The religion of Islam was revealed in the seventh century A.D. among the Arab peoples living on the Arabian peninsula. It was spread by the man called the Prophet Muhammad. He began preaching some time after 610.

Muhammad taught that there was only one God, called Allah in the Arabic language. At first, his message was not widely welcomed. He was forced to flee his home in the city of Mecca. Muhammad settled in Medina to the north. Soon, he had many thousands of followers, called Muslims. Imagine you are there as Muhammad spreads Islam across Arabia. (See map on page 81.)
Ayesha is 13 years old. Her brother, Yazid, is 12. They are part of a Muslim family that lives in the city of Medina in Arabia. It is the year 632. Their parents have told them that the Prophet Muhammad is planning to make a journey, which he calls the hajj, to the holy city of Mecca. Their parents explain that the hajj will be a way for people who share Muhammad’s religion to demonstrate their faith in God. Their family will follow Muhammad to Mecca and participate in the hajj.

The day of the hajj has finally come. As Ayesha and Yazid set out on the family’s camels, they are amazed to see so many other people. Their parents say that nearly 100,000 have gathered for the journey. Others also join the caravan along the way. The journey to Mecca is a difficult one. For nine days, the family faces many hardships in the grueling desert heat.

Finally, they reach Mecca. There, Ayesha and Yazid join the other pilgrims in prayers and rituals. After spending time in Mecca, everyone travels to Arafat. At Arafat, the people listen to Muhammad give a sermon from atop a mountain. That afternoon, Ayesha and Yazid stand with their parents for hours, praying in the blistering sun. But that memory soon fades when the sister and brother learn that they will spend the evening camping in the desert under the stars. After more prayers and rituals, everyone eventually returns to Mecca.

Many days after the journey began, the family is on the way back to Medina. Ayesha tells Yazid that the trip has been very hard, but it was also satisfying. They agree with their parents that being near Muhammad was especially meaningful. And they are deeply saddened when, just two months later, they hear that the Prophet has died. They wonder what will happen to their religion now.

What do you think will happen to the Muslim community after the death of Muhammad?

1. READING: Plot The plot is a sequence of events in the story. Usually, each event is caused by an event that came before it. With a partner, identify the various events that make up the plot of this story.

2. WRITING: Response to Literature Write a paragraph describing what Muslims might do following the death of their leader, the Prophet Muhammad.

CALIFORNIA STANDARDS Writing 2.2
Write responses to literature.