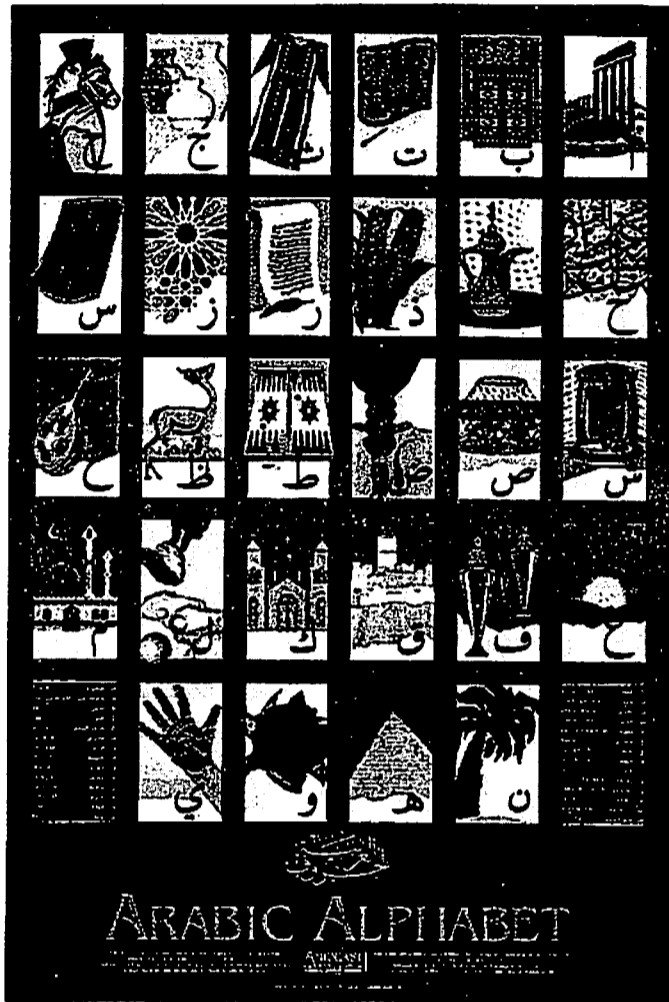


AMIDEAST
المركز الإسلامي

Arabic Alphabet Poster



Supplement

produced by
AMIDEAST

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Arabic Alphabet Poster Supplement

The Arabic alphabet has 28 letters. Arabic is read from right to left, so the alphabet on the poster begins in the top right-hand corner with the antiquities illustration. In the following transliterations, double vowels indicate a "long" sound. For example, "aa" is pronounced like the "a" in "lamb;" "ii" is pronounced like the "ee" in "seen;" and "oo" is pronounced like the "oo" in "moon." The apostrophe indicates a glottal stop (the action that precedes the initial vowel in words like "apple" and "orange." The symbol "ʿ" represents the ʿayn, a letter that makes a sound similar to the "aa" in the exclamation "aargh." A more complete guide to pronunciation follows the table below.

Letter	Translation	Transliteration	Arabic Spelling
(أ) alif	antiquities	'aathaar	آثار
(ب) ba	door; gate	baab	باب
(ت) ta	embroidery	taṭreez	تطريز
(ث) tha	garment; robe	thaub	ثوب
(ج) jiim	jar	jarra	جرّة
(ح) ḥa	horse	ḥisaan	حصان
(خ) kha	writing	khaṭṭ	خط
(د) dal	coffeepot	dalla	دلة
(ذ) ṭhal	corn	ṭhura	ذرة
(ر) ra	letter	risaala	رسالة
(ز) zayn	decoration	zakhaarif	زخارف
(س) siin	prayer rug; carpet	sajjaada	سجادة
(ش) shiin	shawarma	shaawurma	شاورمة
(ص) ṣoḍ	fishing	sayd as-samak	صيد السمك
(ض) ḍoḍ	braid	ḍafiira	ضفيرة
(ط) ṭa	backgammon	ṭaawulat zahr	طاولة زهر
(ظ) za	gazelle	zabii	ظبي
(ع) ʿayn	oud	ʿood	عود
(غ) ghayn	sunset	ghuroob ash-shams	غروب الشمس
(ف) fa	lantern	fanoos	فانوس
(ق) qaf	fortress	qalʿa	قلعة
(ك) kaf	church	kaniisa	كنيسة
(ل) lam	pearls	lu'lu'	لؤلؤ
(م) miim	mosque	masjid	مسجد
(ن) noon	palm tree	nakhla	نخلة
(هـ) ha	pyramid	haram	هرم
(و) waw	rose	warda	وردة
(ي) ya	hand	yad	يد

The Arabic Alphabet A Guide to Pronunciation

(أ)	alif	"a" as in <i>apple</i>
(ب)	ba	"b" as in <i>bat</i>
(ت)	ta	"t" as in <i>taffy</i>
(ث)	tha	"th" as in <i>thank</i>
(ج)	jiim	"j" as in <i>juggle</i>
(ح)	ḥa	"h" as in <i>hot</i>
(خ)	kha	"ch" as in <i>chutzpah</i>
(د)	dal	"d" as in <i>daffodil</i>
(ذ)	ḏal	"th" as in <i>that</i>
(ر)	ra	"r" as in <i>Iran</i> (roll the "r")
(ز)	zayn	"z" as in <i>zipper</i>
(س)	siin	"s" as in <i>summer</i>
(ش)	shiin	"sh" as in <i>shutter</i>
(ص)	ṣod	"s" as in <i>sorry</i>
(ض)	ḏod	"d" as in <i>dot</i>
(ط)	ṭa	"t" as in <i>taught</i>
(ظ)	ẓa	"th" as in <i>other</i>
(ع)	ʿayn	sound made in pronunciation of <i>aargh</i> (symbol ʿ)
(غ)	ghayn	similar to "r" in <i>Paris</i> (French pronunciation)
(ف)	fa	"f" as in <i>favor</i>
(ق)	qaf	"c" as in <i>call</i>
(ك)	kaf	"k" as in <i>kettle</i>
(ل)	lam	"l" as in <i>lamb</i>
(م)	miim	"m" as in <i>manner</i>
(ن)	noon	"n" as in <i>nap</i>
(ه)	ha	"h" as in <i>happy</i>
(و)	waw	"w" as in <i>work</i> , or "oo" as in <i>moon</i>
(ي)	ya	"y" as in <i>yellow</i> , or "ee" as in <i>cheese</i>

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AMIDEAST امد ايست

The Arabic Alphabet A Guide to the Images

آثار (*aathaar*) antiquities

The Middle East is often referred to as the "cradle of civilization," for the world's first settled cultures developed there around 4500 BC. Since then, the region has played host to many great civilizations: some indigenous, others brought by conquerors. Among the most prominent were the Sumerian (3000–2500 BC), Phoenician (1200–725 BC), Assyrian (900–614 BC), and Babylonian (626–538 BC) civilizations in Mesopotamia and the Fertile Crescent; the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms (3000–525 BC) in Egypt; the Sabaeen civilization (1000–100 BC) in Yemen; and the Nabataean empire (321 BC–AD 106) in Jordan. The extent of Roman presence in the region is illustrated by the Roman ruins that stretch across the Arab world; noteworthy sites include Baalbek in Lebanon, Jerash in Jordan, Carthage in Tunisia, and Volubilis in Morocco. This illustration was modeled after the ruins in Jerash, Jordan.

باب (*baab*) door, gate

Doorways and entryways have been important features in Arab architecture for centuries. The kind of door varies according to the specific structure and its intended purpose. Outer gates of homes, citadels, and cities are usually made of iron, while inner doors are of wood (often cedar or mahogany). Outer gates of city walls — some of which can be found in Aleppo, Cairo, and Jerusalem — once provided protection to residents inside. In the past, wooden doors were frequently inlaid with mother of pearl or carved in geometrical or floral designs. The entryway in this illustration was inspired by a carved wooden door from Oman.

تَطْرِيز (*taṭriiz*) embroidery, needlework

The prominence of embroidery in the Arab world goes back at least to the beginning of the 16th

century. Arab needlework was influenced by Spanish, Turkish, Balkan, and Berber styles. In addition to clothing, needlework is used to embellish furnishings such as curtains, cushions, bed covers and wall hangings. The design in the illustration is based on cross-stitch designs typical of Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine. Another traditional form of embroidery is worked in gold or silver thread on a background of velvet or heavy silk. This style can be found on the *kiswa*, the covering on the Ka'ba at Mecca, on which Qur'anic verses are embroidered.

ثوب (*thaub*) dress, robe

Cotton robes are worn by both men and women in the Arab world. The garment's cut varies among the different regions according to temperature and terrain. In hot dry regions, the dress is larger, with wide sleeves that catch the breeze and deep folds to trap body moisture. In cooler regions, the dress is frequently more fitted. Most *thaubs* for women are embellished with designs, while men's *thaubs* are usually unadorned. A knowledgeable eye can identify the origin of a costume by the style, fabric, thread, stitching, and design, all of which vary according to region. In many *thaubs* for women — such as those in Palestine, Jordan, and the Maghrib — the color and style of embroidery also reflect a woman's marital status. Today, in metropolitan areas throughout much of the Arab world, many Arabs wear Western dress rather than the traditional *thaub*.

جَرَّة (*jarra*) earthenware jar

Earthenware containers date back to the earliest civilizations in the region, and their use has continued until today. The jars are used to keep water cool and to store grains and beans. When buried in the ground, the jars protect food against the heat. In the absence of refrigeration, perishables can be stored in the cool area created underneath a few pottery jugs filled with water. In

some parts of the Arab world, earthenware jars filled with water are placed outside storefronts, where passersby can quench their thirst. Besides their functional use, these earthenware jars provide a medium for artistic expression. Before the clay jars completely harden, they are sometimes decorated with tools such as rope, knives, or thumb imprints. A rope was used to decorate the jars shown here.

حصان (hisaan)
horse

The Arabian horse has the distinction of being the oldest living breed of horse. The Arabian horse's existence was first recorded 3,000 years ago, although some archaeologists believe that the breed existed as long ago as 40,000 years. The Arabian was introduced to Europe through Andalusia and brought to America by bedouins for the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. Arabians are known for carrying heavier loads at faster speeds and for longer distances than any other breed; they are occasionally called "drinkers of the wind" by some Arabs. Arabian horses are also prized for their extraordinary beauty. Arab tribesmen are largely responsible for preserving the Arabian's traits through their careful breeding and recording of bloodlines. Such records were committed to memory and transmitted orally before the first written records of genealogy were introduced into the Arab world in 1946. The development of the Thoroughbred was influenced by the Arabian horse. Today, some Arab countries have centers dedicated to the study of the Arabian horse. Examples include the Egyptian Agricultural Organization Stud, the Jordanian State Stud, and the Riyadh Equestrian Club.

خط (khatt)
handwriting, script

The written Arabic language is one of the world's most widely used languages. The *qur'an*, Islam's holy book, is written in Arabic, and as Islam spread, so did the use of the Arabic language. There are 28 letters in the Arabic alphabet, including three long vowels. Short vowel sounds are indicated with diacritical marks above and below the letters. Arabic is written from right to left with most letters connecting to others. The script is flexible and can be altered for purposes of calligraphy.

There are two main forms of calligraphy: the *kufic* script characterized by angular, geometric lines, and the rounded cursive versions of the *nashk* script. Calligraphy achieved new heights with the

coming of Islam in the seventh century AD. Muslims consider the Qur'an to be the literal word of God, and as such it should be written with precision and grace. In addition, Islam forbids religious iconography, thus contributing to the rise of calligraphy as a favored art form. The Prophet Muhammad encouraged the development of calligraphy as an art form when he said, "He who writes *bismillah* ('In the name of God') beautifully obtains innumerable blessings."

دلة (dalla)
coffeepot

A *dalla* is a coffeepot with a handle and a long, curved spout. This style is typical of the Arabian Peninsula. Elsewhere in the Arab world, coffeepots look different and are called by other names. The word *dalla* is used primarily in the Gulf region, whereas the term *'ibriiq* is used in many other parts of the Arab world.

Traditionally, Arabs are known for their hospitality, a characteristic that developed centuries ago among the bedouin in the Arabian Peninsula where hospitality once meant the difference between life and death. When guests would arrive, the host spread a carpet for them before the fire and served coffee into small cups with no handles. Bedouins today represent only a small percentage—about two percent—of the Arab population, but the coffee ritual continues to be widely practiced by Arabs throughout the region. Coffee itself was first cultivated in the Arab world, the sole source of the product until the end of the seventeenth century. The origin of the term 'mocha' is the ancient Yemeni port of *el-Mukha*, from which Yemeni coffee was exported.

ذرة (thura)
corn

While corn is not grown extensively in the Arab world, many Arabs have come to enjoy this imported vegetable. A popular way of preparing corn is to cook it in its husk over coals. It is then wrapped in tin foil and eaten as a snack. Many street vendors in villages and cities sell corn prepared this way.

رسالة (risaala)
letter, message

Written forms of communication have long held an important place in the Arab world. An elaborate postal system was developed during the Abbasid Empire (eighth through mid-thirteenth centuries AD). Over nine hundred post offices

were established during this period, and mail delivery relied upon horses, camels, and carrier pigeons.

The word *risaala* also refers to the message that God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad through the Archangel Gabriel. Muslims refer to the Prophet Muhammad as *rasuul Allah*, or "messenger of God." The *qur'an*, the holy book of Islam, is the written word of this revelation, or message.

زَخَارِف (zakhaarif) ornamentation

Like calligraphy, the development of other decorative art forms in Islamic culture is in part the result of Islam's prohibition of iconography. There are two major design categories popular in the Arab world. The first is geometric design, which is characterized by interlocking, symmetrical lines and angles, such as those depicted in the illustration. This type of motif is commonly used in North Africa. The second style is known as arabesque and is characterized by a curved floral motif. It originated in Persia and reached great heights during the Fatimid Dynasty in Egypt. The mosques of Ibn Tulun and Al-Hakim in Cairo display examples of arabesque designs. *Zakhaarif* is applied in many mediums, including ceramics, glassware, wood, fabrics, stone, tile, and paper.

سَجَادَة (sajjaada) carpet

In the past, carpets were widely used in the Arab world for purely practical purposes such as sitting and sleeping. The skill of carpet weavers turned this household object into a medium for artistic expression manifest in the elaborate weaving of fine silks and wool that make oriental carpets admired worldwide. Muslims also use carpets during prayer. In Islam, it is preferable to perform one's prayers on a clean surface. Many Muslims keep small carpets on hand especially for this purpose. The root of the word *sajjaada* (س-ج-د) means to bow down in worship. The word for mosque—*masjid*—comes from the same root and means 'place of worship.'

شَاوُرْمَة (shaawurma) shawurma

Shawurma is among the most popular of all snacks in the Arab world. Most often made with charcoal-broiled mutton, it is cut into thin slices and arranged on a vertical skewer from which individual servings are shaved (like the Greek

gyro). A popular way to serve shawurma is in a sandwich form, rolled into a flat round of bread and garnished with finely chopped tomatoes, parsley, lettuce, onions, and tahina (sesame) sauce. Street vendors selling this popular snack are a frequent sight in most Arab cities.

صَيْد السَّمَك (sayd as-samak) fishing (literally, hunting of fish)

Many Arab countries border a large body of water: the Mediterranean Sea, the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf (known in the Arab world as the Arabian Gulf), or the Red Sea. As a result, fish is an important staple in the diet of many Arabs. Before the discovery of oil in the Gulf, fishing was one of the main industries there. In the past several decades, many Gulf countries have devoted attention to improving their fishing industries. Widespread developments include the modernization of traditional wooden fishing boats, and the replacement of hand-crafted fishing nets with a manufactured nets that are both stronger and more easily repaired at sea. Some popular fish in the Gulf region are sardines, bluefish, mackerel, shark, and tuna. Shrimp, lobsters, and oysters are also found in Gulf waters. Fish common to the Mediterranean Sea include sardines and mackerel.

صَفِيرَة (dafira) braid

Traditionally, many bedouin women in the Middle East have braided their hair and decorated it with colorful bands called *laffayef* made from local handspun wool, or with woolen tassels. The use of braids dates as far back as the Sumerian period. The woman in a statue from the Sumerian Period, found outside the Ishtar Temple at Mari, wears braids coiled around her head as well as a large headdress.

طَاوُلَة زَهْر (taawulat zahr) backgammon

Usually referred to as simply *taawula*—literally "table" in Arabic—backgammon is a popular game in the Middle East. It is also known as "*tric trac*" (Lebanon) and "*takht-e-nard*" (Iran). The rules and method of the game vary depending on the country. *Taawula* boards typical of the Arab world are hinged wooden boxes that are opened and laid flat for playing. The boxes are often crafted of inlaid wood and mother of pearl. Archaeological evidence suggests that *taawula* was played over 5,000 years ago in the Sumerian city of Ur, located in now what is southern Iraq, where

archeological digs have turned up a table very similar in appearance to the backgammon board.

In a more esoteric vein, the backgammon board itself symbolizes the globe, and specific parts of the board represent day and night, the four seasons (or four directions), the months of the year, the days of the month, and the hours of the day.

ظبي (zabii) gazelle

The *zabii* is a species of gazelle (*gazella dorcus*) that has existed since antiquity and is considered to be the "classic" gazelle. It lives in climates of dry savanna, semi-desert, and desert and can be found from the North African Atlantic coast to western parts of Saudi Arabia. The *zabii* was still common around the end of the nineteenth century, but its numbers have since dropped considerably. The name of the emirate Abu Dhabi literally means "father of the gazelle" in Arabic, suggesting that the species at one time may have inhabited what is now the UAE.

عود (ood) oud

Forerunner of the English lute, the *oud* is a short-necked, fretless musical instrument that until recently was the most widely used instrument in the Arab world. Cave paintings in Egypt and Mesopotamia depict oud-like instruments. In ancient times, the oud had a belly made from animal skin. The wooden-bellied *oud* was imported to Mecca from Iraq in the late sixth century AD. The Crusaders first introduced the oud to Europe during the period AD 1109–1289, when the Arab world was at the forefront of academic scholarship and the arts. During this period, students from Europe came to study at Arab universities and were exposed to the oud. The instrument was brought back to Europe via Spain, where it became known as *laud* (pronounced la-ood) in Spanish. The English slightly altered the name, resulting in the term "lute."

غروب الشمس (ghuroob ash-shams) sunset (literally, setting of the sun)

Sunset is one of the five required times of prayer in Islam. These prayers are at sunrise (*fajr*), noon (*zuhr*), afternoon (*asr*), sunset (*maghrib*), and night (*ashaa*). The root from which the word *ghuroob* is formed (غ-ر-ب) means "to go west." The western-most area of the Arab world is northwest

Africa, known in Arabic as the *maghrib*, meaning "place of sunset" or "west." Sunset is a particularly important time of day during the Islamic month of Ramadan. During this month, Muslims fast from sunup to sundown. At sunset, the fast is broken and the feasting begins.

فانوس (faanoos) lantern

Lanterns hang above the streets throughout the Islamic month of Ramadan. During this month, able-bodied Muslims are required to fast from sunrise until sunset. Every evening there is a breaking of the fast, when entire communities celebrate and feast late into the night. The *faanoos* is connected with this tradition and is a symbol of Ramadan. These lanterns are usually made with brass and glass, or with colorful paper.

In Egypt, the lanterns have been a part of Ramadan since Fatimid times (AD 969–1172). They were used to light the procession to sight the new moon, thereby signaling the beginning of the month, and to announce the start and end of each day's fast. Fasting would begin when the lanterns were put out in the early morning. The ritual was so important that in the fifth century, the governor of Cairo decreed that everyone had to put a lantern in front of his house.

قلعة (qal'a) fortress

Fortresses can be found all over the Arab world some built by local sultans or generals, others by conquerors. Some still standing include *Al-Hazm* in Oman, which was built in 1708 by Sultan bin Seif al-Ya'ariba, and *Rustaq*—also in Oman—built over a long period starting from the Sasanian period in AD 212; *Qal'at al-Rabad* in Jordan, built in 1184 by Saladin's general, Izzadin Usama, as a defense against the Crusaders; *Crac des Chevaliers*, built by the crusaders in Syria; and *Qal'at al-Burak*, built by the Ottoman Turks in Jordan.

كنيسة (kaniisa) church

The Middle East gave birth to the Christian church and was the place of its earliest growth. Today, about five percent of Arabs are Christians. Many Old and New Testament events are related in the Qur'an, and Muslims respect Christians and Jews as *ahl al-kitab*, or "people of the book." As *ahl al-kitab*, Christians are given protected status under Muslim rule, and in countries where Islamic law applies, Christians follow their own religious laws

for family matters. Jesus—the Messiah in Christianity—is recognized as an important prophet in Islamic theology. Christian denominations in the Arab world include Catholic, Anglican, Protestant, Assyrian, Maronite, Eastern Orthodox, and Oriental Orthodox including Armenian Apostolic, Coptic, and Syrian Orthodox.

لؤلؤ (lu'lu')

pearls

The pearling industry in Gulf countries such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates was once counted among the most profitable industries in the region. It helped establish the region along world trade routes, especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when pearling in these countries reached its height. Since the development of the cultured pearl in Japan in the 1930s and the discovery of oil in the Gulf in the 1940s and '50s, the pearling industry in the Gulf has declined substantially. In some Arab countries, satellites and scuba gear are used in the pearling industry, while in other countries these technologies are banned in an effort to preserve the pearl beds.

Before the advent of modern equipment, pearling required tremendous physical endurance. Pearling teams consisted of a captain who was often also the owner of the boat and who knew the best pearling banks, divers, rope tenders, and apprentices. The crew worked, ate, and slept on the deck. Divers looked for pearls by holding their breath under water and collecting as many oysters as possible. Divers would descend to depths of thirty to forty feet about eight times in a fifteen minute period and then rest. This routine continued from sunrise to sunset. The rope tender was very important to the diver. He was responsible for pulling the diver up from the bottom. If he was too slow, the diver could drown; and if he was too fast, the diver would get "the bends." Pearl dealers traveled around the pearl beds in boats buying pearls from the captains and then selling them to other merchants.

مسجد (masjid)

mōsque

The mosque is the Muslim place of worship. The first mosque can be traced back to the days of the Prophet Muhammad in the seventh century AD. In Islam, the mosque serves not only as a place for communal prayer, but also as a central meeting place and locus of social activity. Islam was born in the Arab world and spread quickly throughout the region and beyond. Today, approximately 80%

of the world's Muslims live outside the Arab world. Mosques usually reflect local art and architecture and therefore vary widely in appearance, although most contain some basic structural elements.

Most mosques have a minaret from which the call to prayer is issued. A *mihrab*, or niche in the wall, indicates the direction of the city of Mecca. Muslims face Mecca when they pray because this is where the *ka'ba* is located. The *ka'ba* is believed to have been built by the Prophet Abraham (Ibrahim in Arabic) and his son Ishmael. God told the Prophet Abraham to take his wife Hagar and his son Ishmael from Palestine to a new land. After traveling for many days, they arrived in the valley of Bacca which would later be called Mecca. Abraham left his wife and young son in the dry valley. There was no water nearby, and Hagar soon left Ishmael to search for water. When she returned unsuccessful, she found a spring bubbling out of the earth near where Ishmael sat. Many years later, God told Abraham and Ishmael to build a *ka'ba*—or holy shrine—near the spring. After they finished the *ka'ba*, God told Abraham to call mankind to make a pilgrimage to His holy house to pray. The pilgrimage is known as the *hajj*.

نخلة (nakhla)

palm tree

The date palm tree is believed to have originated in the Middle East and is probably the oldest cultivated tree. A date palm motif was used in Assyrian and Pharaonic architecture and its importance was praised by the poets and scribes of these ancient civilizations. The fruit itself provides an important staple, while the trunk and leaves are used to make furniture and construct houses. There are more than 400 different types of dates. The best fruits are stuffed with almonds or other nuts. In emulation of the prophet Muhammad, Muslims often break their Ramadan fast with dates.

Palm trees require maximum moisture and heat, a condition that prevails in oases. Some well-known oases include Marrakesh in Morocco, Siwa in Egypt, Al-Hasa in Saudi Arabia, and Al-Kufra in Libya.

هرم (haram)

pyramid

The first pyramid was designed by the builder Imhotep as a burial place for King Zoser in 2600 BC. Overlooking Memphis in Egypt, Imhotep's step pyramid was the first large monument made

entirely from stone. About 100 years later, King Khufu built the Great Pyramid. It stands 481 feet high and is the tallest of the three pyramids at Giza, Egypt.

The ancient Egyptians considered the pyramid to be a symbol of perfection. The burial chambers within the pyramid lie directly under its apex at ground level, while different chambers are located within the structure for various other purposes. The engineers who built them are still praised today for their precision in constructing these monuments without the benefit of cranes or pulleys.

وَرْدَة (warda)
rose

The rose is believed to have been first cultivated in ancient Persian gardens, and it gained widespread popularity in the eighth and ninth centuries AD. The Persian city of Jur was noted for its abundance of red roses, and Jurian rosewater was traded from Morocco to China. Roses were also used in ancient Egypt. They were dissolved in hot fat in order to produce pomades that the Egyptians shaped into

cones and placed on their hair; as body heat melted the fat, the fragrant oil would trickle down the face and neck. Today, rosewater is a popular ingredient in many Arab sweets. Most of the world's rose extract is produced in Morocco.

يَد (yad)
hand

The hand pictured here is stained with a dye called henna. Henna is made from various trees, shrubs, and crushed dried berries blended to create a reddish-brown substance. Staining the nails, skin, and hair with henna is a popular traditional form of adornment in all parts of the Middle East. Henna is primarily used during times of celebration such as religious holidays and weddings. Henna Night (*laylat al-henna*) is a ritual performed for the bride before her wedding. It is an occasion for girls and women to celebrate the marriage of the bride and prepare her for her wedding day. Henna designs vary from region to region. The design in the illustration is based on motifs used in Morocco.

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