

# Al-Qalam

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## Ramadan and Laylatul-Qadr

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Muslim calendar. The Arabic word for fasting literally means to "refrain," which is what is religiously prescribed, not just abstaining from eating and drinking, but also restraining every part of one's physical body- a time for Muslims to focus on purifying their soul through prayers and self-sacrifice.

The Month of Ramadan is also when it is believed the Holy Qur'an "was sent down from heaven, a guidance unto men, a declaration of direction, and a means of salvation".

It is during this month that Muslims fast. It is called the fast of Ramadan and lasts the entire month. Ramadan is a time when Muslims concentrate on their faith and spend less time on the concerns of their everyday lives. It is a time of worship and directing ourselves to Allah.

During the Fast of Ramadan strict restraints are placed on the daily lives of Muslims. They are not allowed to eat or drink during the daylight hours. Smoking and sexual relations are also forbidden during fasting. At the end of the day, the fast is broken with prayer and a meal called the iftar.

The good that is acquired through the fast can be destroyed by five things - the telling of a lie, slander (denouncing someone behind his back), a false oath and greed or desire. These are considered offensive at all times, but are most offensive during the fast of Ramadan.

During Ramadan, it is common for Muslims to go to the Masjid and spend several hours praying and

studying the Qur'an. In addition to the five daily prayers, during Ramadan, Muslims recite a special prayer called the Tarawih prayer (night prayer). One thirtieth of the Qur'an is read each night of Ramadan during the evening prayer. By the end of the month, the whole Qur'an would have been recited. Some Muslims spend the entire night in prayer.

### Special Characteristics of Ramadan

1. Observing the fourth pillar of Islam has been prescribed during this month, and it is one of the best means by which a person attains piety and forgiveness of sins.
2. The first revelation of the Qur'an as guidance for humanity was given to the Prophet ﷺ during this month.
3. The Sunnah of performing the prayer is observed during this month.
4. Ramadan contains Laylatul-Qadr, which is better than a thousand months.
5. The great battle of Badr between the Muslims and the unbelievers took place during Ramadan in the second year of the Hijrah.
6. The Muslims re-entered Makkah victorious during Ramadan in the eighth year of the Hijrah. After this conquest people began to enter the fold of Islam in multitudes, and Makkah became free of polytheism and evil.

## Virtues of Ramadan

1. It strengthens one's ties with Allah and trains the soul to observe duties of devotion in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ.
2. It enforces patience and determination in the Muslim individual.
3. It promotes the principle of sincerity by keeping the Muslim away from arrogance and showing off; since it is an act between the individual and his Creator.
4. It promotes good character, particularly truthfulness and trust-worthiness.
5. It encourages the Muslim to do away with bad habits and change his/her circumstances for the better.
6. It enhances generosity, hospitality, and spending on charitable causes.
7. It reinforces feelings of unity and brotherhood among Muslims.
8. It instills orderliness and close observance of the value of time.
9. It serves as an opportunity for children to perform acts of obedience and to practice Islamic acts of worship.
10. It offers a chance to balance one's attention to both physical and spiritual needs. The mouth, for example, is restrained from idle talk and gossip, while the ears are restrained from listening to obscenities. In this way, a Muslim engages his or her entire body in the physical observance of the Ramadan fast.

## Better than a thousand months

The Night of Power is the night of spiritual bliss. A thousand months are equivalent to 83 years and 4 months. Fortunate is the person who spends this night in prayer. The man or woman, who prays for the whole night during this night, will deserve blessings and reward for the period as if he or she had been praying for eighty three years and four months consecutively. Since the Night of Power is better than one thousand months no one can actually measure the extent as to how much better it is.

## Exclusive

The Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: "Laylatul-Qadr has been bestowed by Allah to my Ummah (people). It was not given to any people before this." (Dur-Mansoor).

How manifest and replete the special bounties and mercies of Allah Ta'ala are upon this Ummat is really beyond imagination. It will therefore be extremely foolish to allow ourselves to be deprived of these great blessings at the expense of sheer laziness and a few hours of extra sleep. Hazrath Aisha has narrated another saying:

*"I asked: O Messenger of Allah! Tell me if I were to find a Night of Power, what should I recite therein?"* Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ advised her to recite:

**Al-laa-hum-ma in-na-ka 'afoow-wan tu-hib-bul-'af wa fa-fu 'an-ni.**

**O Allah! You are Forgiving; You love forgiveness, so forgive me. (Bukhari).**

Special attention should therefore be given to the excessive recitation of this dua on the blessed night. Furthermore, one may engage in lengthy rakaats of Tahajjud and nawaafil salaah, Tilaawat of the Qur'an, repentance (Istaghfar), Dua, Zikr and recite many Salawat (Darood Sharif & Salaam) on our beloved Prophet ﷺ.

Allah concealed that night from His servants out of mercy so that they would increase their acts of worship and gain the great reward by performing Qiyam during these blessed nights, thinking that each night is Laylatul-Qadr.

By this, they shall gain the reward of each night, especially when they think it is Laylatul-Qadr and actions are judged according to intentions, in addition to catching up Laylatul-Qadr, if they perform Qiyam the entire ten days.

The worship and the vigil of the Night of Power are a treat to the soul. The heart tends to melt into tears of heartfelt gratitude. The body is in a state of angelic ecstasy. The soul strives to reach nearer to Almighty Allah. In this holy month of Ramadhaan let us strive to seek the Night of Power and its bliss.

May Allah reward us with His bountiful blessings. We ask Allah's forgiveness and good health in this world as well as in the Hereafter. We ask Him to make us from those who hasten to repentance and Paradise, and compete with one another in doing good deeds in order to win the highest rewards and the great ranks of Paradise, for He is All Hearing, All Responding to invocations.

## Verses from the Holy Quran

### سُورَةُ الْبَقَرَةِ

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ (١٨٣)

O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, even as it was prescribed for those before you that ye may ward off (evil); (183)

أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ ۚ فَمَن كَانَ مِنكُم مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ ۚ فَمَن تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ ۗ وَأَن تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (١٨٤)

(Fast) a certain number of days; and (for) him who is sick among you, or on a journey, (the same) number of other days; and for those who can afford it there is a ransom: the feeding of a man in need - but whoso doeth good of his own accord, it is better for him: and that ye fast is better for you if ye did but know - (184)

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْءَانُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ ۚ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ۗ وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَيْكُم وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (١٨٥)

The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for mankind, and clear proofs of the guidance, and the Criterion (of right and wrong). And whosoever of you is present, let him fast the month, and whosoever of you is sick or on a journey, (let him fast the same) number of other days. Allah desireth for you ease; He desireth not hardship for you; and (He desireth) that ye should complete the period, and that ye should magnify Allah for having guided you, and that peradventure ye may be thankful. (185)

## Layla tul Qadr

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ ۚ  
وَمَا أَدرَبَكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ ۚ  
لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ ۚ  
نَزَّلُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ وَالرُّوحَ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِم مِّن كُلِّ أَمْرٍ ۚ  
سَلَّمَ هِيَ حَتَّىٰ مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ ۚ

Allah, the Exalted, says:

"We have sent it (the Qur'an) down in the Night of Qadr.

And what may let you know what the Night of Qadr is?

The Night of Qadr is much better than one thousand months. The angels and the Spirit descend in it, with the leave of your Lord, along with every command.

Peace it is till the rising of dawn." (97:1-5)

Ahaadeeth

1) Sayyidah 'Aishah (radhiyAllaahu 'anhaa) once asked the Holy Prophet as to what du'aa (supplication) she should recite in the Laylatul-Qadr. The Holy Prophet taught her the following du'aa:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّكَ عَفُورٌ تُحِبُّ الْعَفْوَ فَاعْفُ عَنِّي

"O Allah, You are surely most forgiving and you like forgiving, so, forgive me." (Tirmidhi)

2) Abu Hurairah (radhiyAllaahu 'anhu) reported: The Prophet (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wasallam) said, "Whosoever performs Qiyam during Lailat-ul-Qadr (Night of Decree), with Faith and being hopeful of Allah's reward, will have his former sins forgiven."

[Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

## How to Gain Maximum Reward on Laylatul-Qadr

**Recite Quran abundantly**

Abdur Raziq said **“When Ramadan came, Sufyan ath- Thawree would give up all voluntary acts of worship and devote himself to reciting Quran”**

**Strive to gain forgiveness**

The prophet(SAW) said **“Whoever stands in prayer on Layla tul Qadr while nourishing ones faith with self evaluation ,expecting reward, will have ones previous sins forgiven”** (Bukhari and Muslim)

**Increase in dhikr**

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّكَ عَفُوٌّ تُحِبُّ الْعَفْوَ فَاعْفُ عَنِّي

**“O Allah! Verily You are most forgiving. You love to forgive, therefore forgive me”**

**Make much dua**

The prophet(saw) said **“ Nothing is more honourable to Allah then dua”**

**Give charity**

Any good act such as charity during Laylatul-Qadr is rewarded like you have done it for 83 years

(At- Tirmidhi)

**Show good character**

The prophet(SAW) said **“Nothing will be heavier on the day of judgement in the scale of the believers the good manners; Allah hates one who utters foul or course language”**

*Sameeah Sandford*

8A

# Good Character-A Key to Paradise

I want to start off by sharing a few simple basic things you learn in life. Saying please and thank you are one of the first social skills a child is taught. You may recall adults telling you that they were golden words. But, why do parents do this?

The virtues of good character are mentioned in various hadiths which points out good character that pleases Allah and his messenger. The Prophet ﷺ said: "The most beloved of Allah's servant to Allah are those with the best manner". (Al-Bukhari)

The Prophet ﷺ was a man with beautiful character. He was the best man that was created, yet he still thought that it wasn't enough. That just goes to show that if the best of all man found a fault, then we have more. We should aim to be like him and follow him in righteous deeds.

There are so many examples of good character e.g. picking up litter, replying to a salaam, helping the elderly, being kind to your neighbours, helping the less fortunate etc. You never know, perhaps having good character may save us from the fire.

## A story was narrated about good character- Don't Talk to Me About Muhammad

A long time ago there lived an old woman who was carrying a heavy load along the road. It was a bit difficult for her, but she was managing as best she could. A young man asked if he could help her with her load, and she readily obliged. Here is the conversation that transpired:

"It would be such a pleasure to have you come along with me. I accept your gracious offer of kindness and company," she said. She was a very talkative woman and the young man did not want to interrupt her. So he let her speak the entire time they were together.

"But as we walk along young man, and as you help me with my load, I have only one request as we travel down this road. Don't talk to me about Muhammad! Because of him there is no peace and I have trouble in my mind. So don't talk to me about Muhammad! And as we walk along together, we will get along just fine."

She continued: "That man upsets me so – so much more than you could know! I hear of his name and reputation everywhere I go. Though his family and his clan once knew him as an honest man, he's dividing everyone with his claim that God is one! He's misled all the weak, the poor, and the slaves. They think they've all found wealth and freedom by following his way! He's corrupted all the youth with his twisted band of truth. He's convinced them they are all strong and gave them somewhere to belong. So don't you dare talk to me about Muhammad!"

They reached their destination, and the man helped the woman put away her belongings. The old woman, with a wide smile of gratitude at the stranger's kindness, turned to him and said "Thank you now, young man. You've really been so kind. That generosity and smile is very rare to

find these days. Stay away from Muhammad, don't heed his word or emulate his way. If you do, you will never have true peace and all you will find is trouble."

As the young man turned to walk away, she stopped him. "Now before we part and go, if it's alright just the same, may I ask you dear young man, who are you? What's your name?"

He told her, and she stopped dead in her tracks.

"Forgive me, but what was that? Your words weren't very clear. My ears are getting old, and sometimes I have a hard time hearing. You know, it's rather funny, but I'm sure I must be wrong. Yet, I thought I heard you say that your name is Muhammad."

"I am Muhammad", the Prophet ﷺ told the woman. This conversation took place as the woman was planning to leave Mecca due to the spreading message of Islam, but after seeing the Prophet's beautiful character and generosity, she became Muslim right there on the spot.

With the beautiful example of our dear Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in front of us, we should be showing and teaching people what good character is.

If we live and act with good character we will benefit in numerous ways and our lives will also serve to be an invitation to the deen (religion) of Islam.

May Allah (SWT) make it possible for us to practice upon the beautiful teachings in the Noble Qur'an the perfect example of our Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Ameen

## Ramadan Conference

Ramadan is a very sacred month in the Islamic year for Muslims all around the world. It encourages people to increase their practice in good deeds and spreads the feeling of peace throughout the entire Ummah. Muslims may give more charity, pray extra salaah or help out others in their community. The promise of additional reward motivates people to spend more of their time in worship and wholesome actions which will aid them in the hereafter. The Prophet ﷺ said: "When the month of Ramadan starts, the gates of heaven are opened and the gates of hell are closed and the devils are chained." (Bukhari). In commemoration of the nearing of Ramadan, AAGS held a Ramadan conference.

The day was filled with interesting speeches and inspiring talks on the benefits and rewards we could receive throughout the month of Ramadan. Each talk had just been as impelling as the one before and inspired the audiences to pledge to themselves to carry out good-willed acts in Ramadan. There were also many other things happening throughout the conference; beautiful Quran recitations and lovely nasheeds were sang.

Overall, it was the most inspiring conference and many new things were learnt. Ramadan is starting this coming weekend so make sure you are on top of all the good practices we should be doing in this month. Try to finish reading the whole Quran or even try memorising some of it. Whatever good deed you will be putting into practice, don't forget that the reward will be multiplied many times. Abu Hurairah (R.A) reported that the prophet ﷺ said, "Every action a son of Adam does (in Ramadan) shall be multiplied– a good action by ten times its value, up to 700 times." So make sure to keep these good actions in your daily life, not just in Ramadan but when it is over too!

**Azra Ahmed - Year 9A**

## Maths Conference

On Friday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2014, students from Year 10 and 11 were invited to a Maths conference which was held for the purpose of preparing GCSE students for their exams. The conference consisted of a variety of presentations from teachers from other schools, a performance from a comedy duo called 'Scratch' and a speech by a former Edexcel examiner. At the conference, we were given a booklet which contained a number of Maths related questions which we had to complete. I found the conference quite helpful as it allowed my peers and I to have an idea on what to expect in the actual exam, we were shown exam questions from previous papers and how some students answered the questions. This made me aware on how to answer such questions and avoid any common mistakes.

My favourite part of the conference was the performance from the comedy duo, 'Scratch.' I liked that they engaged and interacted with the audience. They chose members of the audience to give them a selection of words which describes emotion; a setting and the relationship between two characters; and then they improvised and acted out a scene. I found this very entertaining and thought that they were very funny.

I would definitely recommend this to other students who are also preparing for exams as I personally found this to be very helpful; it gave me a brief understanding of what to expect in exams.

**Mohima Firdaus - Year 11A**

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### YEAR 8 ASSESSMENT EXPERIENCE.

Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> June 2014 -  
the day of our non-calculator  
Mathematics exam.

Nerves were high, with  
everyone's noses stuck in their  
exercise books for some last  
minute revision, trying to  
memorise methods, working  
outs, and formulae!

The moment Miss Kazi  
announced that we will begin  
soon, we were filled with stress  
and we could not bear to put our  
books down, in fear that we may  
forget all that we painstakingly  
practised over and memorised.

As soon as the hour of silent  
endurance was over, collectively  
we breathed a sigh of relief and  
hoped that we passed.

Alhamdulillah, once we received  
our results we were happy. We  
have set ourselves personal  
goals for improvements in  
future.

**Nadha Tahsin - Year 8A**

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## Year 8B's Assembly

Year 8B worked very hard on their assembly. We compiled a PowerPoint presentation and a script for a play. Our topic was 'How to Keep Safe with Technology'.

We chose one aspect of technology and we decided to talk about the safe use of mobile phones.

Our deadline was the 24<sup>th</sup> of June but out of excitement, we got ready weeks before! I took the role of creating the PowerPoint and monitoring the play.

Each student read a slide from the power point. In it we emphasised the advantages and the disadvantages of a smart phone and how to keep safe using a phone.

Throughout the weeks, we made a full attempt to make the play humorous; so it would not be boring to watch. We did a little comedy and the audience laughed once- not bad, right?

At the end, we hoped that the girls learnt that their phones are like a trust given to them by their parents, and so they should use it wisely. InshaAllaah in the future they will apply this to their lives!

**Shair Bano - Year 8B**

## Multi-Cultural Day

On Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> February 2014, the Modern Foreign Language Department at Azhar Academy Girls School held an ecstatic multi-cultural day that included a variety of activities and events from fantastic food stalls to a marvellous fashion show.

Firstly, the fashion show was memorable! The crowd was super supportive and cheered on the contestants. It was truly remarkable to see students encouraging their friends on the red carpet.

Secondly, during lunchtime, students sold their home-made cultural food. Each dish was an absolute delight which had a unique taste of its own. There were Indian curries, African couscous, Arabian hummus and many more

Last but not least was the nasheed show, which was amazing to watch! I was certainly surprised to see that Azhar has got many talented students. I absolutely enjoyed the harmonious voices echoing across the room. The enthusiasm of all the volunteers took me by surprise.

To conclude, the multi-cultural day was one of the unmissable, fun-packed and coolest events of 2014. The most important lesson of this day was appreciating all the different ethnicities in our society. I hope next year is as much fun!

**Zamila Ullah - Year 7B**

## English Workshop

On 17<sup>th</sup> June my class had a workshop with the author of "The Khadijah Academy Books".

Sufiya Ahmed explained to us about how she became an author and how she was inspired to be an author by books she had read when she was younger. Also, she spoke to us about her life before she was an author, explaining to us that her passion for reading when she was younger drove her to wanting to become an author.

She also spoke about her jobs before she became an author as well as perseverance and positive attitude towards the rejection letters she received regarding her books. In the last part of the session, she made us write the opening to our own book, giving us the scenario and layout. While doing this we also had to create our very own character for our book and a setting.

I enjoyed the workshop as I already have a strong passion for English and reading and I think this has made that become stronger. Meeting Sufiya was very inspirational and also made me want to start writing more often. Overall, it was a great experience.

**Aaliyah Natha - Year 7A**

## BBC Report Review

## BBC SCHOOL REPORT

During March 2014, a few of us participated in the BBC School Report. This gave us a chance to voice our opinions on a matter that was important to us. We had to research our chosen topic; arrange interviews; film them and then edit the clips to produce a proper report.

For our topic, we decided to select the changes to the curriculum that the government is proposing- the change to school timings and grade boundaries. We were careful not to impose our opinions of this matter on those that we were interviewing (although we strongly disagree to a longer school day).

We chose this topic because we felt it was a good point of discussion and would definitely initiate an interest and reaction from others.

Throughout this project, each one of us was assigned a different role and responsibility. This taught us how to be organised and how to prioritise. In addition, it helped us to meet deadlines and manage our time. It was a very educational and a beneficial experience and it has taught us a range of skills that we can hopefully use in the future. We really enjoyed this and are grateful to have been selected to take part in this project.

**Hannah & Zaynah - Year 9A**

## Controlled Assessment Challenge for Year 10-11

Tips to prepare for controlled assessments:

- Must be prepared- know the content
- Understand what is required of you
- If confused, then ask questions
- Always keep the questions and notes with you at all times
- Have notes ready- be smart and use bullet points for notes and do not overdo it
- Be careful of plagiarism as this could seriously damage your grade and disqualify you from the assessment; which will mean no results
- Always meet deadlines, as you never know when you might get the chance to get your work marked again
- Always proof read your work to avoid confusions
- Follow the correct instructions, keep to the title and do not go off point
- Plan your work; do not just cram in a huge amount of information on the day you are writing your controlled assessment, as this could mean you are not following guidelines and structure
- Above all else, remain calm and in control

**Ms F Begum - English Curriculum Leader**



### Year 8 Salters Trip

Four gifted and talented students from Year 8, Saba Athar, Sami Nawaz, Aishah Shahzad and Mahak Polani, were chosen to take part in the Salters Chemistry Challenge. It took place at Queen Mary and our students went head to head in a competition with participants from other schools. Besides being given a unique opportunity to use an excellently equipped university lab for this contest, the students were also very fortunate to get a tour of the university.

In this competition, the contenders had to use their experimental and team work skills to solve crime scene scenarios. Unknown chemicals and powders were provided and they had to identify them using a range of science techniques. Our girls performed extremely well, displaying fantastic team work and communication ability.

Although this was the first time that Azhar Academy Girls School took part in this challenge, we managed to secure 2<sup>nd</sup> place, MashaAllaah!

At the end of the competition, all students also got the chance to meet the Head of Biological and Chemical Sciences who awarded them with certificates and prizes. Well done to our wonderful winners!

## The House of Parliament

Year 10 visited the House of Parliament in preparation for their GCSE's. We visited Parliament a day too early because, 8<sup>th</sup> April was the first ever scheduled visit by the President of Ireland to UK Parliament. Aside from the good old green and red chairs inside the House of Parliament, it was indeed interesting to know that the entrance doors to the House of Commons were in fact donated by the President of Pakistan and the Bar of the House sent from Jamaica after the WW2 bombings damaged a great deal of the building. Apart from private doors and offices, we got an in-depth tour of both houses, and the furnishings. The 'woolsack', a chair in the House of Lords which was stuffed with wool symbolises a great contribution in Britain's trade. Altogether, our trip to the Parliament was indeed interesting and pleasant and we all passed the day a little more informed.

**Khansa Mahmood - Year 10A**

Year 10 students had the opportunity to visit The House of Parliament since we were studying the theme 'power, politics and the media' in Citizenship. We had a guided tour of the remarkable and historic building followed by lunch in the garden area outside. Our tour was fantastic, very informative and educational with light hearted moments. We were taken to every chamber- The House of Commons and The House of Lords which were beautifully decorated with royal portraits. It was so interesting to be at the place that is the centre of the government, which we see on the news all the time. Despite the hustle and bustle of the city, it was a brilliant day out!

**Zainab Master - Year 10A**



## A Trip to the Globe Theatre

In October 2013, Year 10 went on a trip to The Globe Theatre. It was a great experience, as we had been studying Macbeth- a play written by William Shakespeare in the Elizabethan era- for a while, and we finally got to see it performed in the very theatre in which 'The Bard' himself acted. We were all extremely excited as the tickets had been booked from the previous year and the tension had been building up.

The theatre is based near the River Thames. It was all wooden and built to resemble the appearance of the theatre in Shakespeare's time. I, for one, had immense fun watching actors (a few of whom were familiar faces from television programmes) bring Macbeth to life with their periodic costumes and acting skills.

Whilst we were seated in the left wing of the theatre, there was still a vast portion of the audience standing in what's called 'the pit'. The correspondence between the ambiance of the theatre today and what I've learned about in history made me feel like I was there, in the Elizabethan Era- the tiny details contributed- the wooden benches, the absence of electricity and modern music, the outfits of the staff right down to the open roof of the theatre. It was a very enjoyable trip that I learned a lot from and am glad I had the privilege of attending.

**Nusrath Tapadar -Year 10B**

## Year 9 Trip to V & A

On May 20<sup>th</sup>, Year 9 students visited the Victoria and Albert Museum

We were given worksheet to complete. The worksheet included questions about tessellations, Islamic art, geometry and symmetry. Each section of the worksheet had to be completed in different exhibitions throughout the museum.

The Islamic art exhibition was my favourite, as it related to both Math and Art. Completing the worksheet whilst visiting the museum helped us gain a better understanding of our subject.

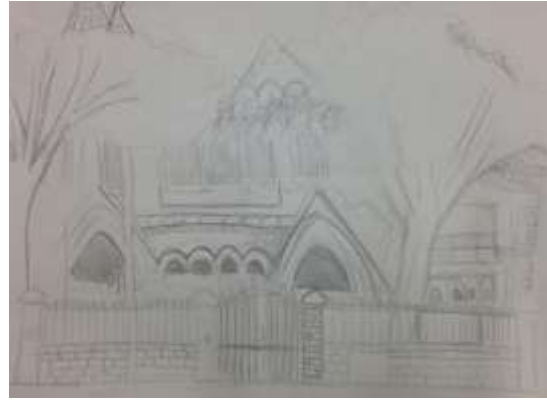
**Amarah Memi - Year 9B**

## Review of 'Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry'

In Year 9 English, we studied a variety of topics which taught and tested different skills. My favourite topic was on the novel 'Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry' by Mildred Taylor. The story is about how a young girl and her family battle their way through life with all the racism and injustice that they experience in America during the 1920s. From the start of the book, the theme of segregation is apparent. I found the book to be educational and the characters in the book are good role models as they stand up for what they believe in. The book shows how wrong racism is and should not be accepted. I loved it!

**Zahra Abrar - Year 9C**

## OBSERVATIONAL WORK – DRAWING OUTDOORS



In our art lesson with Ms. Mahmud, we practiced our observational drawing skills. We crossed the road to the old sixth form building and chose something from our surroundings to draw. It was fun, challenging and a great way to improve our drawing skills. We all liked the change of working outside and look forward to the next time! **Mahak Polani - Year 8B**

### What I Learnt in History

This year I have learnt many things I didn't know about. Although I found it hard to comprehend what half of the lessons were about, I had my classmates and most importantly my teacher to help me.

Some of the things I've learnt about this year are as follows:

- Suffragettes were members of women's right to vote in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Britain at war
- Weapons that was used during World War 1&2.
- How countries tried to avoid more wars
- Fascism and communism.

Along with all the writing work, we were also given a chance to create posters and do work which required discussions. This was beneficial for me as

I was able to express my point of view on interesting topics as well as hearing other opinions.

### My Likes

Personally, my favourite topic in History was the suffragettes. This topic was easy to understand and was very interesting. I was fascinated about the work of the suffragettes and suffragists and how they helped me and other women get the vote. Most of these were role models that risked their lives so that we could live in a democratic society.

Samia Tasnim - Year 9C

## Citizenship

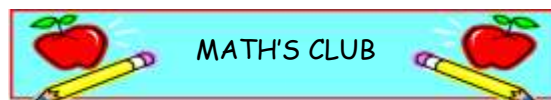
In Citizenship this year, we learnt many things including:

The rights of police

- Roles of mps and lords
- How to become a member of parliament
- The Monarchy
- How to solve global problems

My favourite topic in Citizenship this year was political parties for a number of reasons. Firstly it was interesting learning about parties that we can vote for and learning their motives and principles. I especially enjoyed giving my opinion on whether we should have a new voting system, FPTP or PR. The best part of it was when we had the fantastic opportunity of making our own political party and sharing our roles and rules with the class. It was amazingly awesome as some groups bribed each other with food and sweets, therefore making the competition more competitive. I extremely enjoyed Citizenship this year, as our teacher, Ms. Esmail, made the lesson interesting as she has many personal experiences and knows more or less everyone.

**Sumayyah Raza and Hira Tahir- Year 9B**



This year I attended Mathematics Club which was held on Mondays after school. In this club, I was able to ask the teacher whatever I would like to know about Maths; the topics I was finding difficulty with; and the homework I needed help with.

Maths club is open to all year groups, and I found it very beneficial especially as I was struggling with the start of year 10, KS4 work.

Alhamdulillah, it helped me gain a better understanding in the topics I found difficult, and I felt at ease in the club, as there were not many students so i was given more one to one help.

I would recommend after school clubs to any student who might struggle with her maths work.

**Faizah Ullah - Year 10B**

## AAGS Art Exhibition 2014

Every year our diligent, creative and inspirational Art GCSE girls host an exhibition displaying their work. It is a real treat and a wonderful experience, as they all work very hard in order to produce such amazing artwork. This year was no disappointment; all of the pieces were unique and intriguing; each fit to go on display in a museum or art gallery.

There was a large range of art, from hats to display pieces to decorative items. The colours were mostly purples, blues and greens, but in many different shades, and there was a large variety of media used, including felt, pebbles, paint, cardboard, pastels, etc. The hats had very rare designs, with huge flowers or entire cities on them! The display pieces were very interesting, as were the hanging ornaments. Each model was accompanied by a scrapbook, wherein the artist had arranged their research and ideas, helping us to understand the work and its meaning.



One piece which particularly caught my eye was a collage of an underwater scene. The artist had painted a soft background and stuck on fish and coral, using special stones and rolled-up fabric. It was simple yet beautiful, and was only one of the brilliant pieces there.

I believe I speak for the whole school when I say that we really enjoyed the exhibition, and look forward to seeing more fabulous artwork in the future, and creating our own in years to come.

**Sabah Athar – Year 8A**

## Speak Out Challenge

During the latter part of our third year in Azhar Academy, Year 9 pupils were challenged by their English teacher, Ms F. Begum, to present a speech on a topic of their choice in poem form. Students were given a month to prepare.

The weeks prior to the designated deadline, Yr 9 pupils were studying poetry written by famous poets such as Seamus Heaney. Students took inspiration from the poems they had studied and began to compose their own. A variety of topics were covered, ranging from food to family, storybooks to selfies. All students stood passionate about their topic, causing roars of laughter and dry eyes to become moist.

We watched speak out challenges on You Tube from the Jack Petchey's show, which is a well known competition amongst secondary school pupils; we found this very inspiring.

In general, the speak-out challenge was a "challenge" in more ways than one. Pupils were not only challenging others, or being challenged by others, but were challenging themselves. We were also rewarded with merits for performance and ability.

Amarah Memi Year 9B

LEARNING'S HOW  
LEARNING'S HOW  
LEARNING'S HOW  
LEARNING'S HOW  
LEARNING'S HOW

### *7 Helpful Hints to Get off to a Good Start for Next Year!*

1. Start the year off with a clear head, have a positive attitude and be ready to learn!
2. Purchase all your mathematical equipment over the holidays, like your scientific calculator, maths set, pencil, and highlighters.
3. Go over what you have learnt in the previous year; you will need to know your basic first!
4. Make notes in every maths lesson; be sure to use your highlighters for important information/ keep a separate MATHS RULES BOOK.
5. Ask your teacher if you need any help. Don't be shy!
6. Try and go over what you've learnt after every maths lesson; if not, then be sure to do it at the end of the week.
7. Have fun and enjoy yourself in lessons. This will help you learn and remember everything. Positive minds lead a positive life!

## **My Time at Azhar So Far**

Even though I have been here for a year now, it feels as though I started at AAGS only yesterday. I have had much fun attending this school and love certain things; one of them is that I am in an Islamic environment. We are all sisters in Islam and that makes me comfortable as we are all one big family. Also, the school offers a chance to make each individual a better Muslim by adding an Islamic curriculum where the students get to have the chance to become an Aalimah, Haafizah and also have general Islamic knowledge besides receiving academic knowledge.

My favourite subjects are Art, RE and English. All the teachers are always very supportive and understanding.

My friends whom I like to call them sisters are always there for me when I need them. They are all very trustworthy, honest and humorous. They also help me gain reward and keep me away from sins.

Another thing I love is going on school trips together as a whole class. The choice of trips are very good. My favourite trip so far was the end of year trip as we were always united in whatever we did, such as having a picnic, bowling, splashing and playing on the water fountains together. It was extremely fun!

I am very happy to be part of this school.

**Dhiyaa Ahmed - Year 7A**

## **Poem**

From primary to secondary, things started to change,  
Once I came here a new life started again,  
Azhar is a new life, a new purpose, a new dream.

In primary it was a game,  
In secondary it was pain.  
The beginning was dark and lonely,  
And the future inshallah will be bright and cosy.  
Azhar is a new life, a new purpose, a new dream.

As time goes by,  
My aim is to reach high.  
I persevere and keep on trying,  
I never give up and keep on going.  
Azhar is a new life, a new purpose and a new dream.

Now I'm here, I don't want to go,  
I'm going to hold on tight and never let go.  
This is the path which is right for me,  
A path which can only be opened by a key.  
This key is a key which will lead me to paradise,  
The future ahead of me is clear and bright.  
These are the words which I always say,  
Azhar is a new life, new purpose, a new dream for me.

**Fatimah Ilyas Patel - Year 7B**

## **The way to Azhar**

Struggling through a strange crowd,  
trying to find my way.  
Anxiety rang a bell aloud,  
but confidence led the feeling astray.

Glancing at these familiar faces,  
eyes filled with kindness;  
reminding me of the bright stars illuminating the  
darkness.  
That is when I realised that this would be my fate

Strangers blossomed into companions  
And teachers became friends.  
The school grew into a family  
united by our deen.

Forty weeks flew by  
And I had the most memorable times.  
I appreciate my achievements through and  
through  
And the joy still chimes.

Eager for the next year  
And hoping for joy and cheer.  
I look forward to becoming year 8  
And achieving things far more great!

**Maimoonah Wadiwala – Year 7B**

## Azhar Academy

A place you can come to, to build your dreams  
Zapping up Muslimahs from everywhere  
Home is what our school is  
Aalimah – to become one is my dream  
Really fast is what our year 7 has been.

Azhar Academy is  
Caring  
As well as secure  
Dreams in here can be achieved  
Everybody  
Makes an effort and for  
Year 8, I can't wait!

### To Be Or Not To Be

To be, or not to be,  
A good Muslim, is the question,  
With an answer so simple,  
Yet rarely ever mentioned,  
"What's in a good Muslim?"  
One may ask,  
"One who just completes  
His obligatory tasks?"  
Or the one who is sincere,  
And longs for reward,  
When he sins,  
He repents to his Almighty Lord,

Oh People, be patient, be thankful,  
Respect all of mankind,  
Be compassionate to the orphans,  
The widows and the blind,  
Each day could be your last,  
So make the most of its worth,  
Remember the Powerful One who  
Gave you life on this Earth,  
Oh you who believe,  
Take heed of this advice,  
Let your lifetime aim be  
Towards PARADISE.

**Habibah Khanom & Zainab Haque 9B**

## End of Year Trip

Each class had the opportunity to visit a place of their choice whether it is bowling, eating out, or visiting a park. The ideas ranged; however, 9A and 9B settled on visiting Valentines Park.

We had a brilliant time on the climbing frames, knowing what it feels like to be kids again. The opportunity of having an open space gave us freedom to an extent, but we had to remain in teachers' view. The teachers did their thing whilst we played in the blazing sun. We visited the food

place outside the play area, bought food and ice cream.

The trip was pretty amazing; we were even complimented by the workers, who said we were "very polite girls." We were drained out by the time we reached school.

Overall we enjoyed the trip and that's what mattered most.

**Nusaybah Molvi – Year 9 A**



## Our London Adventure

On Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> June, 8A had their end of year trip with their form tutor, Apa Asma. On the day, the whole class was buzzing with excitement. Nobody could sit still. For the trip, we were going on the cable cars, a River Thames boat ride and to a restaurant for a three course meal buffet. Year 8A and Year 10B were to go together but nobody minded. Once the register had been taken, we all got into pairs.

After getting on the bus, we headed towards the train station to go on the cable cars. Once we got there, we split into groups. In my group there were Oyin, Shahnaz, Sumayya, Asma, Mariam C, Apa Asma and Anisa. The view was phenomenal! The higher we got, the more we could see. When we were travelling over the Thames, all we could see was murky brown water - not a pretty sight. As we neared the first pole, we rose extremely high and kept on going higher until we reached the second pole which marked the highest point that could be reached. Thereafter, we steadily descended and began entering another cable car station.

After getting out, the excitement seemed to relight and soon everyone wanted to go on the ride again but we couldn't. We soon went to the bench to have a light snack. We then headed to the boat.

As we entered the triple deck ferry, everyone ran up the steps and took a seat on the top deck. The boat had no windows but a roof which had poles attaching it to the sides. Down the steps was a smaller open area, with yet more sets of stairs. There was an entrance to a seating area. There were windows and comfortable cushion sofa seats around the sides by the tables.

Again on the boat, we played and had some snacks and drinks. Everyone enjoyed it. The journey lasted an hour and when it ended, we were all upset. Nevertheless, there was still the restaurant.

Entering the restaurant brought excitement as the class walked up the stairs that seemed to be discreetly tucked out of sight.

As we entered the large dining hall, everyone rushed towards the seats. After a couple of minutes, we had all chosen seats and were waiting eagerly to eat. The food was laid out by the restaurant staff and there was a race towards it.

Half of the food had disappeared and was replaced by a murmur of delight, as each pupil tucked in to the food. The food was delicious. The food was replaced with more and desserts had also arrived but the girls were still having more of the main

course. The dessert consisted of a lot of cakes and puddings.

As everyone started to get ready to leave, the manager came and with so much enthusiasm and asked if anyone would like to take some food home. Again, there was a long line for food and cakes. The class left the restaurant with heavily loaded bags!

This had been the best trip ever!

Anisa Rashid 8A

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On Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> June, Year 8A, along with Year 10B, went on our end-of-year trip. It was a very enjoyable experience, and we all agree that the trip was one of the best this year.

It was nice to take a break from our regular studies to make the most of the warm weather before Ramadan. The outing began at 9 am, when we all left school, taking the bus and tube to the Emirates Cable Cars. We all crowded into the pods and watched the beautiful view below us as the cars gained height. It was a breathtaking sight of the Thames and a residential area of London. We had a real laugh trying to scare one of our friends - she could barely open her eyes!

After the cable cars, we made our way to the boat trip. We saw a magnificent police horse, which many of us petted. The boat trip was amazing. We had the entire boat to ourselves, and 8A filled up the top deck whilst 10B took the middle one. We leaned over the edge of the railing and the crisp cold air blew our scarves everywhere! When it got too chilly, we went down to the lower deck and sat on the seats which the sun had warmed up for us. The hour on the boat passed by very quickly.

Our last stop was the Qasida Turkish Restaurant, in Whitechapel. The food was delicious and we all loved it. We made lots of jokes as we ate and relaxed, for we had a long bus journey ahead of us!

Tired, we returned to school, eager to get home and rest after our entertaining but lengthy day.

We all appreciated the trip and are thankful to our form tutors, Apa Asma and Miss Iqbal, and of course our Headteacher, Mrs Adams for organising it for us. We all look forward to next year's trip and are wondering what it will be.

**Sabah Athar – Year 8A**

## The Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park

You could argue that a group of 16 year olds are too old to have a picnic-I beg to differ. A day in the warm British sunshine, in a park we are normally too busy to visit and of course, surrounded by FOOD- what could be better?

On Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> June, Year 11 Art students visited the Olympic Park for the day. You'd think it'd just be a park with swings and slides but there was in fact, a lot more to see.

As we headed in, we walked on the path to the Olympic stadium - the stadium which held the opening and closing ceremony, along with the athletic events. Throughout the day, we saw many more infamous stadiums including the aquatics centre and also the velodrome.

The Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park isn't like any ordinary park. Packed with stadiums, walk paths, lakes and memories of 2012, it bears the symbolism the country hoped to instil two years ago when the Olympics came to London. It symbolises hope and a revival of sport. It symbolises the importance of sport within this country and hope of a new generation of successful sporting stars.

The picnic was amazing- probably the best I've had. We all brought in our own dishes. Pasta, wraps, cookies, rolls, pastries, tacos and cake.

After the meal, we all took a walk around the park. Being so vast, it took a long time. Eventually we reached the play area. They say 'never lose your childish enthusiasm' and it was true, because in that moment, we all became kids again- waiting for the swings, playing in the sand and shoving each other down the slide.

My favourite part of the park was by far, the water fountains. There was more than a double dozen, each carrying a different rhythm. At times, the water merely spilled out the holes on the floor, though the pressure almost instantly developed into a jet wash, soaking us all from head to toe. It was perfect for a hot summer's day, with tons of babies sliding around in nothing other than swim suits and even a few elderly enjoying a soak.

We finished off the day with a fresh cream cake and a long walk back to the station, realising that it could be the last time some of us saw each other, knowing that this was officially our last trip with Azhar.

**Khadija Kothia – Year 11B**

# Farewell letter from the Head Girl

The end of an era

The last chapter of a book

The seal on an envelope

That's how most of us would describe our leaving Azhar Academy Girls School.

It's incredible to think that it has already been five years since we set foot through those black doors, with our blue hijabs and massive rucksacks. Five years since the remarkable journey began- half a decade, SubuhanaAllah! But those five years was what it took for us to appreciate the amazing opportunities offered by AAGS; for us to understand the value of both the teachers and students of this school; and for us to become the Muslimahs we are today. For this reason we cannot express how thankful we are to such an institute that educates us in all aspects of our life, for Islam is our way of life, and AAGS has never let us think otherwise. We've learnt about the importance of good character, determination, courage and love throughout our stay here alongside the significance of sisterhood and making bonds that will remain strong forever. And these things can never be repaid.

Throughout our time here there have been ups, downs, tears and plenty of laughter which have shaped the memories that we will never cease to cherish. The past five years have been a never-ending roller-coaster but as we reach its destination, we realise that we can either scream or enjoy the ride. We chose the latter. You see, we believe that AAGS can be whatever you want it to be- just another school or a place to get your GCSES, or even a safe haven of your own. Therefore, after working hard, making the right friends and creating unforgettable memories here, I dedicate this message to AAGS, for not only being a shelter for education but for being a home that we will forever cherish.

On behalf of all of the year 11 students, I would like to seek forgiveness from all of you, if we have ever intentionally or unintentionally hurt you, if we have ever been a bad influence on you or if we have ever disappointed you. We do not want you to remember us for these reasons and so we are sincerely asking that you do forgive us.

*Amina Sheik*  
*Head Girl*

