

paper

introduction

You are probably reading this on a piece of paper. Stop and think about that for a minute: what that really means. Now imagine life without paper. Paper has been around for a really long time (books came later). The earliest mass-produced paper was made in China in 105AD, although some older fragments of paper have been found. This was not the first material used for writing on, though. Egyptians and Greeks were using a plant called papyrus to make a writing surface as early as 3000BC, and other natural materials were also used before paper, such as wood, clay, silk and animal skins. Papermaking methods spread from Chinese to Muslim culture in the 8th century and immediately its value was recognised, with paper mills established in Baghdad. Silk Road traders travelling across Europe and Asia helped to spread paper further and used it for documents as well as wrapping their goods. Paper was essential to Muslim Culture in many ways. It was used to make beautiful and highly prized copies of the Koran. It was also used for making maps, charts and architectural plans, books on a wide variety of topics, and for recording scientific developments, therefore assisting all the new discoveries and developments going on in the Islamic world during this golden age.

questions to think about

- How many things can you think of that are made of or use paper?
- What did people write on before paper?
- What is paper made from?
- How has paper helped the spread of ideas and knowledge?
- How and why is paper important to you in your daily life?



where to find out more

Papermaking in the Muslim world:

<http://www.1001inventions.com/paper>

<http://www.muslimheritage.com/article/beginning-paper-industry>

Islam's gift of paper to the West

<https://www.nytimes.com/2001/12/29/books/shelf-life-the-story-of-islam-s-gift-of-paper-to-the-west.html>

How the invention of paper changed the world:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/the-reporters-38892687>

Ancient uses of paper:

<https://www.kew.org/blogs/library-art-and-archives/ancient-uses-paper>