ESPR Academic Reading and Writing

SHEIKH ZAYED GRAND MOSQUE

SOURCE TEXTS
Chapter 1

SHEIKH ZAYED GRAND MOSQUE

In this iBook you will find a pre-reading and source texts on the Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi.
PRE-READING

• As you read, look up any unknown words.

• Make a note at the end of each paragraph identifying the main idea of the paragraph.

• From the notes you have made on each paragraph, go to the ‘Notes’ App and summarise the pre-reading.

• From your summary, try to predict the essay question for the topic ‘The Grand Mosque’.

• Now turn to page 3 and start reading the source texts.

The essay title is:

‘The Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque is an impressive example of architecture: Describe its construction, unique features and the function of the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque Centre’.

SHEIKH ZAYED GRAND MOSQUE PRE-READING

It is said that the design and construction of the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque ‘unites the world’, as artisans and materials from around the globe were used when building it. Inspired by architecture from both India and North Africa, the mosque is built using precious stones and other natural materials. Pools alongside the mosque’s arcades reflect its columns, and, at night, a unique lighting system is used which represents the phases of the moon.

The interior of the mosque is equally spectacular and contains a number of unique features, commissioned and imported from abroad. On the Qibla wall, the ninety qualities of Allah are written, designed by the well known UAE calligrapher, Mohammed Mandi Al Tamimi.

As well as being a place of worship, the offices of the mosque serve the community. The Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque Centre (SZGMC) manages the day to day operations of the mosque, as well as organising cross cultural events.

This architectural work of art is one of the largest mosques in the world and its namesake, Sheikh Zayed, is buried at the site.
The Grand Mosque

Inspiration for the design of the Sheikh Zayed Mosque has been taken from several different types of architecture. For instance, the Badshahi Mosque in Lahore, Pakistan and the Hassan II Mosque in Casablanca, Morocco have been credited with being direct influences. The layout of the dome in the Sheikh Zayed Mosque, as well as the floorplan, was inspired by the Badshahi Mosque, while the architecture was influenced by both Mughal and Moorish design.

In fact, one of the roles of the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque Centre, the administrative part of the mosque, is to promote the mosque as a masterpiece of Islamic architecture. The Centre actively encourages both residents and international visitors to visit the mosque for educational and tourism purposes.

More than 3,000 workers and 38 renowned contractors participated in the construction of the mosque, using artisans and materials from a variety of countries, such as, India, Pakistan, Turkey, Malaysia, Iran, China, the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, Greece, New Zealand and, of course, the United Arab Emirates. It was decided that natural materials should be used for much of the mosque’s construction, because of their long lasting qualities. These include, marble, gold, semi precious stones, crystals and ceramics.

The mosque can accommodate over 40,000 people, with the main prayer hall alone allowing for more than 7,000 worshippers. There are two smaller prayer halls, one being for females, and both of these have the capacity to hold 1,500 people.


Example of the inlaid stone work
Centre of worship and learning

Located in Abu Dhabi, the capital city of the UAE, Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque was initiated by the late President of the country, His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. He set the foundation stone, although the mosque was completed under the guidance of his son, His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

It is the largest mosque in the country and the eighth largest in the world, its site being equivalent to the size of five football fields. After over a decade of construction, the Grand Mosque was finally opened to the public on the 20th December 2007.

As well as being a place of worship, the mosque is also a centre of learning and discovery. Educational and cultural activities, as well as visitor programmes, are organised by the offices of the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque Centre, which is located in the eastern minarets.

In the north eastern minaret, the local community is served with a library, which contains classic books and publications, some of which date back more than 200 years. A range of Islamic subjects are covered by these books, including science, the arts, calligraphy and civilization. As a reminder of how diverse the Islamic world is, the library contains material in a variety of languages, including Arabic, English, French, Italian, Spanish, German and Korean.


Exterior of the Grand Mosque
Features

The Grand Mosque has a number of unique features. The courtyard, with its floral design, measures about 17,000 m² (180,000 sq ft) and is said to have the largest example of marble mosaic in the world. The world's largest carpet, designed by Iranian artist Ali Khaliqi and made by between 1,200 and 1,300 Iranian carpet knotters, can be seen in the main prayer hall. Measuring 5,627 m² (60,570 sq ft), and weighing 35 tons, the carpet is made mainly from wool from New Zealand and Iran. It took approximately two years to make and contains 2,268,000,000 knots. The value of the carpet is estimated to be AED 30 million.

In addition, the third largest chandelier in the world can be found in the Grand Mosque, with a diameter of 10 meters and a height of 15 meters.

History

Following a directive by the late Sheikh Zayed, the Grand Mosque was initiated in 1996. Situated in Abu Dhabi, the mosque can be found between Mussaffah Bridge and Maqta Bridge. The AED 2.5 billion project involved around 38 contracting companies and approximately 3,500 workers and took a period of almost 12 years to complete. The first prayer was held in the presence of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nayhan in 2007.

Sadly, Sheikh Zayed did not see the completed mosque as he died in November 2004. However, his mausoleum is located beside the mosque on the north side.


The carpet found in the main prayer hall.
Design

After completing the first phase of the mosque, the foundations and concrete structure, the building was finished with a decoration of Greek and Italian white marble, which is considered to be among the purest in the world. Inside the mosque there are seven chandeliers that were imported from Germany and which incorporate millions of Swarovski crystals. Calligraphers from the United Arab Emirates, Syria and Jordan supervised the work of artists from all over the world and visitors can see verses from the Holy Quran inscribed on the wall, written in three types of Arabic calligraphy.

The interior of the mosque features unique plants designed specifically for the building and the designers used mosaic to cover the entire courtyard (17,000 square metres).

In the main prayer hall there is a hand knotted carpet, which used 35 tons of wool and 12 tons of cotton.

Although the carpet consists of 25 natural colours, it is predominantly green, as this was the favourite colour of the late Sheikh Zayed. A very clever feature of the carpet is the inclusion of a number of horizontal lines. Designed to be slightly raised above the height of the rest of the carpet, they allow worshippers to align themselves for prayer. However, because of the special knotting effect, these lines cannot be seen from a distance. This Iranian masterpiece was dissected and brought to Abu Dhabi in August 2007, where it was fitted together again in the mosque.


One of the chandeliers
Many Cultures One Society

In line with the vision of the late Sheikh Zayed, the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque Centre aims to promote the values of tolerance, brotherhood and dialogue between different cultures. The centre’s goal is to extend communication and cross co-operation with both governmental and private companies. This is done by holding different cultural events.

The Centre was established in 2008 and, as well as promoting respect between different cultures and religions, it supports the printing and translation of the Holy Quran, as well as other religious works. Lectures, seminars and forums are organised, relating to Islamic architecture and calligraphy, and competitions are held on Quran recitation and Adhan (Call to prayer).

Inside the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque
ARCADES

Noun
Covered passages with arches

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ARCHITECTURE

Noun

The design or style of a building

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

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ARTISANS

Noun
A person who does skilled work

Related Glossary Terms
Drag related terms here

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COMMISSIONED

Verb
In the arts or music: an official request to make or do something

Related Glossary Terms
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NAMESAKE

Noun
A person or thing that has the same name as something or somebody else

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SPECTACULAR

Adj.
Very impressive

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