

**Objections to  
“ACROSS THE CENTURIES”  
Houghton Mifflin Social Studies Book  
7<sup>th</sup> grade 21<sup>st</sup> Century Edition**

**ISLAM UNIT:**

I. Unbelievable Leading Assignments to Children:

1. “Assume you are a Muslim soldier on your way to conquer Syria in the year A.D. 635. Write three journal entries that reveal your thoughts about Islam, fighting in the battle, or life in the desert.” Pg 71  
(My son is forbidden from imagining fighting for Allah.)
2. “Form small groups of students to build a miniature mosque [place of worship]. You may decide to use cardboard, papier’ mache, or other materials. Have one member do research at the library to find out what the insides of mosques look like. Have another member design a building plan. And have two members collect the building materials. Together, construct the mosque according to your plan.” Pg 71  
(My son is forbidden from building places of worship to Allah.)
3. “You leave your home in Alexandria for the pilgrimage to Mecca. [previously described as a holy religious event]. Using the map on page 53 and other atlases, write a letter describing your route, the landscapes and peoples you see as you travel and any incidents that happen along the way. Describe what you see in Mecca.” Pg 71  
(My son is forbidden from imagining he is on a pilgrimage to “holy” Mecca, which is done as worship to Allah.)
4. “Why do you think the Arabs and others in Southwest Asia would have been attracted to Islam? Explain your reason.” Pg 64  
(This is nothing short of brainwashing! First our children are shown a false god, shown how Muslims worship him, told to imagine being a Muslim, write about it in many ways and then to write what is good about it. All the time claiming this does not proselytize!?)

II. Islam Belief Statements as Fact:

Although much of the Unit on Islam contains words like “Muslims believe,” the following statements are sprinkled throughout as statements of fact and some begin the paragraphs and lessons with NO statement of “Muslims believe.”

1. “The Quran is the final revelation, just as Muhammad is the final prophet.” Pg 62

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2. (new paragraph) “The Arabic word Quran can be loosely translated as ‘recitation.’ In fact, the very first word the angel Gabriel spoke to Muhammad was “Recite.” Pg 63
3. “Ramadan is a holy time, because in this month Muhammad received his first message from Allah.” Pg 63
4. “He also realized that, with his mission complete, he would soon join Allah in heaven.” Pg 65
5. “Arabic lettering had a special significance for Muslims, because it was used to write down God’s words as they had been given to Muhammad.” Pg 88
6. (Opening paragraph of Lesson 2 with no “belief” qualifiers).  
“In the year AD 610, something extraordinary occurred. The first verses of the Quran, believed by Muslims to be the written record of God’s words, were revealed to him at that time.” Pg 58
  - a. Please look closely at what that sentence is saying. This would be the same as saying “On Mount Zion, something extraordinary occurred. The Ten Commandments were given to Moses. Believed by Jews to be the written word of God, these commandments were listed in the Bible.
7. “Then, in the cave, something more far-reaching happened. A being he later identified as the angel Gabriel, or Jibril (juhBREEL) in Arabic, came to him, telling him to read, or recite. Trembling, Muhammad responded that he didn’t know how to read or what to read. ‘Thereupon [the angel] caught me and pressed me so hard that I could not bear it any more.’ Three times the angel pressed Muhammad, finally commanding him to...” (quotes Quran, thus statement of fact ends, quotation of Quran begins.) Pg 58
8. “From Jerusalem, both Muhammad and Gabriel ascended into heaven, where Muhammad spoke to God.” (new paragraph) “These revelations confirmed both Muhammad’s belief in one God, or monotheism, and his role as the last messenger in a long line of prophets sent by God. The God he believed in – Allah – is the same God of other monotheistic religions, Judaism and Christianity.” Pg 59
9. “The angel told him [Muhammad] to recite in the name of God.” Pg 59
10. “The ...mosque...allowed Muslims to feel Allah’s invisible presence...” Pg 97
11. “Muhammad’s revelations occurred from 610 until his death in 632.” Pg 61

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12. “Today pilgrims visit the Prophet’s Cave on Mount Hira.” Pg 58
13. “Islam has close ties to Judaism and Christianity.” Pg 62
14. “Most Muslim scholars agreed that creating images of living things like humans and animals, which have souls, is forbidden.” (does not say “which they believe have souls” rather states it as fact). Pg 89
15. Further, I object to Muhammad’s wife, Aisha, describing in length what she believes Muhammad experienced as revelation. Though the textbook qualifies it as her version, it is still testimony presented as fact. Pg 58 (conversely, does the gospel of John, where John gives the story of Jesus, qualify as textbook material?)

III. What California Mandates, what the textbook delivers:

**“7.2 Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the civilizations of Islam in the Middle Ages.”**

Please note religion is listed as number FOUR out of a list of five given above. Following is what the textbook delivers per my word count, listed in order of dedicated text:

	<u>Text</u>	<u>Pictures</u>
1. Religious Beliefs (not religious politics)	35%	20
2. *Arts (poetry, art, medicine, science, etc)	*18%	*14
3. Politics	18%	3
4. Economics	13%	6
5. Religious Politics	11%	3
6. Geography (#1 on list from Ca)	03%	7
7. Social Structures	02%	1

\* not even on list

IV. MORE Leading Suggestions to Children:

- 1 “In what ways is Islam similar to Judaism and Christianity?” Pg 64
  - a. Why is it never asked in what ways are they different? I can give you PAGES, but that information is not offered anywhere that I can find in this book.
2. “Interview your classmates or use the encyclopedia to find out what these rituals have in common: Yom Kippur (among Jews), Lent (among Christians), and Ramadan (among Muslims).”

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- a. WHY the repeated comparisons? Especially to modern day traditions?  
Fails to mention that if a Muslim converts to Christianity they are beaten, kidnapped, tortured, and openly pronounced the death sentence.  
Apparently Islam does not feel beliefs are similar!
3. “Why are the Quran and Sunna important to Muslims?”
  - a. The answer leads children to focus on Muslim faith.
4. “Muhammad’s success in spreading Islam was due in large part to his strong character. His followers were attracted to his morality, courage, and compassion, perhaps as much as they were attracted to his teaching.” Pg 65
  - a. Are we painting Muhammad as a hero here or what? How do the writers of this book know that converts were attracted to Muhammad’s morality, courage and compassion? Compassion? He wrote to kill all infidels in the Quran!
5. “Find details to support the statement, “Islam, like other religions, is not only a system of beliefs but also a way of life.” Pg 64
  - a. Do not tell my son to “find details to support,” i.e. prove, Islam is a way of life. He does not know that way of life and no one has the right to force him to seek it.
6. “The differences between Sunnis and Shiites have become public knowledge today, but all Muslims remain united by their common faith in Allah. They also share a reverence for the Quran as Allah’s word and recognize Muhammad as Allah’s prophet.” Pg 68
  - a. These words paint a lovely picture of faith and reverence of Muslims. The Muslims I see today are either claiming they are a peaceful religion or screaming for the Jihad, holy war against Americans. The peaceful Muslims claim that the fundamental Muslims are terrorist fanatics and not true Islam. Yet this textbook paints them all as “united by their common faith in Allah” and a shared reverence.
  - b. Conversely, rather than whitewash the differences of Catholics and Protestants and present them as “united by their common faith in God and reverence”, the split is analyzed most coldly with reasons given of financial gain and readiness for a change. No shared faith nor reverence for the Bible is afforded the Christian faith that I could find so far.
7. “Since the Muslims did not necessarily encourage people to convert to Islam, why did they bother expanding their empire?” Pg 84

- a. Do we have extra thick white-wash here?
8. “Why did Muhammad think he was a messenger of God?” Pg 70
    - a. Are they looking for our children to reply, “Because of greed, lust for power, hallucinations? (not once hinted in the text). Or are they trying to compel our children to answer as fact what the text should have taught as a belief. My gosh! THINK about what they are leading our children to answer here!
  9. “Why were people first attracted to Mecca, and why do they still go there today?” Pg 70
    - a. They want our kids to answer with what they have been feeding them! Do they expect our kids to remember to write “because Muslims believe...” when the text can’t seem to remember to do that? “Why do they still go there today?” hmmm, I wonder if its DEATH if a Muslim doesn’t go. I am sure there are dire consequences that the text didn’t cover.
  10. (end of the medical section) ...”Interest in treating illness went back to the earliest days of Muslim history. It was the prophet Muhammad himself who stated that Allah had provided a cure for every illness.” Pg 92
    - a. Muhammad himself? Are we supposed to take keen note? Why is this sentence here? To add an “all glory to Allah” at the end of the section that gives credit to medical contributions of Islam? “Muhammad himself” implies his word carries more weight. Calling Muhammad a prophet also states he actually heard from God.
  11. “The unique style of Muslim art is unmistakable, because it so often uses Arabic script as its inspiration. Arabic lettering had a special significance for Muslims, because it was used to write down God’s words as they had been given to Muhammad...” (Page 88 and 89) More is discussed of calligraphy in mosques and how scholars agreed they believed images of humans and animals were forbidden (because the book states that animals have souls).
    - a. Twice in the review our children are referred to this section. “Write your first name in the center of a sheet of paper. Then work the letters into a design in the way that Muslims make Arabic letters become part of an intricate design.” Pg 92 This section describes the inspiration and Islamic spiritual value of writing intricate designed letters, then instructs our children to do the same with their names, **I object**.

- b. “Reviewing Skills: 1. Read the section headed Art and Design on page 88 of Lesson 2.” (same section) “Where in the section does the main idea appear? Write down this main idea. Then list three details or facts that support the main idea.” Page 103 (So much emphasis on Islamic beliefs and spirituality woven into art and design. This is downright sneaky in my opinion).

V. Textbook Claims that Contradict the Quran:

How can the textbook make these claims compared to the Quran?

Textbook:

“Christians and Jews are respected as ‘people of the book’ by Muslims, and all their prophets are revered.” Pg 62-63

“The Quran and Sunna allow self-defense and participation in military conflict, but restrict it to the right to defend against aggression and persecution.”

Pg 64

“Many different peoples benefited from Muslim tolerance.” Pg 82

Quran:

*“O you who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians as [friends, protectors, helpers, etc]” (Surah 5:51)*

*“Prophet, make war on the unbelievers and the hypocrites and deal rigorously with them. Hell shall be their home: an evil fate (Surah 9:73)*

*“Kill them wherever you find them. Drive them out of the places from which they drove you. Idolatry is worse than carnage. But do not fight them within the precincts of the Holy Mosque unless they attack you there” (Sura 2:190)*

Further Quran Quotes:

*“Mohammed is Allah's apostle. Those who follow him are ruthless to the unbelievers but merciful to one another.” (Sura 48:29)*

*“Let those who would exchange the life of this world for the hereafter, fight for the cause of Allah; whether they die or conquer, we shall richly reward them”. (Surah 4:74)*

*“O you who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians as friends, they are but friends to one another. And if any amongst you takes them as friends, then surely he is one of them. Verily, Allâh guides not those people who are the Zâlimûn (polytheists and wrong-doers and unjust)” . (Surah 5:51)*

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## **OTHER UNITS:**

### I. VARIOUS OBJECTIONS:

As this book is thick, I skipped around to various sections. These examples I stumbled on which leapt off the page:

Page 34: States Christians were fleeing other Christians and escaped to Persia (around the 600s). I challenge this. I’ve studied Biblical history, there were no Christians persecuting other Christians at this time. Christians were severely persecuted by non-Christians, yet that appears skipped over often.

“Rome maintained peace in its provinces by allowing individuals to continue living and working as usual.” (page 27, regarding 27 BC to 117 AD)

What about the Roman ruler Nero and the intense persecution of Christians?

“Because Rome was strong, the empire was peaceful and stable, which benefited everyone in it.” (page 28)

Nero put animal skins on Christians as they were fed to packs of wolves. He used Christian bodies as human torches to light up Nero’s gardens. Peaceful?

I could not find any instance in this textbook where Christians were persecuted (except by other Christians, which I challenge.) On page 315 there is a large 3-column block entitled: “Understanding Religious Persecution.” It defines persecution, then states “As Christianity in Europe grew stronger, it taught that members of other religions were to be converted, by force, if necessary.” Segment also blames Christians for Jews persecution when actually everyone persecuted Jews (just as the Hebrew Torah/ OT Bible predicted they would be). While segment repeatedly blames Christians exclusively for perpetrating persecution on others, there have been more Christian martyrs than any other belief! It is amazing that only Joan of Arc is mentioned as a martyr (that I can find) and I believe she was the exception because it was an opportunity to criticize the Catholic Church.

“Christian” by definition means “Christ like.” Nowhere in the Bible did Jesus say to convert people by force. To blame “Christianity” is false. Anyone can call themselves “Christian.”

Page 43: Extremely misleading paragraph. Begins with Byzantines (Christians) in 500 AD forcing Christianity. Suddenly flashes back to 500 BC to list where Jews thrived. Jumps forward to AD70 to when Romans destroyed Judea and “hundreds of thousands of Jews were shipped off as slaves.” Many escaped, flourished in [various countries].”

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(next paragraph) “Justinian’s treatment of Jews and other non-Christians (there were no Muslims) was brutal.

Unless a 7<sup>th</sup> grader watches the dates carefully as this paragraph jumps all over the place, one would get the impression that the Christians persecuted the Jews so terribly, when in fact, the Christians were being hunted down like animals in AD 70.

Page 46: Chapter Review: “Romans are remembered for the peace they maintained in their provinces by allowing people there to live as usual but under Roman law.”

Didn’t they just say they destroyed Judea and sold hundreds of thousands of Jews off as slaves? Though it was confusing and gave the impression the Christians did it. Everyone is portrayed as good guys except the Christians!

Page 319: “During the Middle Ages, many Christians saw themselves as sinful creatures struggling to get into heaven. But humanists did not see people as sinful. They thought people had dignity, worth, and the ability to achieve almost anything. Religion was important to humanists, but they stressed that life on earth was also meaningful.”

What a TWISTED view of Christianity! Christians believe that Jesus paid the price for our sins, and because of Him we are holy and pure! The Bible teaches we are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” There are MANY verses about how precious we are to God, He counts the numbers of hairs on our heads, our pictures are in the palms of His hands. To be Christian is to REJOICE. Clearly textbooks cannot be trusted to teach religious beliefs.

Page 285: “The mission of the church was to save the soul of all members so that they would go to heaven after they died rather than hell. This salvation, or saving, came through accepting the beliefs of the church, living a moral life, and performing good works.”

Again, this is an unbelievably twisted version of the gospel. Not one word that Christ died for our sins? That God so loved the world that He gave His only Son? Just, “believe as we do or burn in hell?”

Page 47: Five philosophies are presented as “nuggets of wisdom,” including “For a good cause, wrong doing is virtuous.” This textbook gives a huge amount of emphasis on various cultures philosophies and applauds them. This particular “nugget” is opposite of what Christ teaches and I object to opposite moral views being given as wisdom. That is the textbooks opinion and not our beliefs.

Page 47: “Imagine being a hostile barbarian armed with a knife...” Write a humorous dialogue for a hostile barbarian armed with a knife? (given as an assignment). Humor in



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desperate refugee situations? Laughing at violence? Would it help future students to look back at us and imagine humor about gangs, knives and drugs?

Page 327: “In Renaissance times, Christians still barred Jews from most occupations and owning land.”

I think the government, though Christian, wrongfully barred the Jews. This book continually seeks to criticize Christianity. Again, “Christian” means “little Christ.” Christ never at any time told Christians to persecute Jews. In fact, Christians are told to not even be haughty towards Jews!

Joan of Arc and Constantine both claimed amazing experiences with God. Joan of Arc’s prophecies even came true and were able to pass a clever test by the King to see if she was truly of God. Yet, the book states only that: “This helped convince the King that Joan spoke the truth.” This approach would be totally acceptable except that Muhammad’s claimed experiences, with NO fulfilled prophesies, are given many substantiating statements and enticing emotional descriptions of his experience.

I originally became alerted when my son came home with an assignment to create his own “Tree of Life and Knowledge” using the Hindu pattern. He was to use oil pastels and Black construction paper to “make your tree come alive.” Teaching our children about religion at a distance, and asking them to participate in them, learn them in detail, and imagine worshipping other gods; is two different things.

## II: VIOLATION OF CHRISTIAN RIGHTS:

Christians are not to seek knowledge of other gods;

Where is the Christian’s “freedom of worship?” Are we to obey God or man? The school says I cannot opt my son out of this class and I forbid him to do the assignments, for my God says:

“Take heed that you are not snared and that you INQUIRE NOT after their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods?...for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods’” (Deut. 12:30)

“Thus says the Lord: ‘Do not learn the way of the heathens’”  
(Jeremiah 10:2)

“You shall not walk in the manner of the nations which I cast out before you, for they committed all of these things and therefore I abhor them”  
(Lev 20:23)

## III. COMPARATIVE REVIEW:

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In addition, the Islam section asks questions like this in review: “Why do you think the Arabs and others in Southwest Asia would have been attracted to Islam? Explain your reason.” Pg 64 Conversely in the Crusade review, children are asked, “How do you think other people felt to be called infidels?” In the reviews, children are continually asked to find the positive side of Islam, and the negative side of Christianity. And it is the Quran, not the Bible, that says “kill the infidel”! More comparative review at a later date.

#### IV. SUMMARY:

The Crusades, the Inquisitions did happen, but nowhere in the Bible did God instruct Christians to behave that way. God said, “You will know My people by their love.” The word “love” is given 264 times in the New Testament alone. I am told the word “love” (in any language), does not exist in the Quran.

My son values, respects and tolerates others because God says, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” NOT because he imagines himself a Muslim soldier. People ask how an American, such as John Walker, and the child who flew a plane into a building, could be seduced to the Taliban. LOOK at what we are teaching our children!

Additionally, three years ago, my son went to an assembly where a district approved African culture troop performed. My son told me that they chose children to dance to their African god. Many children did. Some Christians have no problem with this and see it as harmless. And yet, the Bible shows clearly how God feels about His children dancing to pagan gods. Our God is a jealous God!

Every time I open the book, I find something new that is objectionable. This textbook is full of philosophies and ways of drawing children into them, presenting them as “nuggets of wisdom” with many of the philosophies opposite of what the Bible teaches. I have no choice but to object. I hope we can work together to correct these violations of religious freedom.

For more information please contact Pacific Justice Institute at [www.pacificjustice.org](http://www.pacificjustice.org), a non-profit legal organization that has been fighting for our rights, 916-857-6900. Frontlines Network of America (FNA) can also be reached at 949-442-9240 x314. In my own ministry, I refuse to accept even a small donation. I give out free Bibles and tapes. To accept money for this feels like it would taint the work, which I consider a privilege. But in legal matters like this, it takes money to fight for our rights. Our rights are so precious. God bless America. Thanks for listening.

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