

Letters of Light

Activity Guide



اللوفا أبو ظبى
LOUVRE ABU DHABI



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MUSEUMS

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Welcome to the *Letters of Light* exhibition that presents the world's three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

This Activity Guide contains 6 thematic cards to help you explore the books and manuscripts in the exhibition through craftsmanship, techniques, motifs and cultural styles.

You will discover the shared themes of colour, light, calligraphy, sound, form and structure as well as alphabets and languages.





Follow these instructions to use your Activity Guide in the exhibition:

1. Use the cards in numerical order.
2. Find the artwork connected to each thematic card.
3. Discover other artworks in the *See Also* category to learn more about the shared themes.
4. Continue until you reach the last section of the exhibition, "The Unseen" by Muhannad Shono.



Calligraphy

Enter Section "Birth of the three monotheisms"

FIND

Pentateuch and Hagiographa (Hebrew)

Spain, c. 1280-1300

Parchment

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France,
Department of Manuscripts,
Hébreu 13, f. 2v-3

DESCRIBE

Look at the way the words are written in this book. Do you find it easy to read? What shapes do you see? How do you think these pages are read?

DID YOU KNOW?

Calligraphy is a special art of writing often used in sacred books.

The many styles of calligraphy have stunning designs in common that show a deep respect for sacred texts.

The calligraphy you see on this double page is typical of Spanish Hebrew bibles. The page is bordered by a line of writing, forming its frame. Within this frame, you'll find very small letters arranged in a symmetrical pattern of 13 circles.

Can you find all 13 circles?

SEE ALSO

Section "Shrines and mirrors of the Divine"

Micrographic Quran (Arabic)

Egypt, c. 1400

Paper

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France,
Department of Manuscripts,
Arabic 6088, f. 11

Raban Maur (780-856?)

In honorem sanctae crucis,

or In Honour of the Holy Cross (Latin)

France, mid-11th century

Parchment

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France,
Department of Manuscripts,
Latin 11685, f. 29v

Materials

Enter Section "Loyalty, sacredness, and transmission"

FIND

Gravestone with Hebrew inscription

United Arab Emirates, Ras al-Khaimah, between 1507 and 1650

Black limestone

Ras al-Khaimah, National Museum of Ras al-Khaimah, RAK 2025

DESCRIBE

Before paper became common, sacred texts could be written on different types of materials.

What kind of material do you think was used to create this object? How would you describe its texture, and can you guess how much it weighs?

DID YOU KNOW?

This stele (a tall stone slab) is made from limestone, a type of rock that can be easily found in nature. Various materials like stones, plants such as papyrus, wood, metal, pottery, and even animal skins can be used as surfaces to make copies of important religious writings.

It contains words written with letters from the Hebrew alphabet. It serves as evidence of Jewish communities being present in the United Arab Emirates, hundreds of years in the past.

SEE ALSO

Section "Founding texts"

Fragment of the Gospel according to Saint Luke Bible, New Testament (Greek)

Egypt, 2nd-3rd century

Papyrus

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France,

Department of Manuscripts, Greek Supplement 1120, f.A

Section "Practices"

Muhammad ibn Husayn Abu al-Gayš al-Ansari al-Hazragi al-Andalosi (active in the 20th century) Quranic tablet

North Africa, before 1841

Wood

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France,

Department of Manuscripts, Arabe 4650.2

Languages and Alphabets

Enter Section "Loyalty,
sacredness, and transmission"

FIND

**Catechism in pictures and numbers
with prayers (otomi)**

Mexico, 18th century

Paper

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France,
Department of Manuscripts, Mexicain 76, f. 1

OBSERVE

Take a closer look at this book. Can you read what is written there? Do you recognise any of the letters?

DID YOU KNOW?

Each Abrahamic religion has its own special written language: Hebrew for Judaism, Greek and Latin for Christianity, and Arabic for Islam.

However, to make the texts understandable for everyone, sacred books have been translated into many languages and dialects as they spread across the world. For example, this religious instructional manuscript was written in Otomi, a dialect from Mexico in Central America.

Try to identify the languages you can recognise in the exhibition. How many can you find? To find out the answer, turn your card.

SEE ALSO

Section "Loyalty, sacredness and transmission"

**Qing zhen si ji
Inscriptions from Kai Feng synagogue
(Chinese)**

China, after 1679, Paper
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France,
Department of Manuscripts, Chinois 1204, p. 6-7

**Tawrāt
Pentateuch, or Torah
(Persian and Hebrew in Persian script)**

Iran, c. 1740, Paper
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France,
Department of Manuscripts,
Supplément persan 1780, f. 76v-77

Form and Structure

Enter Section "Practices"

FIND

The page of a monumental Quran placed on a kursi

Iran or Central Asia, around 1400
Ink on paper, later gold additions
London, private collection of Hamid Jafar

OBSERVE

The structure and form of a sacred book can change over time. Think about its size, how it opens, or even how you can read it.

DID YOU KNOW?

The scroll, a lengthy piece of rolled-up paper, is the predecessor of the book form. Scrolls could be read from right to left or from top to bottom.

To better organise sacred texts into chapters, they were later copied onto codices, which are pages sewn together. That's how the book as a new form was developed. Some books, like this Quran, were written in monumental formats.

Can you imagine the size of this Quran with all its pages?

Try to guess the height and width of this holy book.

SEE ALSO

Stay in section "Practices"

Collection of prayers (Arabic)

Ottoman Empire, 1744

Paper

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France,
Department of Manuscripts, Arabic 5940

Esther scroll

Netherlands, 17th century

Parchment

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France,
Department of Manuscripts, Hébreu 1475

Colour

Enter the next room

FIND

The 5 pages of the Blue Quran
Folio from the Blue Quran
Surah 2, *al-Baqara* (The Heifer)

North Africa or Spain or Iraq (?),
late 8th-10th century
Gold, opaque pigments and silver
on indigo-tinted parchment
Abu Dhabi, Louvre Abu Dhabi, LAD2014.006

OBSERVE

Carefully look at the shades and colour combinations used on the pages displayed in this room.

DID YOU KNOW?

Colours play an important role in the texts and illustrations of manuscripts from the three religions. They can be associated with symbols and values.

On these pages, the deep blue symbolises the heavenly universe, and the golden letters represent the divine light spread through the word of God.

What type of materials do you think they used to create the blue pigment? To find out the answer, turn your card upside down.

SEE ALSO

Section "Abraham, the founder"

Souvigny Bible (Latin) In Abraham's Bosom

France, late 12th century
Parchment, Moulins, Samuel Paty
multimedia library, MS-1, f. 256

Section "Shrines and mirrors of the Divine"

Gospel according to Matthew, *codex Sinopensis* Bible, New Testament (Greek)

Syria, Palestine or Constantinople,
second half of the 6th century
Purple parchment
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France,
Department of Manuscripts,
Greek Supplement 1286, f. 15

Light

**Enter the final room
of the exhibition.**

FIND

**The installation *The Unseen*
by artist Muhannad Shono.**

The Unseen

Metal structure, braided thread, white LED's,
video projection, speakers

Music by FACESOUL

Abu Dhabi, 2023

Riyadh, Studio Shono

OBSERVE

Position yourself in front of the installation.

Now imagine yourself immersed within the light while paying attention to the sounds around you. Stay there a while and enjoy the artwork.

DID YOU KNOW?

Light plays a significant role in the three Abrahamic religions. It is used as a symbol of the sacred and spiritual awakening, signifying a connection to something greater than just ourselves.

In his installation, the artist Muhannad Shono presents light as long threads. He explains the concept of black holes, as a powerful space object that can bend time and space. This artwork encourages you to take a moment to think about the nature of the universe.

SEE ALSO

Go under the dome of the museum and observe the effects of light all around you.

It's time to explore other spaces
in the museum.

Head to the permanent galleries
or walk under the dome while
looking through the cut-out
letters on the guide's cover.

Look through these letters
to find other sources of light
surrounding you.

Contact us for more questions
and learning opportunities:
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