Empathizing (Islam)

The Growth of Islam

Ask the students to reflect on what features of Islam might contribute to its being the fastest-growing among humankind’s religions. What might enable it to appeal so widely to people? To make this more specific, encourage the students to focus on the ways each of its four basic elements—the Qur’an, the Prophet Muhammad, its primary teachings, and the Muslim community—might contribute to its growth.

Prayer

The practice of praying five times daily is central to Islam. Ask the students to think about their own practice of prayer. How do they think being required to pray five times daily might affect them? Would prayer being required five times every day seem like a good reminder to pray, or would it feel like a burden? What might be the effect of knowing that all Muslims, the world over, follow this same practice? You might point out that because time zones around the world vary, this practice means that somewhere, at all hours, Muslims are praying. It can also be useful to have the students follow a schedule of prayer that parallels that of Islam, using their own faith’s prayers.

Site Visits and Guest Speakers

There are mosques or *masjids* in many cities in the United States. Most welcome visitors for Friday midday prayers and are usually willing to give tours and provide information. The leaders of a local mosque may also be willing to speak to your class. Students tend to especially appreciate it if Muslim students their own age are willing to talk about their everyday life. With site visits, be certain to check on dress requirements and remind female students that they need to have some sort of head covering to wear. Female students will likely be required to sit with female Muslims as well.