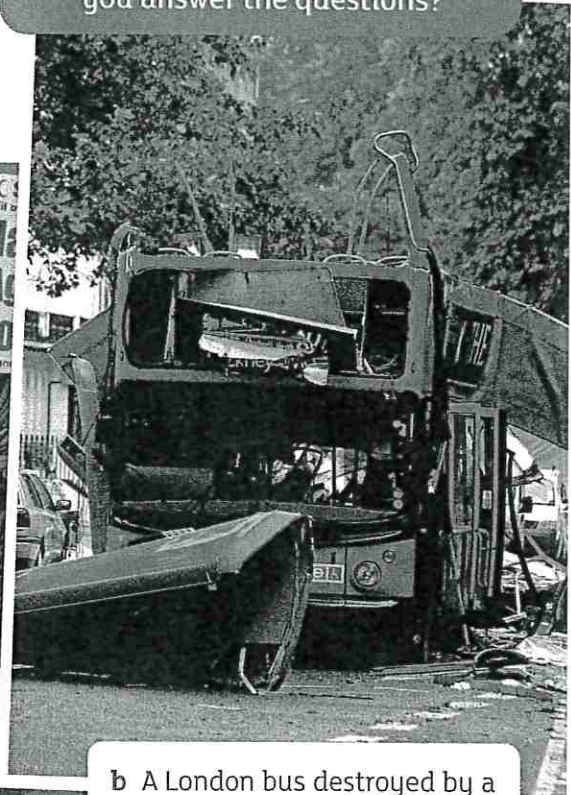
? Look carefully at the two photographs and make a note of your responses. Discuss your feelings with a partner and identify three questions you'd like to ask about the photos. Share and discuss in a small group. What further information is needed to help you answer the questions?

a Muslims peacefully protesting against acts of terror.



Activities

- 1 Interview your partner about something they learned from a challenging situation.
- 2 In pairs, role-play or write down a conversation between a young Muslim who is facing a personal struggle and someone who is giving them advice on how they should approach it.
- 3 What kind things do/might Rahaf and Saad find to be a challenge, and what qualities do you think they develop as a result of this 'jihad'?
- 4 Look at the two photos (a and b). One shows Scottish Muslims protesting against terrorism and the other an act of terror carried out by someone who thought they were doing the right thing. If you could write a letter to send back to each, to arrive the day before these photos were taken, what would you write? Think about the qualities you think we should encourage in people.



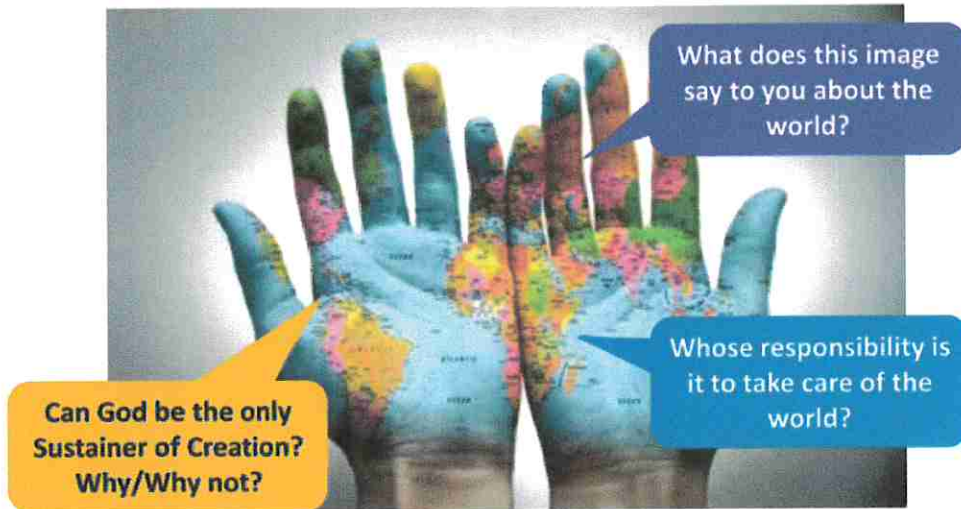
b A London bus destroyed by a suicide bomber on 7 July 2005, a day when a series of similar attacks left 52 civilians dead.

Reflection

Reflect on the personal struggles faced by Rahaf and Saad. What are the similar challenges you might face in your own daily life?

Year 8 – Who Am I

Take 1 minute to look at this image. What does it mean to you?
Answer one of the questions



STEWARDSHIP – The theological belief that humans are responsible for the world and should take care of it.

What was God's plan?	What does this mean in your own words?	What can humans do to take care of creation?
In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth		
"Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."		
"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. (JOHN)		
"You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet"		
The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. (Psalm 19)		
I brought you into a fertile land to eat its fruit and rich produce. But you came and defiled my land and made my inheritance detestable		

Write a letter to somebody you know, explaining to them why stewardship is important not only to Christians but to all humans.

Stewardship means...

Humans have a responsibility...

Humans have this responsibility because God said....

John's Gospel also teaches Christians...

Christians can show this by...

Humans should look after creation because The Bible teaches that....

One reason we should look after creation is....

Evidence to support this is...

The Bible teaches us that....

Creation
Genesis
Stewardship
Sustainer
Creator
Responsibility
Psalm
Love
Fertile
Defiled
Subdue
dominion

Unit 1: History and belief

How did Islam rise to influence?

How did Muhammad combine his radical religious message with political and military power?

Muhammad the prophet

After the Night of Power, Muhammad began preaching his message in Mecca. His words were considered radical. Muhammad said that it was wrong for Meccans to worship many gods. He insisted that there was only one God, and claimed that this God had given him instructions for how people should live their lives. In particular, he criticised the worship of **idols**.

This was particularly controversial because Muhammad's own tribe looked after the idols in Mecca's main holy site, the **Ka'aba**. The leaders of the tribe did not like Muhammad's radical monotheistic message. They saw it as a threat to their power and to the income they earned through polytheistic tribes visiting the Ka'aba on pilgrimage. They tried to persuade him to abandon his preaching and to join them as the most powerful traders in Mecca. When Muhammad refused, the leaders of the tribe denied Muhammad's message and persecuted his followers. They banned Meccans from marrying or trading with any of Muhammad's followers. Some of them were tortured and killed.



A modern picture of the Ka'aba.

Bilal

One man who was attacked because of his conversion to Islam was a slave called Bilal. He was one of Muhammad's earliest followers. When Bilal's master found out that he had converted to Islam he violently tortured him, but Bilal would not give up his faith. His master was angry that Bilal regarded God as more important than him and that Bilal would not honour the many idols that the other Meccans worshipped. His master ordered that a large stone be placed on Bilal's chest to slowly crush him. Bilal simply said, '*Ahad, ahad*' – 'God is one.' Muhammad was shocked when he heard about the treatment of Bilal and told his friend Abu Bakr to buy Bilal from his master. After Bilal was freed from slavery, he became a close friend of Muhammad.



Bilal became an important figure in early Islam. Here, he is calling Muslims to pray from the top of the Ka'aba.

Muhammad the politician

In 620 CE, while preaching outside Mecca, Muhammad met six men from the city of Yathrib (Medina). They had heard the message of Islam and became Muslims. Polytheist, Jewish and Christian tribes all lived in Yathrib, and they had all been fighting each other for many years. The six men asked Muhammad to move to Yathrib to help settle the conflicts. Over the next two years, more people from Yathrib visited Muhammad, pledging allegiance to him and inviting him to move to their city. In 622 CE, after years

Fact

Yathrib was later named al-Madinat al-Nabi, 'the city of the Prophet'. Today it is known as Medina.

of persecution in Mecca, Muhammad instructed all his followers to travel 320 kilometres (200 miles) north to Yathrib. The emigration of Muhammad and his followers to Medina, as Yathrib became known, is called the **Hijrah**.

One of the first things that Muhammad did when he arrived in Medina was to write the **Constitution of Medina**. This was a set of religious laws that aimed to bring together the Muslim, Jewish, Christian and polytheist tribes who lived there and create a fairer society. It included rules to help widows and orphans and it said that Medina should be a 'sacred place' where no weapons could be carried. This was Muhammad's first attempt at creating a community based on his religious beliefs, and Medina became the first Islamic city-state.

Muhammad the warrior

At the time of Muhammad, there were many violent disputes between tribes across the Arabian Peninsula. In 624 CE, Muslims in Medina were being persecuted by tribes in Mecca. Muhammad led his army of followers into battle to defend the safety of Muslims in Medina against this violence. The Battle of Badr, as this event became known, confirmed that Muhammad was no longer just a prophet and a politician – he was also a strong warrior. As a result of his victory in this battle, more people in Medina accepted Muhammad's authority.

After a series of battles between Mecca and Medina, Muhammad finally conquered Mecca in 629 CE. Muhammad had sent a message in advance saying that those who stayed in their homes when his army entered the city would not be harmed. On entering Mecca, Muhammad rode straight for the Ka'aba. He circled it seven times before entering it and destroying all the idols inside of it. He then dedicated the Ka'aba to God.

By the end of Muhammad's life, he was the most influential man in Arabia. He had successfully united the warring tribes of the region under Islamic rule. All of the polytheistic tribes had become Muslims, as well as some of the Jews. Muhammad had combined his radical religious message with political and military power. The world would never be the same again.

Activity

Make a timeline showing the key dates in the life of Muhammad. Include his birth, marriage, the Night of Power, the Hijrah, the Battle of Badr, conquering Mecca, and Muhammad's death in 632 CE.

Check your understanding

- 1 Why did Muhammad disapprove of idol worship?
- 2 How did the leaders of Muhammad's tribe react when he told them there was one true God?
- 3 Describe what happened to Bilal.
- 4 What was the Constitution of Medina?
- 5 Was Muhammad a prophet, a politician or a warrior? Explain your answer fully.



The Battle of Badr occurred in Medina.

Key vocabulary

Constitution of

Medina The laws passed by Muhammad in Yathrib when he and his followers first settled there

Hijrah The emigration of Muhammad and his followers to Yathrib (Medina) in 622 CE

idol A picture or object that people worship as part of their religion

Ka'aba A holy site in Mecca which Muhammad dedicated to God after destroying its 360 idols

Unit 1: History and belief

Why did Islam split?

How did a disagreement about Muhammad's rightful successor cause Islam to split?

The caliphs

Muhammad died in June 632 CE. His message had spread at a rapid pace, and by the time of his death he had conquered the entire Arabian Peninsula and was widely regarded as a true prophet. In the 30 years after Muhammad's death, the Muslim community was led by four political and religious rulers (**caliphs**), all of whom had been close companions of Muhammad:

1. Abu Bakr (632–634 CE)
2. Umar (634–644 CE)
3. Uthman (644–656 CE)
4. Ali (656–661 CE)

Under these four caliphs, the religion of Islam spread across the world at an astonishing speed. This happened through people converting and invasion.

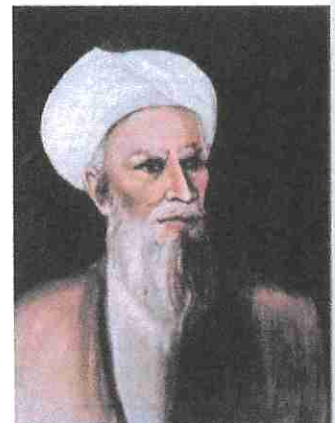
By 750 CE, the Islamic Empire stretched from the westernmost point of Spain to the eastern edge of India. This empire was known as the **Caliphate** and continued to be ruled over by a succession of caliphs in the centuries that followed.

Abu Bakr

After Muhammad's death, some tribes in the Arabian Peninsula wanted to return to having their own rulers. There were also disagreements between followers of Islam, which threatened to divide the new religious community. The first caliph, Abu Bakr, wanted to make sure that people living in Arabia remained Muslims and lived under Islamic rule. During his reign he often used force to defeat rebellions against him and maintain power.

Umar's conversion

According to Islamic tradition, the second caliph, Umar, originally despised the new religion of Islam and wanted to murder Muhammad. On his way to carry out this attack, Umar stopped at his sister's house to let her and her husband know what he thought about them becoming Muslims. However, when Umar heard them recite the words of the Qur'an, he converted to Islam on the spot and became a loyal follower of Muhammad. As caliph, he helped Islam expand beyond Arabia, conquering the areas now known as Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Iran.



Abu Bakr, the first caliph was a friend of Muhammad and an early convert to Islam.

Islam continued to spread fast during Uthman's 12-year rule. Uthman had many supporters, but there were also rebels living in the Caliphate who were opposed to him being leader. This caused violence to break out between different groups of Muslims. In 656 CE, opponents of Uthman broke into his house carrying swords and assassinated him.

The fourth caliph, Ali, was Muhammad's cousin – he was the son of Abu Talib. He was also married to Muhammad's daughter Fatima, making him Muhammad's son-in-law. Ali was elected to lead the community after Uthman had been assassinated, but, despite him being a relative of Muhammad, Ali had many opponents who he had to fight to secure power. One of these was a man called Muawiya, the Muslim governor of Syria, who felt that Ali had not done enough to take revenge on Uthman's killers. Muawiya's opposition to Ali led to a war in which different groups of Muslims fought each other for power. In 661 CE, Ali was assassinated, and Muawiya became the fifth caliph.

Sunni and Shi'a Muslims

After Muhammad's death, there was disagreement amongst Muslims over who should be their leader. Not everyone agreed that Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman should have been caliphs, and this caused Islam to split into two groups and its followers to become known as **Sunni** Muslims and **Shi'a** Muslims.

The majority of Muslims in the world today (about 85 per cent) are Sunni. They believe that it was correct for Abu Bakr to become leader after Muhammad, because he was Muhammad's closest companion. They also think that Umar, Uthman and Ali were the right people to succeed Abu Bakr. However, there is disagreement amongst Sunni Muslims about whether the caliphs who ruled in the centuries after these four men – who are sometimes known as the four Rightly Guided Caliphs – were rightful rulers.

Shi'a Muslims believe that God told Muhammad that Ali should be his immediate successor and that Muhammad made this clear to his followers in a speech given in the year of his death, 632 CE. They believe that the first three caliphs should not have been the rulers of Muslims. Shi'a Muslims also believe that, after Ali's death, his son Hussein should have succeeded him, not Muawiya, and that leadership of Muslims should have continued to pass down through the descendants of Ali.



Pilgrims and scholars at the shrine of Ali.

Key vocabulary

caliph The Arabic word for the leader of the whole Muslim community after the death of Muhammad; it literally means 'successor'. Sunni Muslims call the first four caliphs 'Rightly Guided Caliphs'

Caliphate The Islamic community ruled over by the caliph

Shi'a A smaller group of Muslims who believe that Ali and his descendants should have succeeded Muhammad as leaders of Islam

Sunni The majority (about 85 per cent) of Muslims across the world who believe that the Rightly Guided Caliphs were rightful successors of Muhammad

Check your understanding

- 1 What did Abu Bakr do while he was caliph?
- 2 How did Umar initially feel about Islam and what did he achieve as caliph?
- 3 Why was there a war between Muslims during Ali's rule?
- 4 Do Sunni and Shi'a Muslims agree on who should have succeeded Muhammad? Explain your answer.
- 5 "The caliphs played an important role in the development of Islam." Discuss this statement.

Unit 2: Islam in the modern world

Sunni and Shi'a Islam

What are the similarities and differences between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, and what effect does this have in the modern world?

Similarities

Today, the majority of Muslims – about 85 per cent – are Sunni. In Britain, approximately 95 per cent of Muslims are Sunni. Although Sunni and Shi'a Muslims disagree over who should have succeeded Muhammad (see pages 100–101), there is much that they do agree on. Both groups believe that there is only one God and that Muhammad was his final prophet. They both use the Qur'an as the basis of their beliefs and they both follow the Five Pillars, although Shi'a Muslims have other practices that they believe are similarly important. Both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims attend mosque to pray at noon on a Friday, although they use a slightly different adhan and different prayer positions. The Qur'an only specifies praying three times a day, so some Shi'a Muslims combine the five daily prayers into three sets of prayers.

When Muslims first moved to Britain, Sunni and Shi'a Muslims would often share the same places to pray, but as Islam grew in Britain this became less common and the different branches of Islam developed their own identities.

Differences

Sunni Muslims believe that the Qur'an, **Hadith** (the reported teachings of Muhammad) and Sunnah (the example of Muhammad) show them how to live. These three sources form the basis of **Shari'a law**, which provides guidance on all aspects of life.

Shi'a Muslims believe that God did not want to leave his people without a spiritual leader on earth, so he chose 12 **imams** – Ali and his descendants. God gave the imams the ability to be examples for Muslims, leading them in all aspects of life and showing them the truth that they should follow. Shi'a Muslims believe that in 874 CE, when the 12th imam was six years old, God took him into hiding to avoid him being killed as the previous imams had been. They think that he will return at the end of time, along with Jesus, to bring peace and justice to earth.

Fact

The largest form of Shi'a Islam is known as Twelver Shi'a, but there are other types of Shi'a Islam: the Isma'ilis (Seveners) and the Zaydis (Fivers). These groups are given their names because of their differing beliefs about how many imams followed Muhammad.



The site of a suicide car bomb in Karbala, Iraq, during a Shi'a pilgrimage.

Both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims celebrate Ramadan, Eid ul-Fitr and Eid ul-Adha, but they remember different events during the Islamic festival of Ashura.

Sunni Muslims remember the prophet Noah leaving the ark and Moses being freed from the Egyptians, while Shi'a Muslims mourn the death of Ali's son Hussein, who was beheaded during the Battle of Karbala (in present-day Iraq). During this festival, Shi'as often wear dark clothes, blacken their faces and bodies, and beat their chests with their fists to show their sorrow. In countries such as Pakistan and India, some men even cut themselves with knives, chains and blades to draw blood and suffer as Hussein did.



Iraqi Shi'a men beating themselves with chains to remember the assassination of Ali's son, Hussein.

Shari'a Law

Shari'a Law teaches Muslims what is **halal**. 'Halal' is an Arabic word meaning 'permitted'. The word is most often heard when describing food, but it can also be used to describe prayer, fasting, clothes or other things – any object or action can be halal. The opposite of halal is **haram**, which means 'unlawful' or 'forbidden'. Any meat that Muslims eat must be halal. For meat to be halal, the animal needs to be killed by cutting the jugular vein, carotid artery and windpipe with a sharp knife. All blood is then drained from the animal. During this process, an Islamic blessing is recited. Muslims believe that eating pork and drinking alcohol is always haram.



There are many halal butchers and restaurants in the UK.

Modern clashes

Many Muslims accept that both Sunni and Shi'a Islam are valid forms of their religion, but there have been conflicts between the two groups, which continue today. There are many reasons for clashes between Sunnis and Shi'as. In Iraq, there has been much violence between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims caused by historical, religious and political factors. For example, in 2007, at a popular time of Shi'a pilgrimage to Karbala in Iraq, a car bomb was set off near a Shi'a mosque. Approximately 60 people were killed and about 150 more were injured. Violence erupted on the streets and there were many shootings.

Key vocabulary

Ashura A festival in which Shi'a Muslims mourn the death of Ali's son Hussein at the Battle of Karbala

Hadith The reported sayings of Muhammad, heard by people during his life and written down in the centuries after his death

halal Permitted

haram Forbidden

imam A word used by Shi'a Muslims to refer to Ali and his 11 descendants. It also means the leader of prayers in a Sunni mosque

Shari'a law Guidance on all aspects of life for Muslims, from the three main sources of authority – the Qur'an, Sunnah and Hadith

Check your understanding

- 1 Which is the largest branch of Islam in the world?
- 2 In a table, show the similarities and differences between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims.
- 3 Explain what is meant by Shar'ia Law and how it helps Muslims?
- 4 What is halal food?
- 5 Explain the significance of the festival of Ashura to different Muslims.

4.7 Is Killing Ever Justified? War and Capital Punishment

Learning Objectives

In this unit you will:

- learn about and explain Islamic attitudes to killing
- consider how and why war and **capital punishment** might be thought of as different to murder
- evaluate arguments for and against the taking of a life.

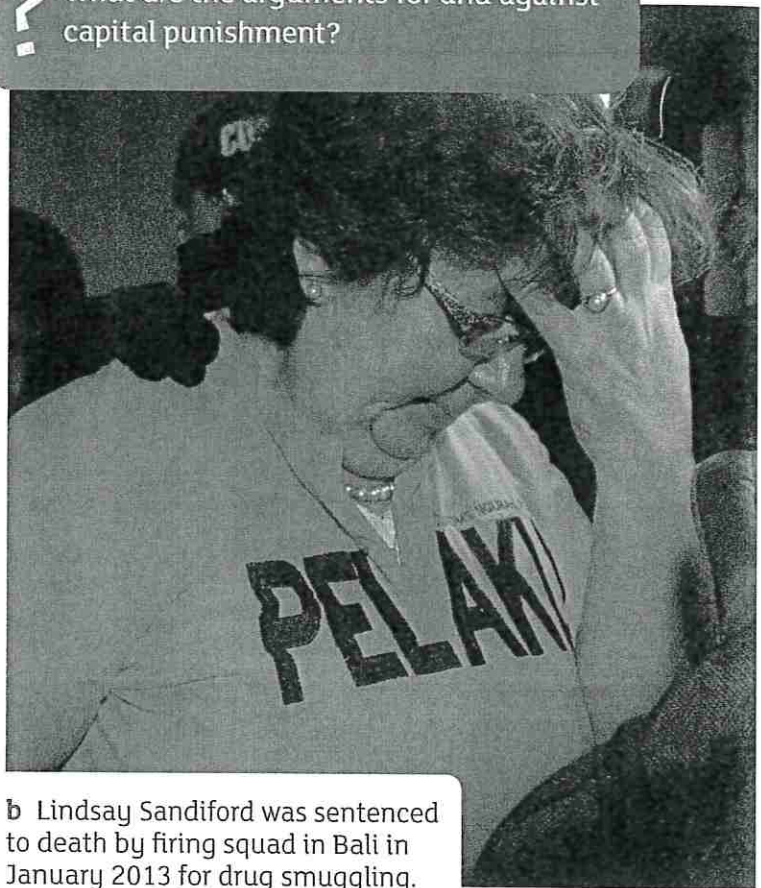
Starter

- Is it ever right to kill someone? Discuss your views with a partner.

Many Muslims believe that it's wrong to end a life, because Allah gives life and decides when people will die. However, according to the Qur'an, there are some occasions when killing is justified – but strict rules exist about the circumstances in these cases. The Qur'an allows capital punishment, because it puts people off committing serious crimes. However, before capital punishment can occur, there have to be many witnesses who can say truthfully that they saw the accused commit the crime.

The Qur'an says in 2:178 that a life may be taken for a life, but a killer who is forgiven by the victim's family can pay compensation instead, and their life will be spared. In fact, the victim's relatives are referred to as brothers – reminding Muslims of the bond between them and encouraging **mercy**.

? What are the arguments for and against capital punishment?



b Lindsay Sandiford was sentenced to death by firing squad in Bali in January 2013 for drug smuggling.

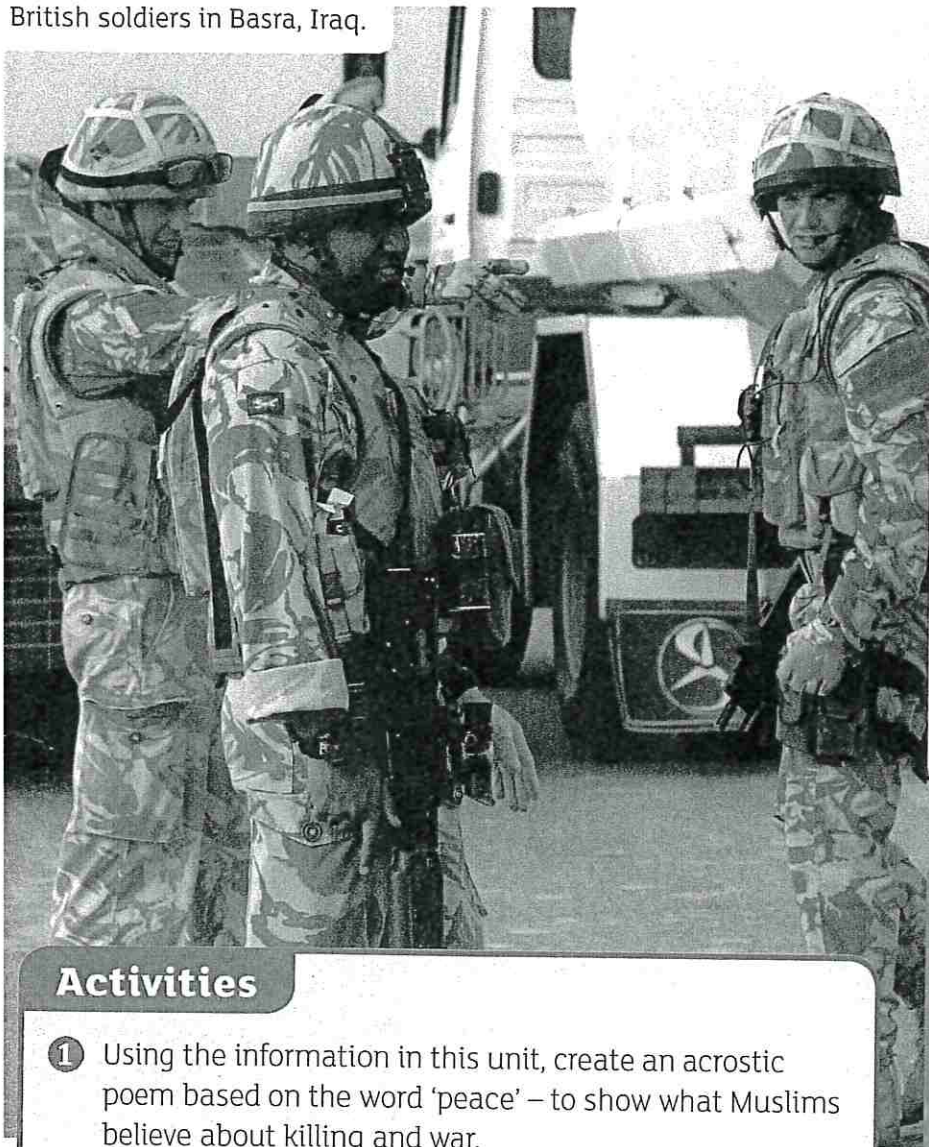
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اَللّٰهُمَّ
Allah
'The Merciful'
Ar Rahim

? The name of Allah 'the Merciful' (Ar Rahim) is repeated many times in Islamic prayer. When do you find it easy to show mercy to somebody who has done something bad to you?

Because of media attention, some people mistakenly think that 'jihad' means that Muslims believe war is a good thing. Jihad actually means 'to struggle' in the cause of Allah, which can be wrongly interpreted (see Unit 4.3). In Islam, a religious authority must declare any war. The Qur'an also sets out conditions when fighting is acceptable – as a last resort.

British soldiers in Basra, Iraq.



Useful Words

Capital punishment Killing or executing somebody, using a country's legal process, for a serious crime they have committed

Mercy Showing forgiveness to somebody who you could punish

'To those against whom war is made, permission is given to fight, because they are wronged, and truly Allah is most powerful for their aid'

The Qur'an 22:39

'If they cease, let there be no hostility, except to those who practise oppression [on-going unfair treatment]'

The Qur'an 2:193

'If the enemy inclines towards peace, then you should also incline towards peace, and trust in Allah'

The Qur'an 8:61

Activities

- ① Using the information in this unit, create an acrostic poem based on the word 'peace' – to show what Muslims believe about killing and war.
- ② Write a short briefing sheet for a media journalist explaining the correct definition of the word 'jihad'.
- ③ 'Capital punishment and war are no different to murder.' Using the information in this unit, as well as your own research, come up with arguments for and against this statement. Then prepare a piece in a format of your choice which sums up your own opinion.



Choose one of the three quotations from the Qur'an and summarize it in your own words. Then evaluate it by coming up with arguments for and against what it suggests. Would you follow this advice?

Reflection

What are your guiding principles for this topic, and where do they come from?