

MODULE 2:**Class Title:** Art and Islam**Aim of the lesson:** To be thankful to Allah (swt) for the beauty around us & to provide guidelines for creating art that is permissible in Islam.**Lesson Format:** Power point presentation and activity

[Note: This class was conducted by an artist and art teacher. It is recommended that an art teacher take this class]

Activities:

- 1- Creativity Test. (2 volunteers from the class)
- 2- Drawing and use of colour after observation of colour, patterns and textures in Allah's Creation. (any two students can volunteer)
- 3- Introduction to Calligraphy.

Materials Needed:**Creativity Test:** White board and marker.**Painting:** White board, primary colour paints, 2 A4 sheets and 2 brushes.**Calligraphy:** Calligraphy papers and pens. (Optional)

(Greeting to students) *Assalamu 'alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*

(Ta'ooz) A'oodhu billahi min Ash Shaytaanir Rajeem

(Tasmiyah) Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem

(Du'a) Rabbish rahli sadri wa yassirli amri wahlul 'uqdatum millisani yafqahu qawli [Surah Ta-Ha 20: Verses 25-28]

Slide 1:

Today *InshaAllah* we will talk about art and Islam.

Slide 2:

As toddlers we were introduced to art and colors. We have all done art since we were toddlers and colors have fascinated us ever since. We have been doodling since we were really little and with practice we kept getting better. Can anyone tell me what art is? How can you define art? (Discuss with students)

Slides 3-4:

This is how you define art; 'Art is the production or arrangement of sounds, colors, and forms in a manner that affects our senses, our emotions, intellect and sense of beauty.' It is also a skill that you can practice and with practice it can be made better.

Do you think Art is something that certain people can do and certain people can't? I don't think so. I think everyone can do art, some are marvelous at it and some aren't, but Allah (swt) has bestowed all of us with hands and minds and the ability to create.

Slide 5:

Take a look at this form of Art; this is a very interesting and very 'green' form of art. It is called 'Trash Art'. There are people who use discarded objects and put them together in such a way that it becomes a form of expression. So you see we don't necessarily need fancy things, paints or colors to produce Art. There are seasoned artists who like to express their ideas and emotions with objects that have little or no value in such a way that 'scrap items' become a powerful tool to convey a message to an audience. They call it, 'An Installation'. Here you see this television made out of broken wires, broken toys and keys of a piano. The idea behind it is witty; a TV made out of trash to imply that there is a lot of rubbish on TV.

Slides 6-7:

Now here you see lamps made out of scrap bottles and scrap fiber of some sort. Isn't it interesting? Has anyone tried something like this at home or in school? (Discuss.)

Slide 8:

Here is a butterfly made out of broken speakers, piano keys and broken china. Are you wondering what Islam has to do with creativity and art? What's the connection?

Slide 9:

We have all heard Allah's (swt) beautiful attribute *Al-Musawwir*. What does that mean? It means the Fashioner, the Designer. So Allah (swt) calls Himself the Fashioner. He (swt) says in the Qur-an in Surah Al-Hashr 59:24: "He is Allah, the Creator, the Inventor, the Fashioner: the Bestower of forms. To Him belongs the Best Names: The most beautiful names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorify Him. And He is the Almighty, the Most Wise."

Slides 10-13:

Our beloved Prophet (pbuh) said that "Allah is beautiful and He loves beauty." [Sahih Muslim, Book 1, *Hadith* no. 0164]

So you see, Allah (swt) is encouraging us to explore and admire aesthetics and art. He has introduced the concept of colours, design, and aesthetics to us. However, we need to realize that all this beauty is a test for us. What do we say when we see the wonderful birds, the shiny moon, the sunlight shimmering through the leaves and branches of thick trees and the beautiful autumn colours? Do we remember Allah (swt) when we see these wonders?

"Surely We have made whatever is on the earth an embellishment for it, so that We may try them (as to) which of them is best in works." [Sūrah Al-Kahf 18: 7]

Slides 14-16:

You see the world could have been in boring black and white, there could have been a plain white roof on our heads and barren land. But no, Allah (swt) has made the world so beautiful. The sky has colors within colors. The sea has colors within colors. Look at that, isn't the sunset gorgeous?

Slides 17-18:

Waterfalls...we don't need waterfalls; water could have just appeared in pools from the earth. But Allah (swt) makes water flow in this beautiful manner for our pleasure. The same goes for the sky; we didn't need beautiful fluffy clouds the way they are. But Allah (swt) has adorned the pretty blue sky with fluffy white clouds and he made these beautiful stars and the sun, just to embellish the sky; all for our pleasure!

Slides 19-24:

Even when it comes to food, Allah (swt) could have rained down carbohydrates and protein pills on us but no, He has hung our food on beautiful trees; isn't that Allah's (swt) favour on us?

Have you ever thought about the simple elegance and beauty of a boiled egg? An oval form with a circle within it, yellow and white but it looks gorgeous, doesn't it?

The same goes for vegetables of all kinds. Some vegetable species come in a variety of colours: tomatoes, *baingans* (brinjals), corn, etc. Did you know that corn comes in many colors? It comes in shades of red, orange, blue and purple. Blue corn is very rich in protein. And then there are *baingans* in all shapes and sizes; one variety of vegetable can look like all of this; there are so many different shapes, colors and textures. *SubhanAllah!*

So you see Allah's (swt) Art is all around us. *SubhanAllah*, All Praises to Allah (swt)!

Have you ever experienced being completely awestruck by Allah's (swt) creation? For example, watching the sun set with fabulous colors in the sky? Or witnessing waterfalls such as the Niagara Falls? What are the first words you utter in such a case?

Slide 25:

'Wow' or 'Awesome' or 'Cool'. But If only we would utter *SubhanAllah* from the depths of our hearts we could learn Allah's (swt) Love and Mercy. Big points for the *Aakhirah inshaAllah!*

Admiring Allah's (swt) art can be a form of *'ibadah* too if it reminds us of Allah (swt) and brings us close to Him (swt).

Slide 26:

Now take a close look at this flower; the crisp petals, the fluffy pollen, isn't it all gorgeous? Allah (swt) has made it all.

Slide 27:

Allah (swt) has made our food beautiful; food could have really looked bland and boring. But no, it comes in colours that stir our appetite.

Allah's (swt) art is on our dining tables every day, isn't it? *SubhanAllah!*

Slides 28-30:

Now let's talk about creativity; what is creativity?

Creativity can be defined as the ability to come up with something new with original high quality ideas. Everyone is creative, don't you agree? Everybody has a certain amount of creativity within them. Some people simply don't bother to explore their creativity.

Discuss with the students; do any of you do art as a hobby?

Very good, *mashaAllah*. There are many ways of being creative. You can decorate your room with fabulous artwork or make your very own greetings cards for your loved ones. You can even be creative with a bowl of salad.

So how do you polish your creativity; any ideas?

Practice always helps, but let me give you some practical tips to improve your creativity:

1. Explore your environment, look around you. Take inspiration from Allah's (swt) creation.
2. Creativity generates creativity. Get inspired by work created by other artists; but don't copy ideas. Do any of you ever visit art galleries?

Visiting art galleries and looking at other people's work will open up your mind. Identify trends and styles, see what it is that you relate to. Develop your taste.

Has it ever happened that you have done a drawing and you find other people not appreciating it or not quite understanding what you have tried to draw? That's okay. The important thing is, does that drawing mean anything to you? If it does, then keep working at it and keep trying to make it clear to yourself. Let it be an expression of you and remember that people perceive art in their own way. Everyone reacts differently to the same painting.

Try to be creative in your everyday lives; do not save your creativity for art classes only and challenge yourself; don't rush towards easy solutions. Your aim is not to get a pretty picture in the end, don't focus on the final product. It has to stir emotions. If a drawing stirs your own and other people's emotions, that makes it affective artwork.

Slide 31:

Activity 1: Now I am going to do a creativity test with you. I need two volunteers.

You see some shapes here; I will give you two minutes to produce objects out of these shapes.

Time's up. (Discuss drawings)

Slide 32:

Now let's talk about the Basics of Art or the elements that make art.

You see a line is a mark with greater length and lesser width. If I make something like this would you call it a line?

What is a shape? When you connect the lines it becomes a shape. This is also a line, but when you connect the lines, it becomes a shape. What is the difference between a shape and a form?

Slides 33-34:

This is a shape, but when you show different dimensions of the shape, it becomes a form. Let's take this shape for example it looks like a triangle. Is it a shape or a form? If I add depth to it, it becomes a form because you can see the other dimension of it.

Let's come to textures. Can you see textures? Can all textures be seen or felt?

Let's take a look at these textures on this slide. You cannot feel the texture but you can certainly see it. And you can tell whether it is soft or rough based on your experience.

When you see these images your mind recalls similar textures you have touched and that's the reason why you are able to say what is soft and what is not. All these things should make us realize how much we take for granted. Do we stop to think and thank Allah (swt) for this blessing of our mind being able to distinguish between textures and things we see every second? *Subhan Allah!*

Slide 35:

Now let's talk about colours. You all know about primary and secondary colours. What are primary colours?

Primary colours are the basic colours that cannot be made by mixing other colours. They are only three: red, yellow and blue.

Secondary colours are those that are made by mixing primary colours. They are also three: orange, green and purple.

Tertiary colours are made by mixing either one primary color with one secondary color, or two secondary colors.

Slide 36:

Now I want you all to carefully observe these images. Notice the forms, textures and colours. Take a good look at them. There are colors within colours, a sand dune has so many shades of brown. There must be more than five shades here, and look at these patterns and designs. There must be around four, five shades of blue and more than four or five shades of grey here in a glacier.

All these leaves, how many shades can you see, so many colors, it's a good blend of about six to seven colors, So you see, observing Allah's (swt) creation closely can help us improve our creativity and drawing skills.

Slide 37:

Activity 2: Again I need two volunteers for an activity.

I am giving you these paints and you have to take inspiration from Allah's (swt) art. Observe the patterns and designs in His (swt) creation. Take inspiration from them by blending the primary colours. Draw something for me. It can be something realistic or abstract.

You have two minutes and you can use your fingers too.

Remember, sticking to primary colours will make your painting boring. The more shades you use, the more depth your painting will have. Notice that Allah's (swt) art has lots of shades and primary colours don't occur independently.

Good work. Don't you just love the blending? To create art, you have to appreciate Allah (swt)'s art.

Slide 38:

Being a Muslim there are certain challenges that an artist faces, there are certain things that Islam doesn't allow. The first thing that is not allowed is making animal or human figures and faces except for educational purposes if it is necessary.

One way to draw images is to deface them, so the body or face is not clear. Moreover, the body should not have curves; the body has to be vague, face defaced. This should be used only for educational purposes. That too, if it is absolutely necessary otherwise you have got to avoid it as much as you can.

The next forbidden thing is any art that represents immoral or indecent ideas.

There is some art that may not look indecent on the surface but the concept behind it can be very immoral. I know artists who draw things that are very vague and you can't really tell what is what, but the concept behind it is not something that would be considered 'decent'. So that is also not appropriate.

Slides 39-41:

One of the reasons why Allah (swt) has prohibited image making or picture making is because it leads to idol worship.

It has happened in the past, starting from the times of Nuh (as). Whenever pious people died, the community buried them and made mausoleums on the graves and they decorated those mausoleums with images of the pious person. Sometimes they would make idols and slowly people forgot why these pictures and idols were made and they started worshipping them.

That's why it is not encouraged in Islam to make images. Even in the times of Ibrahim (as) and Musa (as) there were people who were worshipping calves and idols. Even today you see educated sane intelligent people worshipping things like monkeys and elephants and snakes and cows.

So you see, idol worshipping starts from craftsmen making pictures. Allah (swt) puts a stop there, He (swt) does not even want us to go near the limits for our own good. So when it comes to drawing, you have to be careful. You don't want to leave something behind that can be misused after you, because it may become an *'azaab-e-jariah* (continuing punishment).

Slides 42-43:

Drawing landscapes is certainly allowed in Islam and there is a *hadith* about drawing landscapes. I will read it out to you, it's from Sahih Bukhari.

Once an artist came to Ibne 'Abbas (ra) and said, "My sustenance is from my manual profession and I make these pictures." Ibn 'Abbas said, "I will tell you only what I heard from Allah's (swt) Apostle (pbuh). I heard him saying, 'Whoever makes a picture will be punished by Allah (swt) till he puts life in it, and he will never be able to put life in it.'" Hearing this, that man heaved a sigh and his face turned pale. Ibn 'Abbas said to him, "What a pity! If you insist on making pictures I advise you to make pictures of trees and any other unanimated objects."

Thus, making landscapes is allowed.

Slides 44-45:

Now some of you may say, I don't draw images, I just like to put them up in my room. They could be posters or photos.

There is a *hadith* about it in Sahih Bukhari. I didn't know either; when I found out, I removed all the pictures with human form.

The Holy Prophet (pbuh) said, "Angels do not enter a house in which there is a dog or a picture." He meant the images of creatures that have souls.

So we need to see what our priority is – putting up that poster of a rock star or your own holiday pictures or having angels come visit you!

Slide 46:

There are some people who may not make images of humans or animals but they admire such art. People go to art galleries and there are pictures of humans and animals and people admire them.

And there is a *hadith* on that from Sahih Bukhari, Umme Salamah (ra) and Umme Habibah (ra), who were the wives of the Prophet (pbuh), went to Ethiopia and saw a church and were admiring the pictures in it, so the Prophet (pbuh) raised his head and said, "Those are the people who, whenever a pious man dies amongst them make a place of worship at his grave and then they make those pictures in it. Those are the worst creatures in the sight of Allah."

In short, the Prophet (pbuh) didn't like his wives admiring something that is not allowed in Islam or something that Allah (swt) doesn't like.

Slide 47:

So now the action plan is to remove all pictures and statues of animals and people as soon as possible and let the angels in. You want *rahmah* (mercy), angels of *rahmah* in your house don't you, in your room? So don't make them go away because of the pictures.

Slide 48:

So what sort of art can a Muslim do then?

All sort of art! It can be painting with any material, pottery, drawing with pen and ink, etc. Just make sure it does not include human or animal form.

Any art that promotes virtue, morality, decency and permissible joy is allowed in Islam.

Allah (swt) recognizes that we need to relax and entertain ourselves. That's why He (swt) has put up these beautiful stars and the moon and the sun all over the sky; but you have to realize that there are certain boundaries. Allah (swt) has given us so much but there are certain things which are not allowed so we must respect that.

Now be your own judge when you start drawing.

I am going to show you some pictures and I want your judgment on them. I am going to pinpoint people. Picture number A, is there anything inappropriate about these pictures?

(A discussion on a few pictures: slides 49-55)

Slide 56:

Alhamdulillah you have understood and can identify what is acceptable and what is not.

Slide 57:

You must have heard the term "Islamic Art". What does that mean? It simply means the art that is produced by Muslims to reflect the culture of Islam.

Calligraphy and Arabesque are the most important elements of Islamic Art.

Slides 58-66:

These elements are used in many ways by Muslims. Here are some images for you:

Slide 67:

I will end my class on this *hadith*:

"God is beautiful and He (swt) loves beauty." [Muslim]

Du'a for end of a gathering) *Subhana Rabbika Rabbul Izzati 'amma yasifun wa salamun 'alal mursaleen, walhamdulillah Rabbil 'alameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *Assalam alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*