



## The Prophet Muhammad's Birthday Assembly

### Introduction

The birth of the Prophet Muhammad is called *Milad ul-Nabi* or *Mawlid ul-Nabi* and is celebrated in the Islamic month of Rabi ul-Awwal. Because the Muslim lunar year is shorter than the Western solar year, the corresponding date in the Gregorian calendar will advance by about ten days annually. To add to the confusion, Sunni Muslims (the majority in Britain) celebrate on the 12<sup>th</sup> of Rabi ul-Awwal, Shia Muslims celebrate on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

In 2013, Milad ul-Nabi is celebrated on the 24<sup>th</sup> January (for Sunnis) and the 29<sup>th</sup> January (for Shias).

This assembly gives a short life history of the Prophet, and examines his legacy – the religion of Islam that is thriving 1400 years after his death and still making a positive impact on people's lives, despite the impression often given by Western Media.

It is traditional for Muslims to add "Peace be upon him" after saying Muhammad's name (abbreviated to "PBUH" when written), or *Salallahu alayhi wasallam* (SAW) in Arabic. You might like to add the suffix if you feel it is appropriate.

You will find a variety of English spellings of Arabic words, but this assembly tries to keep to the "standard" transliteration as used in Saudi Arabia e.g. Muhammad (not Mohammed), Qur'an (not Koran) and Makkah (not Mecca).

The word "Hazrat" (which appears in a story below) is a term of respect.

Here are a few links to some Muslim charities:

Islamic Aid: <http://www.islamicaid.com/>  
Islamic Relief: <http://www.islamic-relief.org.uk/>  
Muslim Hands: <http://www.muslimhands.org/en/gb/>  
Human Relief Foundation: <http://www.hrf.org.uk/>

## Preparation

In preparation you will need to find two or three students with good reading voices who are willing to help by delivering the *Assembly Script* below. Make sure they have time to practise. If you are going to use microphones, then give your volunteers a run through with them or they could be surprised or unnerved by the sound of their own amplified voices. Have a regular change of reader to help keep your audience's attention.

There are some A4 *Award Labels* at the end of this document (from page 12) to use at the beginning of the assembly, so don't forget to print them off beforehand, and if you have a large Assembly Hall you might want to enlarge them to A3.

## Instructions

After you have welcomed your students to the assembly, begin by asking them how they would like to be remembered in years to come. Your school might even have an American style "Year Book", with school leavers voted *Most Likely To...* in various categories.

Hold up each *Award Label* in turn (Class Queen, Class King, Class Joker etc) and take suggestions from the students as to who they think deserves each one. Ask the "winners" to stand at the front holding up their labels for all to see.

Ask the winners if they would be happy to be remembered by the label they have been given. Why or why not?

NOTE: You might want to change or adapt the labels to suit your audience and to take account of any "in-jokes" you are aware of, but obviously, be sensitive to your students' feelings!

Now ask the students if they think people are always remembered how they would like to be. How would someone feel to be remembered as, “The one who smelt a bit odd after PE”? Or, “The one who was teacher’s pet in English”? Or, “The one who threw up in Science that time...”

Make the point that we would all like to be remembered for the good we have done in our lives and would be upset if people distorted our memory into something that was untrue or unkind.

Now hand over to your volunteers to read the *Assembly Script*. Make sure you are ready to show the film at the appropriate point!

## Film Digest



[Holy Cribs: The Mosque](#) (6:56)

Topic: *Ethics and Religion*

Sub-Topic: *Religious Traditions*

Omar welcomes TrueTube to London Central Mosque and we're given the full tour - even up the minaret! Omar talks about the features of a traditional mosque and shows us how Muslims pray.

## Resources

- Digital projector (connected to the internet or you will need to download the films beforehand).
- Microphones (if needed, or available).
- Two or three volunteers to read the *Assembly Script*.
- Enough copies of the *Assembly Script* for you and for each of your volunteers.
- The *Awards Labels* for the start of the assembly (from page 12 below), possibly enlarged to A3 if you have a large hall.

# Assembly Script

How to pronounce those tricky words:

Most of them are “say what you see” but here’s a bit of help...

Muhammad	mu- <i>ham</i> -ad (a short “u” as in “put”)
Milad ul-Nabi	mil-lad ul- <i>na</i> -bee (“na” as in “at” not “art”)
Mawlid ul-Nabi	more-lid ul- <i>na</i> -bee
Nuh	noo
Musa	<i>moo</i> -sa
Dawud	dowd
Isa	<i>ee</i> -sa
Makkah	<i>mack</i> -a (short “a”s, like in “at”)
Ka’ba	<i>car</i> -ba (short “a” in “ba”, not “car-bar”)
Abdul Muttalib	<i>ab</i> -dul moo- <i>tal</i> -lib
Abu Talib	a-boo <i>tal</i> -lib
Al Amin	al ah- <i>meen</i>
Khadija	cad- <i>dee</i> -jah
Qur’an	kur- <i>arn</i>
Medina	mad- <i>dee</i> -na
Hadith	had- <i>deeth</i>
Sunnah	<i>sun</i> -nar (a short “u” as in “put”)
Zakat	zak-kar (or zak-kart)

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This week, Muslims all over the world will be remembering the birthday of Muhammad – the man who began the religion of Islam over 1,400 years ago. They call it *Milad ul-Nabi* or *Mawlid ul-Nabi* which means “The Birth of the Prophet”.

According to Muslims, a prophet is someone who is chosen by God to guide his people. They believe that Muhammad was the last and greatest in a line of prophets including Adam, Nuh (also known as Noah), Ibrahim (or Abraham), Musa (or Moses) Dawud (or King David) and Isa (or Jesus).

Milad ul-Nabi is celebrated in different ways by different Muslim communities. For most people it is a quiet occasion held at home with the family. Children will be told stories about Muhammad’s life and donations are often made to charity in memory of the Prophet’s kindness. In some

places there are speeches and special meals laid on at the local Mosque. Other places hold carnivals and street parties in honour of Muhammad.

Some Muslims do not celebrate the day at all – partly because it is also the day on which he died, 62 years after his birth; and partly because there is no evidence that Muhammad himself ever celebrated birthdays. But all Muslims remember Muhammad in their everyday lives, and do their best to follow his example.

Islam is the second largest religion in the world, and the fastest growing. There are over 1.5 billion Muslims living all across the globe. And it all started with one man, sitting all by himself in a chilly cave on a mountainside.

Muhammad was born in the year 570 CE in Makkah, a city surrounded by seas of sand in the deserts of Arabia. At that time, Makkah was a cruel, lawless place. Life was cheap and bloodshed was common. Your chances of survival were increased if you were a member of a powerful family – no one would touch you if they thought your brothers would come knocking on their door – but the different tribes and families were always arguing, so the balance of power could shift overnight. People without protection could end up face down in a pool of blood, and no one would care. Women were badly treated, the poor were left to die and slaves were bought and sold in the market place. It was a tough place to grow up.

The one thing that united the tribes was a strange cube-shaped shrine in the centre of the city called the Ka'ba. People from all over Arabia would come to worship the 360 idols of wood and stone that the Ka'ba housed, and while they were in Makkah they would trade – silk and spices from the East, leather and wool from the North, jewels and slaves from the West.

From a very early age, Muhammad learned that life was hard. His father died before he was even born, and as was the custom at the time, the baby Muhammad was fostered by a Bedouin woman and went to live with her family in the desert. When he was about four years old, Muhammad returned to his mother but she died only two years later, leaving him to the care of his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib.

Muhammad lived with his grandfather for the next three years and used to go with him to the Ka'ba, where Abdul Muttalib had the responsibility of providing food and water to the visitors who came to worship the idols. When Muhammad was nine, his grandfather also died, and he was taken under the protection of yet another person – his uncle Abu Talib.

Muhammad worked for his uncle, shepherding his sheep, and travelling with him across the desert on trading expeditions. It was in Syria that Muhammad met Jews and Christians, and learned that they worshipped one all-powerful God that you couldn't see. This would have been a strange idea to many people in Makkah who prayed to the hundreds of idols in the Ka'ba, but to Muhammad it made perfect sense.

Muhammad grew up to be a kind and respected man, and was known by the nickname *Al Amin*, which means "the one you can trust". He also earned a reputation as a fair and skilful merchant, and so when he was 25, he was sent on a business trip by a wealthy widow called Khadija. Muhammad so impressed her that she proposed to him. Muhammad agreed to a wedding, and despite the age gap – Khadija was 40 – the marriage was a happy one.

However, Muhammad was becoming increasingly unhappy with the situation in Makkah: he hated the violence; he hated the way women were treated; he hated how the poor were forgotten. And the tribal gods did nothing for them. The 360 idols of the Ka'ba accepted the sacrifices of rich and powerful men, but nothing ever got better. Surely if the gods had any power, they would bless Makkah with peace? He thought more and more about the one unseen God of the Jews and Christians – the People of the Book.

His favourite place to think was a cave halfway up the side of a mountain that loomed over Makkah to the North East. He could be completely alone and far from the clamour and cruelty of the city. One dark night, he was sitting in the cave, wrapped in a blanket against the cold. He prayed for help to the one unseen God that he called *Allah* – "the God" in Arabic – and hoped for an answer. Suddenly, a blinding pure white light filled the cave. Muhammad screwed up his eyes in pain and backed against the wall.

"Read!" said a voice. Muhammad carefully opened his eyes and squinted into the light. It was an angel! And it was holding out a scroll that had letters of fire dancing across its surface.

"But I can't. I can't read," said Muhammad. Few people could.

"Read!" said the angel again.

"I can't!" replied Muhammad.

"Read!" said the angel a third time, and suddenly Muhammad felt warmth flood through his body. He knew what the angel wanted him to say. It was as though he had learned the words off by heart. So he recited: "Read in the name of your Lord who created man from a drop of blood. Read, for your Lord is most generous. He who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know."

This event became known as The Night of Power. It was the first time that God sent a message to Muhammad and the revelations continued throughout the rest of his life. The words were eventually written down and were known as the *Qur'an* which is Arabic for "recitation" because Muhammad recited the words.

At first, Muhammad kept quiet about the messages he was getting from God, afraid that the people of Makkah would think he had gone mad. Only Khadijah and a few close friends knew, but eventually he began to speak out against the injustices of Makkah. The ruling families were not impressed with Muhammad's messages of one God and fairness for all. For a start, it was obvious to them that there was more than one God – there were statues of them all over the place! Hundreds of them in the Ka'ba alone. If people stopped worshipping them, the gods might punish the whole city. Even worse, if no one came to worship at the Ka'ba anymore, Makkah would lose valuable trade. And all this stuff about treating women with respect, what was Muhammad on about? He'd be telling them to give money to the poor next, or going on about freeing slaves.

To begin with the ruling families tried to ignore Muhammad, believing that no one would see any sense in his words. But soon he was attracting followers who called themselves *Muslims*, meaning "people who submit to God", so the ruling families determined to put a stop to it. Makkans were forbidden to trade with Muhammad's followers so it became impossible for them to make a living, or even to get hold of food. Muslims without protection were tortured and even killed. Muhammad himself was attacked several times and untrue rumours about him were spread in an effort to discredit his name; but he was still under the protection of his uncle Abu Talib, and the ruling families didn't dare to take any direct action against him.

Some of the Muslims eventually escaped to Abyssinia – now called Ethiopia – where the Christian King had heard Muhammad's message and saw the similarities to his own religion, but Muhammad and most of his followers remained in Makkah.

When Khadija died, Muhammad nearly lost hope altogether, and when Abu Talib also died just a few weeks later, Muhammad knew he had to get out of Makkah. But the ruling families had friends everywhere – where could he go to be safe?

About 250 miles to the North there was another city called Yathrib. Every year, people from the city would make the long journey to Makkah to worship at the Ka'ba. A few of the visitors had heard Muhammad's message

and taken it back to Yathrib. The number of Muslims in Yathrib grew and eventually they invited Muhammad and his followers to join them in their city.

The ruling families of Makkah noticed that the Muslims were disappearing. Their numbers had dwindled until only Muhammad and a few of his close friends were left. Then they realised what must have happened: Muhammad had found support from some other tribe, and that could threaten Makkah's power. They decided it was time to kill Muhammad once and for all. One son from each of the ruling families was sent to Muhammad's house under cover of darkness. The plan was that they would all rush in and stab Muhammad at the same time. That way, all of the families would share the blame for his death in case anyone came looking for revenge. The assassins surrounded the building and drew their blades.

"Now!" They burst into the house, swords raised. But Muhammad was gone. Somehow he had escaped.

In Yathrib, Muhammad was welcomed like a hero. The city was renamed *Madinat ul-Nabi* - or *Medina* for short - which means "The City of the Prophet". The first mosque was built and finally the Muslims were allowed to live in peace. But it wasn't to last. The Makkah families were still determined to wipe out Muhammad and his followers. If everyone in Yathrib - or Medina, or whatever they were calling it now - was uniting in the worship of one God, then they posed a real danger. Or so the Makkans believed. Several battles were fought between Medina and Makkah, but neither side could win outright, so eventually - at Muhammad's suggestion - a peace treaty was signed.

The number of Muslims was increasingly rapidly as more and more tribes saw the success of Muhammad's community in Medina. So when the Makkans broke the peace treaty by attacking and killing some of Medina's allies, Muhammad was able to gather an army of 10,000 men to march on Makkah. The ruling families realised they had made a huge mistake in breaking the treaty - there was no way they could defeat such a huge army. They surrendered to Muhammad, fully expecting him to put them all to the sword. But all the Prophet had ever wanted was peace, and so to the immense surprise and huge relief of the Makkans, Muhammad forgave them. He told them they could go on living as free citizens of Makkah, as long as they lived in peace. Muhammad rode into the city without resistance and went straight to the Ka'ba where he toppled and smashed the 360 idols, and re-dedicated the Ka'ba to the worship of Allah, the one unseen God.

Muhammad returned to his home in Medina where he lived the last two years of his life in peace and happiness. Shortly before he died in 632 CE, all the Muslims gathered together to hear him give his final speech. Muhammad told the massive crowd that he was leaving them two things – God’s words in the Qur’an; and his own words and actions to be used as an example of how to live as a good Muslim.

The Qur’an is still the ultimate authority for Islam. It contains the rules and principles that all Muslims should live by, but when it comes to the small details of how they should live their everyday lives, they turn to huge collections of stories about the things Muhammad said and what he did called the *Hadith*, which means “saying”.

Together, the Qur’an and the Hadith form what Muslims call the *Sunnah* – which means “the trodden path” – because they are following in Muhammad’s footsteps.

How is Muhammad best remembered? The Prophet who spoke with God? The victim of persecution who was driven from his home? The warrior who fought battles in the desert heat? The powerful leader of Arab tribesmen?

For many Muslims, the best way to remember him is as the man found in the stories that have been passed down over the centuries. A man who loved peace and wanted to live in a society where everyone was respected. A man who was kind and gentle.

When Muhammad lived in Medina, people would often come to his house to ask him questions and to listen to his advice. Muhammad had a cat called Muezza who would come and snuggle up to the Prophet while he was speaking. Muhammad would lift the animal onto his lap and continue speaking.

Early one morning, the Call to Prayer sang out over the rooftops and people all over the town crawled out of bed, washed, dressed and made their way to the mosque for the morning prayer.

“Where’s Muhammad?” said Suhail, looking around the courtyard. Everyone was kneeling on the floor facing towards Makkah, ready to begin.

“Dunno,” said Sahil, “Not like him to be late.” The prayer was just about to start when Muhammad came in looking a little flustered and with one sleeve of his gown missing.

“What happened to you?” said Suhail. Muhammad looked down at his sleeve and smiled.

“I was getting dressed and Muezza was fast asleep on my gown,” he said, “She’s been ill and I didn’t like to wake her, so I cut off the bit she was lying on.”

Another story tells how Muhammad was travelling across the desert with a group of his friends. Journeys could take several days, so at nightfall they would stop and make a camp. The camels knelt down on the scrubby sand and the riders dismounted.

“Let’s eat!” said one of the men, “I’ll kill us a sheep.”

“I’ll skin it for you,” said another.

“I’ll cook it,” said his friend.

“And I’ll go and collect some firewood,” said Muhammad. There was an uncomfortable silence. Then one of the men spoke: “Um... Hazrat Muhammad, that’s a horrible job, picking about in all this scrub. There might be snakes. Why don’t you rest and let one of us get the firewood?” But Muhammad laughed.

“Allah isn’t pleased when someone starts thinking he is better than other people. You do your jobs, and I’ll do mine. That way we’ll all be helping each other.”

Young people all over the world are still following in Muhammad’s footsteps, enjoying the legacy he left behind, and taking an active part in the life of their communities.

Show the film [Holy Cribs: The Mosque](#)

Muhammad’s influence still has a positive impact all around the world. One of the five main beliefs of Islam – known as the Five Pillars – is *Zakat*, which means giving to charity. Every year, Muslims have a duty to give a fortieth of their savings to people in need. That’s just 5p for every £2 they have. It doesn’t sound a lot – and many Muslims choose to give much more - but with all the Muslims around the world giving just a little money, it soon adds up to a fortune that can be spent where it is needed the most. Muslim charities such as Islamic Aid, Islamic Relief, Muslim Hands and the Human Relief Foundation have all been active in areas of famine, drought and disaster around world giving vital help to people of all cultures and faiths.

This is the legacy of Muhammad’s life – people all over the world following his teachings, trying to live good lives, and working together to help those in need. And this is how he should be remembered.

Class

King

**Class Queen**

**Class Joker**

**Brainiest**

**Most likely to be  
a rockstar**

Most likely to  
win the  
X Factor

Most likely to be a  
CBBC Presenter

Most likely to win  
gold at the  
Olympics

Most likely to  
win The  
Apprentice

Most likely to  
end up  
in prison