



THE ART OF KNOWING

LESSON ONE

INTRODUCTION TO HAYY IBN YAQZAN

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www.ArtOfKnowingCurriculum.com



OBJECTIVES

- ◇ To reflect on relationships with and among animals and the natural world and the concept of habitat.
- ◇ To analyze the story of Hayy and reflect on different ways of knowing that Hayy used to learn and engage with his habitat.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- ◇ Paper and drawing/writing materials for reflection
- ◇ Giant Post-It Pads and Pictures for gallery walk
- ◇ Post-it Notes (3 different colors)

LESSON OVERVIEW

- ◇ Lead in: Habitat Gallery Walk
- ◇ First reading of Hayy
- ◇ Reflection: Connecting the Lessons
- ◇ Story Summary

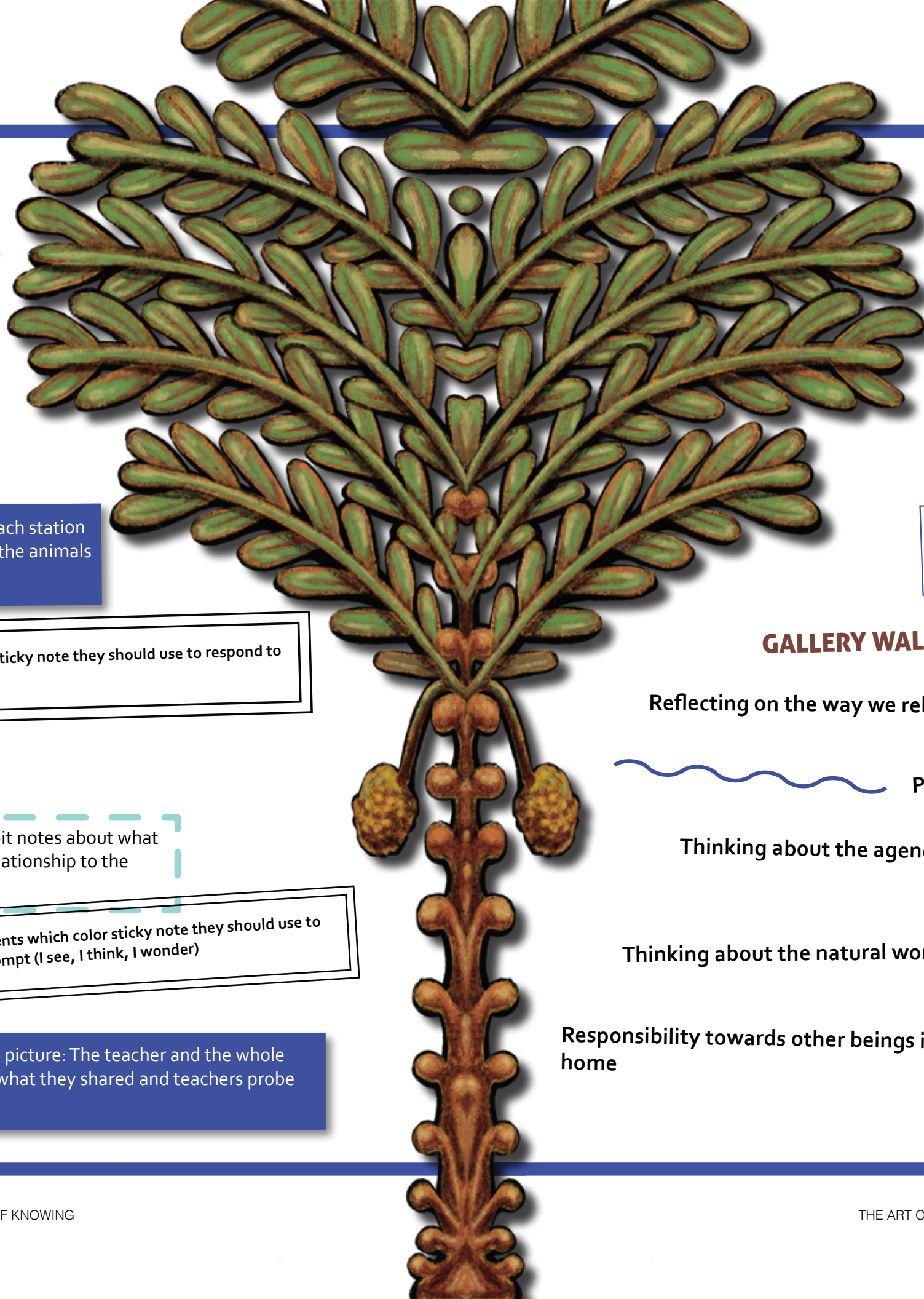
LEAD IN: HABITAT GALLERY WALK

SET UP

**This activity is meant to help students begin to reflect on how they feel about, and relate to, the natural world before engaging with the story of how Hayy does so.*

Adhere each image to a sheet of Giant Post it Paper and place them around the room in a way that makes sense for your space. Place three packs of sticky notes of three different colors on a desk or table accessible to students. Assign one color sticky note to "I see," "I think," and "I wonder."





ACTIVITY INTRODUCTION

We are going to do an activity called a gallery walk. There are five stations in the room. You will visit each one twice and take a few minutes to think about what you see, think, and wonder.

FIRST ROUND INSTRUCTIONS

For the first round, you will leave a post-it at each station about what you see, think, and wonder about the animals in the habitat and their relationship to it.

Explain to the students which color sticky note they should use to respond to each prompt (I see, I think, I wonder)

SECOND ROUND INSTRUCTIONS

For the second round, you will leave post-it notes about what you see, think, and wonder about your relationship to the animals and habitat.

Explain to the students which color sticky note they should use to respond to each prompt (I see, I think, I wonder)

Students share their notes on each picture: The teacher and the whole class visit each station and review what they shared and teachers probe for deeper conversation.

TRANSITION TO THE STORY OF HAYY

Now we will read a story about someone who grew up with animals on an island.

GALLERY WALK IN RELATION TO THE STORY

Reflecting on the way we relate to others in the world

Personification of nature

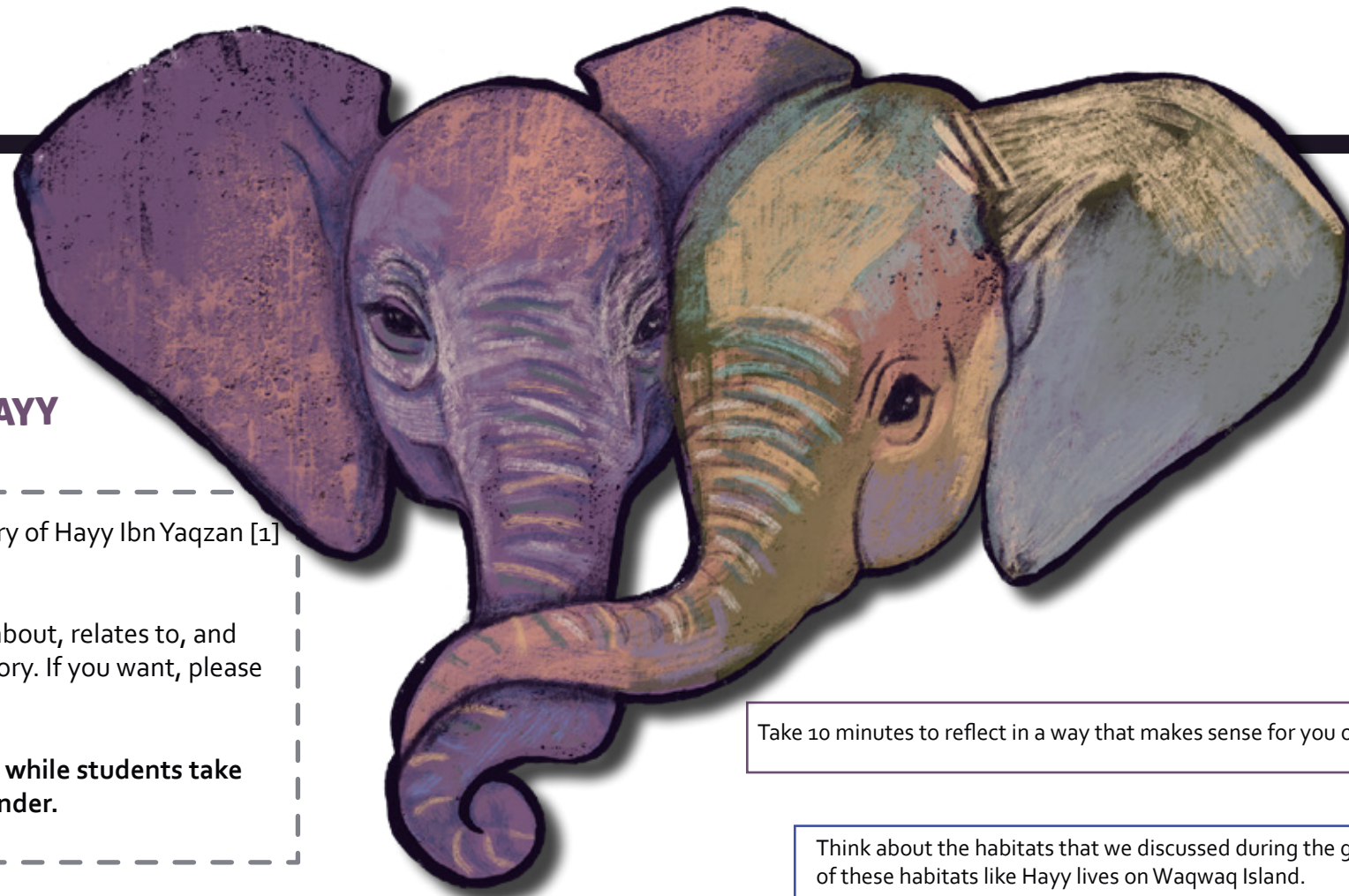
Thinking about the agency of different beings around us

Thinking about the natural world as an open book of knowledge

Responsibility towards other beings in the world as one family sharing a home

GALLERY WALK PHOTO EXAMPLE





FIRST READING OF HAYY

INTRODUCING THE STORY OF HAYY

We are going to read the first part of the story of Hayy Ibn Yaqzan [1] who grew up on an island with only animals.

I want you to pay attention to how he feels about, relates to, and learns from the animals and nature in this story. If you want, please make notes as I tell the story.

Teacher tells the story with illustration aid while students take note of what they hear/see, think, and wonder.

EXAMPLE Q'S

ASK COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

How does Hayy communicate with his mother and other animals around him?

How does Hayy learn to eat?

To walk?

Who is his teacher?

What happens when his deer mother dies?

How does he feel?

What does he do?

What does he learn?

What does Hayy do when he sees fire for the first time?

How does Hayy learn to make animals help him?

How does he convince the horse to let him ride on his back?

How does Hayy relate to his habitat?

Does this relationship change throughout the story? How?

REFLECTION

CONNECTING THE LESSONS

INTRODUCE ACTIVITY

Take 10 minutes to reflect in a way that makes sense for you on the following. You can journal, draw, or both.

Think about the habitats that we discussed during the gallery walk, now imagine that you are living in one of these habitats like Hayy lives on Waqwaq Island.

How does this change the way you think about your relationship with the animals or habitat from the gallery walk?

How does this change how you think about the animals' relationship with their habitat?

LEAD IN TO THE NEXT LESSON

In the story, Hayy comes to realize that life is more than just the physical, think about what that means to you and draw something that represents the more than physical.

[1] Ibn Tufayl, Abū Bakr, and Lenn Evan Goodman. Hayy Ibn Yaqzan: A Philosophical Tale. University of Chicago Press, 2009

INTRODUCTION

THE STORY OF HAYY IBN YAQZAN

[ALIVE, SON OF AWAKE]

INTRODUCTION

Hayy ibn Yaqzān” by Abu Bakr Ibn Tufayl, a 12th-century Andalusian scholar, is an Arabic tale about a boy who grows up in isolation on a remote island and learns about the world through nature as he grows to develop a sense of responsibility and duty toward the natural world. The story, grounded in Islamic perspectives of nature as a reflection of divine beauty, presents two origins for Hayy: a spontaneous biological generation and a royal infant castaway for his own protection. Ibn Tufayl, a master of philosophy and medicine, draws from the wild child motif found in stories like Romulus and Remus, and as mentioned in the earlier talk, his story grows out of earlier narratives of Hayy ibn Yaqzan.

So onto the story...

Many people ask how Hayy ended up on the remote, equatorial island, that few can find. Some say that Hayy emerged spontaneously on the island of Waqwaq, where the unique climate and soil conditions are said to allow people to form naturally from the earth’s mud, from its soil. Others say he was a child of a princess whose brother, the king, was determined to kill him so that he would not inherit his throne. To save his life, Hayy’s mother cast him to the sea and the baby ended up on the shore of Waqwaq Island. Hayy spends the first 50 years of his life on Waqwaq Island, without any human contact.

No matter Hayy’s origin, Hayy was take care of by an “adoptive” Gazelle mother and lived among her herd. He learned what and how to eat, how to communicate from his mother gazelle, from the herd, and from living among other animals. He noticed that some animals had feathers, fur, or wool to keep them warm, while he shivered in the cold, and his skin burned in the heat. Hayy learned he could use leaves and animal skins to protect his body. Being in the natural world, animals attack each other and often have to defend themselves. Hayy saw that that animals (and even many plants) had natural defenses like horns, claws, and thorns. Hayy had his hands and legs, but utilizing what he found on Waqwaq, he began crafting tools to protect himself.

By the time he was seven years old, he began to find his way among his flock of gazelle on Waqwaq. But, Hayy’s gazelle mother was growing older and weaker. The seven-year-old Hayy took care of her, learning about love and responsibility. By watching and imitating the animals, Hayy learned to communicate, protect himself, and care for others. He cared for his mother gazelle as she grew weaker by bringing her food and water.

One day his mother was no longer moving. He tried to wake her, but she would not wake up. Hayy became increasingly worried about her and began examining her body. Nothing he could do would wake her or bring her back to life. Hayy looked for ways to fix her, to find what was wrong, but he found that nothing he tried would bring her back. Realizing his limitations, he came to understand that something important that he couldn't see or touch, had left his mother's body. He accepted her death and he buried her. Losing his Gazelle mother made Hayy curious about the essence of life in all living animals.

In the coming years, Hayy's fascination with life and death continued and he would often examine animals to learn about their bodies—he pondered how they moved, what gave them strength, and life. He learned to engage his natural environment, using animals for transportation and food and he learned how to create shelter for warmth, safety, and storage. He discovered how to make and use fire for light and cooking. Hayy started to understand the difference between animate and inanimate life. He began to categorize everything he saw in the world: animals, plants, and other things. He realized they were all made of physical matter. Reflecting back on his Gazelle mother's death, he realized life was more than just the physical.

By the time Hayy was 28, he realized that everything around him, the earth, plants, animals, even the stars and skies were constantly changing, growing, and decaying - nothing stayed the same forever. He continued to spend his days carefully observing the world and beings around him. As he reflected on this, he realized that everything that exists must have an origin. He thought everything must come from somewhere or some place—that there must be a universal origin for everything he has seen on this planet and in the heavens.

So, Hayy began to look upward, and to think deeply about the sun, the moon, and the stars, especially about how they moved. He also began to wonder about his place in the world and how he should live his life as a part of the ecosystem of the planet. As he considered these things, he came to the conclusion that there were three types of actions he should take.

First, there were bodily actions that made him like animals and other earthly beings because, like them, he had a body. Second, there were actions that would make him like the stars, because he had a spirit or soul. Finally, there were actions that would bring him closer to the Divine because he wanted, deeply, to understand and connect with his Creator.

From then on, Hayy decided to live his life based on these three principles. He would care for his body like the animals, nurture his spirit like the stars, and most importantly, strive to know and resemble the Divine. For Hayy, the greatest happiness came from learning about the Divine and doing everything he could to live in a way that reflected this. Hayy transitioned from being a possessor and master of the environment to having a relationship of responsibility for the environment which he was a part of.

If he noticed a plant cut off from the sun, he would remove what was screening it. If he saw one plant tangled in another that might harm it, he would separate the two carefully so that neither would be damaged. If he saw a plant dying for lack of water, he would water it. When he saw an animal attacked by a predator, caught in a tangle, stuck by a thorn, or thirsty, Hayy did all he could to help the living being.

But, for Hayy's life to endure, he needed sustenance. Yet, as his spiritual insight deepened, his relationship with eating transformed. With a heart attuned to the natural world as a reflection of the unity of the universe, the simple act of feeding himself became a moral question. To consume another living being, he realized, would interrupt its path toward fulfillment, denying it the chance to achieve its destined purpose. Hayy felt this would be a violation of Divine harmony. So, he resolved to take only what was necessary to sustain his body.

His every choice was an act of reverence, a way to live in harmony, to dance with the natural world and tread lightly upon the earth.

For additional lesson plans and more information please visit www.artofknowingcurriculum.com

WHAT IS THE ART OF KNOWING?

The Art of Knowing Curriculum is designed as a supplement to elementary science education. It intentionally places Muslim Ways of Knowing at the center of science learning. It is designed to engage students in exploring “how we come to know” by asking questions about when, where, and why we use various ways of knowing through stories, art, and discussion. We offer suggestions for how to incorporate the curriculum as a once-weekly class, but the curriculum and other resources can be taken up in a variety of ways that suit the needs of your community.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE?

We developed a curriculum that bridges science pedagogy and Muslim Ways of Knowing.

Through this research and teaching project, we explore the possibilities of teaching science through a non-western perspective and creating a space for young people to imagine possible futures through thinking not only about what is taught, but also about the teaching practices, activities, and artifacts in the classroom. Through engaging with art and storywork, we produced a curriculum that draws from classical Muslim systems of knowledge. We engage pre-colonial literature from the Muslim world to explore how young people come to know and how they relate to, and act on, what they know.

Our larger research project aims to open the space for interdisciplinary scholarship that focuses on inclusive STEAM education; offer non-Eurocentric approaches to science education; and, appreciate multiple, and culturally-situated, ways of understanding science.

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ART DIRECTION & ILLUSTRATION

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