**READING**

* **Carefully read the text and make sure to translate terms that you cannot understand**

**Ramadan**

Islam is one of the most widespread religions in the world. Its followers number 1.8 billion. Islam is practiced in many countries throughout the world. Islam is based on the belief in one God, Allah. Allah is the Arabic word Muslims use for “God.”

In Arabic, “Islam” means submission to Allah. Muslims believe that in the seventh century Allah chose Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him to receive his message. Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him recorded the revelations he received. That text came to be known as the Quran.

The most important rituals practiced by the Muslims are often referred to as the Five Pillars of Islam. They are as follows:

1. Shahadah—a short statement declaring the greatness and oneness of Allah.

2. Salat—prayer that is offered five times a day.

3. Sawm—the fast that takes place during Ramadan.

4. Zakat—a religious tax used for the poor, the sick, and the others less privileged in the Islamic community.

5. Hajj—the pilgrimage to the Holy City of Mecca.

The third pillar references an important Muslim holiday. Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and begins with the coming of the crescent moon. This month lasts 29 or 30 days and occurs during different seasons depending on the cycle of the calendar. The fast of Ramadan lasts the entire month. All those who have reached the age of puberty (usually 12 years of age) are expected to observe the fast.

During this time, strict restraints are placed on Muslims. They are not to eat or drink during the daylight hours. Smoking and sexual relations are also forbidden. The fast is broken at sunset. It begins again the next morning when one can see the white light coming through the darkness.

Ramadan is a time for Muslims to concentrate on the practice of their faith. It is a time for greater focus on Islam and less focus on everyday concerns. Time is spent praying, worshipping, contemplating, and receiving religious instruction. Part of the worship includes reciting passages from the Quran.

​For many, Ramadan is a time of profound joy. There is a festive atmosphere after sunset. In many cities, Muslims visit with family and friends after they have broken the fast. Shopping areas and restaurants are busy, alive with food and fellowship.

​On the 27th day of Ramadan, fireworks are often used to celebrate the Night of Power. The Night of Power is the night that Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him first received his revelation of the Quran in the year 610. Ramadan is a time to celebrate and give thanks for the gift of the Quran. It is a time to remember the poor, to practice self-discipline, and recommit one’s self to the Islamic faith.

**Definitions**

* reciting (verb): readingsomething out loud from memory, usually for an audience
* fellowship (noun): a friendly relationship among people
* widespread (adjective): common among many people
* contemplating (verb): thinking carefully about something
* references (verb): refers to
* fast (noun): a period of time when you do not eat any food
* rituals (noun): an act or series of acts done in a particular situation and in the same way each time
* submission (noun): the act of accepting the authority or control of someone or something else; obedience
* restraints (noun): ways of limiting, controlling, or stopping something
* revelations (noun): messages from God or a supreme being