



La-Net

ARA 203

**TEXTS FROM
PRE-ISLAMIC AND
EARLY ISLAMIC
LITERATURE**



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Course code: ARA 203

Course title: Texts from Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Literature

Course credit load: 2 Units

Series 1: Poetry in Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Literature

Part 1.1 Historical background of pre-Islamic poetry

- 1.1.1 Social and cultural context of pre-Islamic Arabia
- 1.1.2 Functions of poetry in tribal life
- 1.1.3 Oral tradition and preservation of poetry

Part 1.2 Themes and styles of pre-Islamic poetry

- 1.2.1 Major themes: heroism, tribal pride, desert life, love
- 1.2.2 Stylistic features: imagery, rhythm, and structure
- 1.2.3 Language and rhetorical devices

Part 1.3 The Mu‘allaqāt and other famous poems

- 1.3.1 Introduction to the Mu‘allaqāt (Suspended Odes)
- 1.3.2 Analysis of one selected Mu‘allaqa poem
- 1.3.3 Other notable pre-Islamic poets and their works

Part 1.4 Poetry in the early Islamic era

- 1.4.1 Transition from pre-Islamic to Islamic poetry
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- 1.4.3 Analysis of one selected Islamic-era poem



Introduction

Poetry has always been a mirror of society, reflecting the values, struggles, and aspirations of its people. In pre-Islamic Arabia, poetry was not merely a form of artistic expression, it was the living record of tribal history, honour, and identity. With the coming of Islam, poetry continued to flourish, but its themes and purposes shifted to align with new religious and moral ideals. This Series introduces you to the richness of Arabic poetry across these two pivotal eras, helping you appreciate its role in shaping both literature and language.

The aim of this Series is to equip you with the ability to analyse selected pre-Islamic and early Islamic poems, to identify their themes and stylistic features, and to evaluate their contribution to the development of Arabic literature and culture.

We shall commence this Series by exploring the historical background of pre-Islamic poetry, focusing on its social and cultural context. Next, we will examine the themes and styles that characterised this poetry, including tribal pride, desert life, and love. Following that, we will study the Mu‘allaqāt and other famous poems, with close analysis of one selected ode. Finally, we will conclude by considering poetry in the early Islamic era, highlighting its transition in purpose and examining one representative poem from this period.

Series Learning Outcomes

Series 1: Poetry in Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Literature

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 1.1** describe the historical background of pre-Islamic poetry, including its social and cultural context.
- **SLO 1.2** explain the major themes and stylistic features of pre-Islamic poetry, such as tribal pride, desert life, and love.
- **SLO 1.3** analyse the Mu‘allaqāt and other famous pre-Islamic poems, demonstrating close reading of one selected ode.



- **SLO 1.4** evaluate the transition into early Islamic poetry, identifying its new themes of religious devotion, moral instruction, and social change through the study of one representative poem.

1.1 Historical Background of Pre-Islamic Poetry

Pre-Islamic poetry forms the earliest and most authentic record of Arab life before the rise of Islam. It reflects the values, struggles, and aspirations of the tribes, serving as both an artistic expression and a historical archive. This Part introduces you to the social and cultural environment in which poetry flourished, the functions it performed in tribal life, and the oral traditions that ensured its preservation. By understanding this background, you will be better prepared to appreciate the themes and styles that follow in later Parts.

1.1.1 Social and cultural context of pre-Islamic Arabia

Pre-Islamic poetry, known as **Jāhili poetry**, refers to verse composed in Arabia before the 7th century CE. The term **Jāhili** means “ignorant”, but in literary studies it designates the pre-Islamic era. Poetry was the most significant cultural product of the Arabs, celebrated in marketplaces such as **Sūq ‘Ukāz**, and memorised by tribesmen. It was regarded as the highest form of eloquence, shaping identity and preserving collective memory.

Fill in the blank: Pre-Islamic poetry is often referred to as _____ poetry.





Figure 1.1 Poetry as a cultural record in pre-Islamic Arabia

1.1.2 Functions of poetry in tribal life

Poetry functioned as the **dīwān al-‘Arab**, meaning “the register of the Arabs”. It was the medium through which tribes expressed pride, recorded victories, mourned losses, and celebrated heroes. The poet, or **shā‘ir**, held a prestigious position as the voice of the tribe. His verses could inspire warriors, defend honour, or satirise enemies. Poetry also preserved genealogies and tribal histories, making it both an artistic and historical record.

Fill in the blank: The poet in pre-Islamic Arabia was called the _____.

<i>Function</i>	<i>Role in Tribal Life</i>	<i>Example / Explanation</i>
<i>Preservation of History</i>	<i>Recorded tribal lineage, battles, and migrations.</i>	<i>Poetry acted as the “archive of the Arabs,” safeguarding collective memory.</i>



<i>Expression of Honor & Pride</i>	<i>Celebrated bravery, generosity, and noble deeds.</i>	<i>Poets praised warriors and chiefs to elevate tribal prestige.</i>
<i>Satire & Defamation</i>	<i>Used to mock enemies and diminish rival tribes.</i>	<i>A sharp poem could damage a tribe's reputation more than weapons.</i>
<i>Diplomacy & Mediation</i>	<i>Helped resolve disputes or praise alliances.</i>	<i>Poets acted as spokesmen, using verse to negotiate peace or loyalty.</i>
<i>Entertainment & Aesthetic Value</i>	<i>Recited at gatherings, markets, and festivals.</i>	<i>Poetry was performed publicly, showcasing linguistic mastery.</i>
<i>Spiritual & Emotional Expression</i>	<i>Conveyed love, longing, grief, and existential reflection.</i>	<i>Themes of desert life, fate, and mortality were common.</i>
<i>Social Cohesion</i>	<i>Unified the tribe under shared values and identity.</i>	<i>Collective recitation reinforced solidarity and belonging.</i>

Box 1.1 Functions of poetry in pre-Islamic tribal life

1.1.3 Oral tradition and preservation of poetry

Pre-Islamic poetry was transmitted orally, as writing was not widespread. The reliance on memory and recitation meant that poems were carefully structured with rhythm and rhyme to aid memorisation. Famous poems, such as the **Mu‘allaqāt**, were said to have been hung on the walls of the Ka‘ba in Mecca, symbolising their prestige. Oral transmission ensured that poetry remained central to Arab identity and was passed down faithfully across generations.

Arabic example:

قِفَا نَبْكَ مِنْ ذِكْرَى حَبِيبٍ وَمَنْزِلٍ (Qifā nabki min dhikrā ḥabībīn wa-manzili) – “Stop, let us weep for the memory of a beloved and a dwelling.”

This famous opening line from Imru’ al-Qays illustrates the oral tradition of beginning poems with vivid emotional appeals.



Fill in the blank: The famous collection of pre-Islamic odes said to be hung in the Ka'ba is called the _____.



Plate 1.2 Oral recitation of poetry in pre-Islamic Arabia

Pilot questions 1.1

1. What does the term Jāhili poetry mean?
2. What was the role of poetry in pre-Islamic tribal life?
3. What was the poet called in pre-Islamic Arabia?
4. How was poetry preserved and transmitted before Islam?
5. What is the name of the famous collection of odes said to be hung in the Ka'ba?

1.2 Themes and Styles of Pre-Islamic Poetry

Pre-Islamic poetry is renowned for its richness of content and artistry. It reflects the lived experiences of the Arabs, their environment, and their values. This Part introduces you to the major themes that shaped the poetry, the stylistic features that gave it form, and the language and rhetorical devices that made it memorable. By exploring these aspects, you will gain a clearer understanding of how poetry functioned as both a cultural record and a creative expression.



1.2.1 Major themes: heroism, tribal pride, desert life, love

The themes of pre-Islamic poetry were deeply rooted in tribal society. **Heroism** was celebrated through verses that praised warriors and their courage in battle. **Tribal pride**, known as **fakhr**, involved boasting about the achievements and honour of one's tribe. The harsh realities of **desert life** were vividly described, with poets portraying both its beauty and its challenges. Finally, **love**, often expressed in the form of **ghazal**, conveyed longing and nostalgia for a beloved, usually introduced in the opening of the ode.

Fill in the blank: The theme of boasting about tribal achievements in pre-Islamic poetry is called _____.



Figure 1.2 Major themes of pre-Islamic poetry

1.2.2 Stylistic features: imagery, rhythm, and structure

Pre-Islamic poetry was composed in the form of the **qaṣīda**, meaning ode. The **qaṣīda** followed a tripartite structure: the **nasīb**, a nostalgic prelude recalling a lost beloved; the **raḥīl**, a section



describing travel or the desert journey; and the **madīḥ**, which offered praise or boasting. Poets employed **imagery**, defined as descriptive language appealing to the senses, to bring scenes of desert life, animals, and emotions vividly to life. Rhythm and rhyme were carefully maintained through ‘**arūd**, or prosody, ensuring memorability and musicality.

Fill in the blank: The nostalgic opening section of a qaṣīda is called the _____.

<i>Section</i>	<i>Arabic Term</i>	<i>Function in the Qaṣīda</i>	<i>Example / Translation</i>
Opening (Erotic Prelude)	النَّسِيب (<i>Nasīb</i>)	<i>Begins with nostalgic remembrance of the beloved and her deserted campsite; sets an emotional tone.</i>	يقف الشاعر على الأطلال ويبكي الأحبة — The poet stands at the ruins and weeps for the beloved.
Journey / Desert Travel	الرَّحِيل (<i>Raḥīl</i>)	<i>Describes the poet’s camel, desert journey, and hardships; showcases endurance and vivid imagery of nature.</i>	يصف ناقته وسفره الطويل في الصحراء — He describes his camel and the long desert journey.
Praise / Boast	المديح (<i>Madīḥ</i>)	<i>Concludes with praise of the tribe, patron, or self; emphasizes honor, generosity, and valor.</i>	يمتدح قبيلته ويذكر شجاعتها وكرمها — He praises his tribe, recalling its bravery and generosity.

Box 1.2 Structure of the qaṣīda

1.2.3 Language and rhetorical devices

Pre-Islamic poets employed elevated **language**, marked by precision and elegance, to reflect the prestige of poetry in society. They used **rhetorical devices**, meaning techniques that enhance expression and persuasion, such as similes, metaphors, repetition, and parallelism. These devices enriched the verses, making them memorable and impactful. The use of metaphorical



comparisons between desert animals, landscapes, and human emotions gave the poetry depth and resonance.

Arabic example:

وَقَدْ أَغْتَدِي وَالطَّيْرُ فِي وَكُنَاتِهَا (Wa-qad aghtadī wa-ṭ-ṭayru fī wukunātihā) – “I set out at dawn while the birds were still in their nests.”

This line illustrates the vivid imagery and rhetorical devices typical of pre-Islamic poetry.

Fill in the blank: The formal ode structure of pre-Islamic poetry is called the _____.

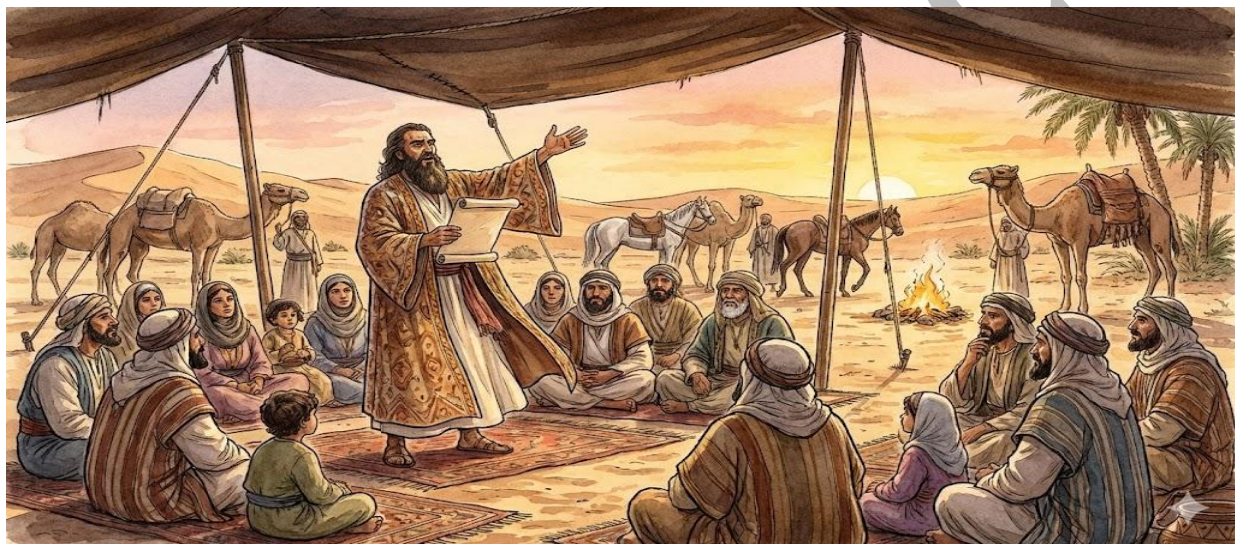


Plate 1.3 Recitation of a qaṣīda in pre-Islamic Arabia

Pilot questions 1.2

1. What are the four major themes of pre-Islamic poetry?
2. What is the tripartite structure of the qaṣīda?
3. What is the nostalgic opening section of a qaṣīda called?
4. Which rhetorical devices were commonly used in pre-Islamic poetry?
5. How did imagery enhance the impact of pre-Islamic poetry?



1.3 The Mu‘allaqāt and Other Famous Poems

The **Mu‘allaqāt**, or “Suspended Odes”, are among the most celebrated works of pre-Islamic poetry. They represent the pinnacle of Arabic poetic achievement before Islam and provide invaluable insight into the culture, values, and artistry of the Arabs. This Part introduces the Mu‘allaqāt, examines one selected ode in detail, and highlights other notable poets whose works shaped the literary heritage of Arabia.

1.3.1 Introduction to the Mu‘allaqāt (Suspended Odes)

The **Mu‘allaqāt** are a collection of seven to ten long odes composed by renowned pre-Islamic poets. The name “Suspended Odes” comes from the tradition that these poems were written in gold and hung on the walls of the Ka‘ba in Mecca, symbolising their prestige. Each ode follows the **qaṣīda** structure, beginning with a nostalgic prelude, moving through vivid descriptions of desert journeys, and concluding with praise or boasting. The Mu‘allaqāt are valued not only for their artistry but also for their role in preserving the language and culture of pre-Islamic Arabia.

Fill in the blank: The Mu‘allaqāt are also known as the _____ Odes.



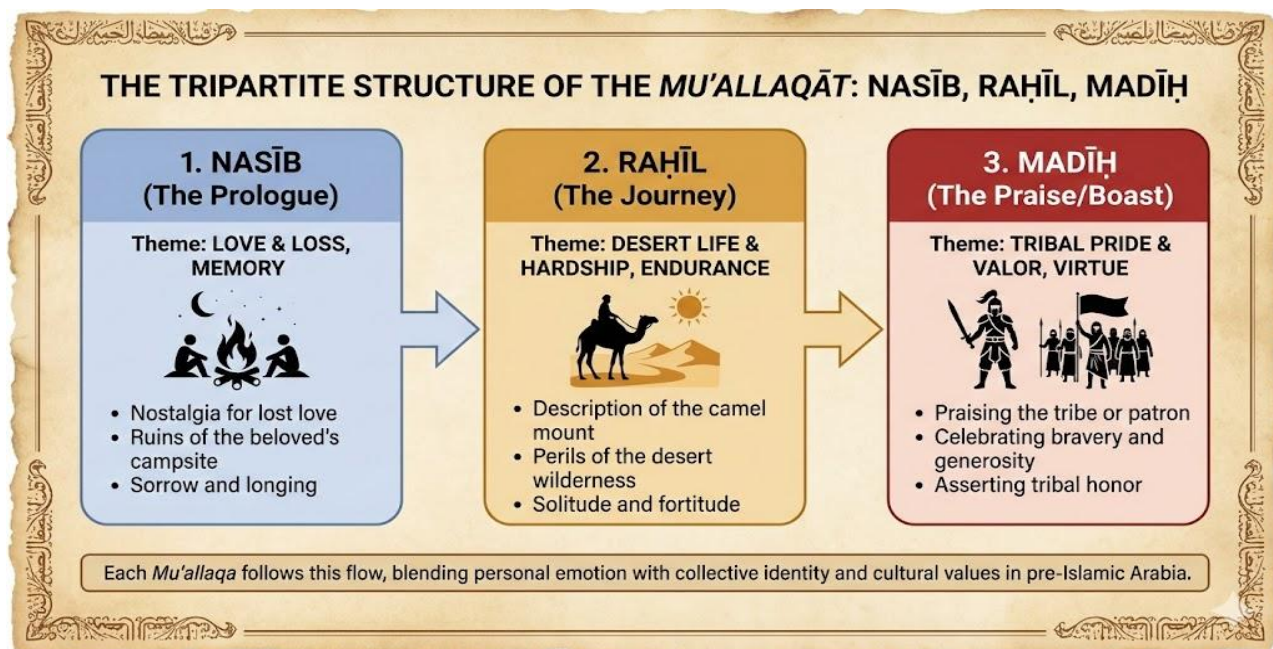


Figure 1.4 Structure and themes of the Mu'allaqāt

1.3.2 Analysis of one selected Mu'allaqa poem

One of the most famous Mu'allaqāt is the ode of **Imru' al-Qays**, often considered the “father of Arabic poetry”. His poem begins with the **nasīb**, where he recalls the memory of a beloved at deserted campsites. It then moves into the **raḥīl**, describing his horse and desert travels with striking imagery, and concludes with sections of pride and defiance. The poem exemplifies the richness of pre-Islamic poetry, combining personal emotion with tribal values.

Arabic example:

قِفَا نَبْكِ مِنْ ذِكْرَى حَبِيبٍ وَمَنْزِلٍ (Qifā nabki min dhikrā ḥabībīn wa-manzili) – “Stop, let us weep for the memory of a beloved and a dwelling.”

This opening line sets the tone of nostalgia and longing that characterises the nasīb.

Fill in the blank: The poet often regarded as the “father of Arabic poetry” is _____.





Plate 1.5 Imru' al-Qays reciting his Mu'allaqa

1.3.3 Other notable pre-Islamic poets and their works

Beyond the Mu'allaqāt, many other poets contributed to the richness of pre-Islamic literature. **Antara ibn Shaddād** is remembered for his verses on bravery and love, reflecting his dual identity as a warrior and a lover. **Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā** is known for his wisdom and moral reflections, often promoting peace and justice. **Labīd ibn Rabī'a** composed poetry that combined vivid imagery with philosophical depth. These poets, along with others, ensured that pre-Islamic poetry remained diverse in theme and style, offering a wide lens into Arab society.

Fill in the blank: The poet famous for combining bravery with love in his verses is _____.

Poet	Contribution	Example / Legacy
Antara ibn Shaddād (عنتره بن شداد)	Celebrated for heroic and chivalric poetry; expressed themes of valor, love, and tribal pride.	Famous for his <i>Mu'allaqa</i> (suspended ode) combining battlefield courage with romantic devotion to 'Abla.
Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā (زهير بن أبي سلمى)	Known for wisdom, moral reflection, and balanced style; praised peacemaking and tribal reconciliation.	His <i>Mu'allaqa</i> extols virtues of justice and the settlement of tribal disputes, earning him respect as a "sage poet."



Labīd ibn Rabīʿa (لبيد بن ربيعة)	Renowned for philosophical depth and reflections on fate, mortality, and the transience of life.	His <i>Muʿallaqa</i> contains the famous line: “لَا كُلُّ شَيْءٍ مَّا خَلَا اللَّهَ بَاطِلٌ” — <i>Indeed, everything except God is perishable.</i>
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Box 1.3 Notable pre-Islamic poets and their contributions

Pilot questions 1.3

1. What does the name Muʿallaqāt mean?
2. How were the Muʿallaqāt traditionally displayed in Mecca?
3. Who is considered the “father of Arabic poetry”?
4. What themes are found in Imruʿ al-Qays’ Muʿallaqa?
5. Which poet is remembered for bravery and love in his verses?

1.4 Poetry in the Early Islamic Era

Poetry in the early Islamic era marked a significant transition from the themes and styles of pre-Islamic verse. While the artistry and eloquence of the **qaṣīda** remained, the content shifted to reflect the new values introduced by Islam. This Part explores how poetry evolved during this period, focusing on its transition, the themes that emerged, and the analysis of one selected Islamic-era poem.

1.4.1 Transition from pre-Islamic to Islamic poetry

The advent of Islam brought new priorities to Arab society, and poetry adapted accordingly. While pre-Islamic poetry emphasised tribal pride, love, and desert life, early Islamic poetry began to reflect religious devotion and moral instruction. The role of the poet also changed, as



poetry was now used to support the spread of Islam and to reinforce ethical teachings. Despite these changes, poets retained the traditional **qaṣīda** form, ensuring continuity in style while introducing new content.

Fill in the blank: The traditional ode structure retained in early Islamic poetry is called the _____.

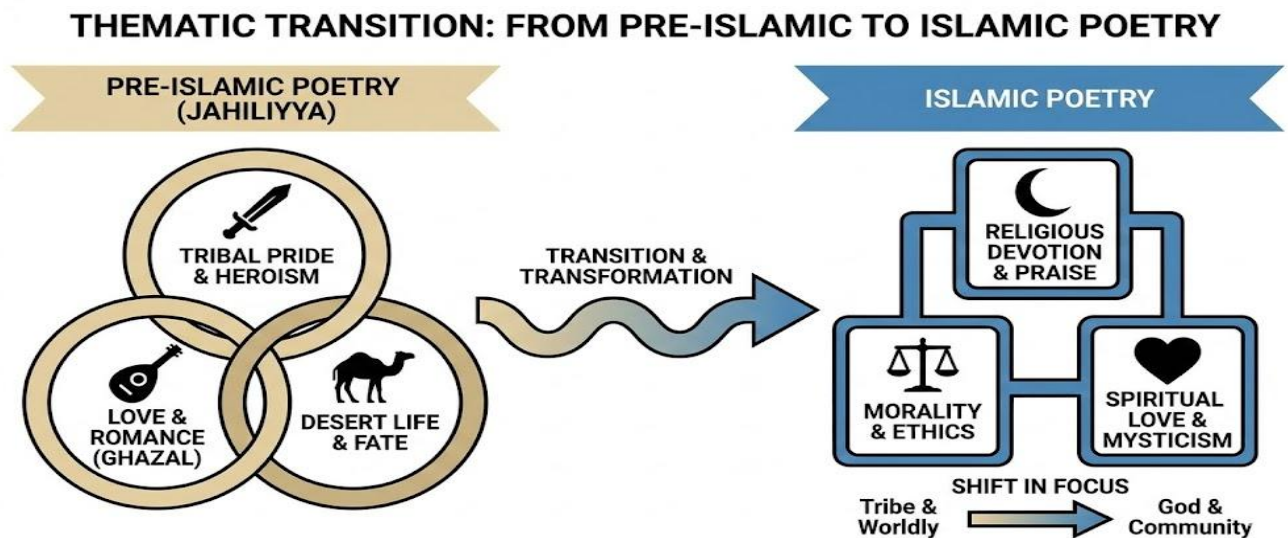


Figure 1.6 Transition from pre-Islamic to Islamic poetry

1.4.2 Themes of early Islamic poetry: religious devotion, moral instruction, social change

Early Islamic poetry introduced new themes that reflected the values of the emerging Muslim community. **Religious devotion** became central, with poets praising God, the Prophet Muhammad, and the Qur'an. **Moral instruction** was another key theme, as poetry was used to encourage virtues such as honesty, justice, and humility. Finally, **social change** was reflected in verses that addressed unity among tribes, the rejection of old practices, and the establishment of



a new moral order. These themes gave poetry a new purpose, aligning it with the spiritual and ethical goals of Islam.

Fill in the blank: Early Islamic poetry often praised _____, the Prophet of Islam.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Arabic Example</i>	<i>Translation</i>	<i>Function / Explanation</i>
Religious Devotion (التعبير عن الإيمان)	سبحانَ اللهَ عما يصفونَ	Glory be to God above what they describe.	Poetry emphasized monotheism, worship, and spiritual reflection.
Moral Instruction (التوجيه الأخلاقي)	إنما المؤمنونَ إخوةٌ	Indeed, the believers are but brothers.	Verses promoted virtues like honesty, justice, and compassion.
Social Change (التغيير الاجتماعي)	لا فضلَ لعربيٍّ على أجنبيٍّ	No Arab has superiority over a non-Arab.	Poetry reflected Islam's call for equality, unity, and reform of tribal customs.

Box 1.4 Themes of early Islamic poetry

1.4.3 Analysis of one selected Islamic-era poem

One notable example of early Islamic poetry is the work of **Ḥassān ibn Thābit**, often called the “Poet of the Prophet”. His verses praised the Prophet Muhammad and defended Islam against its critics. In one poem, he describes the Prophet as a source of guidance and light, contrasting him with the ignorance of the pre-Islamic era. The poem demonstrates how poetry became a tool for religious devotion and moral instruction, while still employing the traditional structure and stylistic devices of earlier poetry.

Arabic example:

وَأَحْسَنُ مِنْكَ لَمْ تَرَ قَطُّ عَيْنِي (Wa-aḥsanu minka lam tara qaṭṭu ‘aynī) – “My eyes have never seen anyone more beautiful than you.”



This line from Ḥassān ibn Thābit illustrates the reverence and admiration expressed in early Islamic poetry.

Fill in the blank: The poet known as the “Poet of the Prophet” is _____.



Plate 1.7 Ḥassān ibn Thābit reciting poetry in the early Islamic era

Pilot questions 1.4

1. What traditional poetic form was retained in early Islamic poetry?
2. What new themes emerged in Islamic-era poetry?
3. Who is often called the “Poet of the Prophet”?
4. How did poetry support the spread of Islam?
5. What role did moral instruction play in early Islamic poetry?

Series Summary

This Series has guided you through the study of poetry in pre-Islamic and early Islamic literature, showing how verse served as both a cultural record and a creative art form. Beginning with the historical background of pre-Islamic poetry, we explored its social and tribal context, before moving on to the themes of heroism, pride, desert life, and love. We then examined the stylistic



features of the qaṣīda, its imagery, rhythm, and rhetorical devices, followed by a close look at the Mu‘allaqāt and other celebrated poets. Finally, we considered the transition into the early Islamic era, highlighting new themes of religious devotion, moral instruction, and social change through the analysis of one representative poem.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to describe the historical foundations of pre-Islamic poetry, explain its themes and stylistic features, analyse the Mu‘allaqāt and other notable works, and evaluate the transformation of poetry in the early Islamic period. These outcomes align directly with the Series Learning Outcomes, equipping you with the knowledge and skills to appreciate Arabic poetry as both a literary and cultural heritage.

Glossary of Terms

‘Arūd – The study of Arabic prosody, which refers to the rules of rhythm and metre used in poetry to ensure balance and musicality.

Dīwān al-‘Arab – Literally “the register of the Arabs”, a phrase describing poetry as the record of Arab history, values, and achievements in the pre-Islamic era.

Fakhr – A theme of boasting or pride in pre-Islamic poetry, often used to celebrate the honour and achievements of one’s tribe.

Ghazal – A poetic theme focusing on love and longing, usually expressed through nostalgic recollections of a beloved.

Hijā’ – A theme of satire in pre-Islamic poetry, used to mock enemies and defend tribal honour.

Jāhili poetry – Poetry composed in Arabia before the rise of Islam, reflecting tribal life, desert experiences, and personal emotions.

Madīḥ – The concluding section of a qaṣīda, often devoted to praise or boasting about the poet’s tribe or patron.



Mu‘allaqāt – A celebrated collection of pre-Islamic odes, traditionally said to have been written in gold and hung on the walls of the Ka‘ba in Mecca.

Nasīb – The nostalgic prelude of a qaṣīda, usually recalling a lost beloved or deserted campsite.

Qaṣīda – A formal Arabic ode with a tripartite structure (nasīb, raḥīl, madīḥ), widely used in pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetry.

Raḥīl – The middle section of a qaṣīda, often describing travel, desert journeys, or animals such as camels and horses.

Rhetorical devices – Techniques used by poets to enhance expression, such as similes, metaphors, repetition, and parallelism.

Shā‘ir – The Arabic word for “poet”, referring to the highly respected figure who composed and recited poetry on behalf of the tribe.

Concept Check Questions [Series 1]

Objective Questions

1. Identify the term used to describe pre-Islamic poetry. (Linked to SLO 1.1)
2. Match the following themes with their Arabic terms:
 - Tribal pride → _____
 - Satire → _____
 - Love → _____ (Linked to SLO 1.2)
3. Select the poet often regarded as the “father of Arabic poetry”:
 - a. Antara ibn Shaddād
 - b. Imru’ al-Qays
 - c. Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā
 - d. Labīd ibn Rabī‘a (Linked to SLO 1.3)
4. State the name of the poet known as the “Poet of the Prophet”. (Linked to SLO 1.4)



Short-Answer Questions

5. Describe the role of the **shā'ir** in pre-Islamic tribal society. (Linked to SLO 1.1)
6. Explain the tripartite structure of the **qaṣīda**. (Linked to SLO 1.2)
7. Give one example of a rhetorical device used in pre-Islamic poetry. (Linked to SLO 1.2)
8. Summarise the main themes of early Islamic poetry. (Linked to SLO 1.4)

Long-Answer Questions

9. Analyse the significance of the Mu'allaqāt in preserving pre-Islamic culture and language. (Linked to SLO 1.3)
10. Evaluate the transition from pre-Islamic to Islamic poetry, highlighting both continuity and change. (Linked to SLO 1.4)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 1]

Objective Questions

1. Jāhili poetry.
2. Tribal pride → Fakhr; Satire → Hijā'; Love → Ghazal.
3. b. Imru' al-Qays.
4. Ḥassān ibn Thābit.

Short-Answer Questions

5. The **shā'ir** was the poet who served as the voice of the tribe, preserving its history, inspiring warriors, and defending its honour through verse.
6. The **qaṣīda** had three parts: *nasīb* (nostalgic prelude), *raḥīl* (journey or desert description), and



madīḥ (praise or boasting).

7. One example is metaphor, where poets compared desert animals or landscapes to human emotions.

8. Themes included religious devotion, moral instruction, and social change.

Long-Answer Questions

9. **Basic response:** The Mu‘allaqāt are a collection of celebrated odes that preserved the language, values, and artistry of pre-Islamic Arabia. They provide insight into tribal life and are considered masterpieces of Arabic poetry.

Value-added response: Beyond their literary importance, the Mu‘allaqāt served as cultural archives, safeguarding oral traditions and influencing later Islamic literature. Their prestige, symbolised by the tradition of hanging them in the Ka‘ba, highlights their role in shaping Arab identity and linguistic heritage.

10. **Basic response:** The transition from pre-Islamic to Islamic poetry involved a shift in themes from tribal pride and love to religious devotion, moral instruction, and social change, while retaining the qaṣīda structure.

Value-added response: This transition reflects both continuity and transformation. While poets maintained stylistic features such as imagery and rhythm, they adapted content to align with Islamic values. Poetry became a tool for spreading religious teachings and reinforcing ethical norms, showing how literature can evolve to meet new cultural and spiritual needs.



Part 1.1

- Jāhili poetry.
- To serve as the cultural record of the Arabs, preserving history, inspiring warriors, defending honour, and satirising enemies.
- Shā'ir.
- Through oral transmission, memorisation, and recitation, often aided by rhythm and rhyme.
- The Mu'allaqāt.

Part 1.2

- Heroism, tribal pride, desert life, and love.
- Nasīb (nostalgic prelude), Raḥil (journey or desert description), Madīḥ (praise or boasting).
- Nasīb.
- Imagery, similes, metaphors, repetition, and parallelism.
- Because it was a formal, prestigious ode structure that showcased eloquence and artistry.

Part 1.3

- “Suspended Odes.”
- They were hung on the walls of the Ka'ba in Mecca.
- Imru' al-Qays.
- Nostalgia for a beloved, vivid desert imagery, and tribal pride.
- Antara ibn Shaddād.

Part 1.4

- Qaṣīda.
- Religious devotion, moral instruction, and social change.
- Ḥassān ibn Thābit.
- By praising the Prophet, defending Islam, and reinforcing ethical teachings.



- It encouraged virtues such as honesty, justice, and humility, guiding the new Muslim community.

References and Attributions [Series 1]

Primary Sources and Literature

- Allen, R. (2000). *An Introduction to Arabic Literature*. Cambridge University Press.
- Jones, A. (1992). *The Mu‘allaqāt*. London: Routledge.
- Stetkevych, S. (1993). *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual*. Cornell University Press.
- Montgomery, J. (2006). *Arabia and the Arabs: From the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam*. Routledge.

Open Educational Resources (OER) Suggested for Learners

- “Themes of Pre-Islamic Arabic Poetry.” Open Educational Resources Commons. Retrieved from <https://www.oercommons.org>
- “Structure of the Qasīda.” Al-Islam OER Repository. Retrieved from <https://www.al-islam.org>
- “Mu‘allaqāt and Pre-Islamic Poetry.” Open Access Islamic Studies Resources. Retrieved from <https://openarabic.org>

Illustrations (Figures, Plates, Boxes)

- *Figure 1.1 Poetry as a cultural record in pre-Islamic Arabia*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create a diagram showing the role of poetry in pre-Islamic Arabia, including tribe, poet, and oral transmission.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Box 1.1 Functions of poetry in pre-Islamic tribal life*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a text box listing the functions of poetry in pre-Islamic tribal life.”



- Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Plate 1.2 Oral recitation of poetry in pre-Islamic Arabia*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create an artistic illustration of a pre-Islamic Arab poet reciting verses to a tribal audience.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Figure 1.2 Major themes of pre-Islamic poetry*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create a diagram showing the four major themes of pre-Islamic poetry: heroism, tribal pride, desert life, love.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Box 1.2 Structure of the qaṣīda*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a text box outlining the tripartite structure of the pre-Islamic qaṣīda: nasīb, raḥīl, madiḥ.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Plate 1.3 Recitation of a qaṣīda in pre-Islamic Arabia*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create an illustration of a pre-Islamic Arab poet reciting a qaṣīda to a tribal audience.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Figure 1.4 Structure and themes of the Mu‘allaqāt*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create a diagram showing the tripartite structure of the Mu‘allaqāt: nasīb, raḥīl, madiḥ, with themes of love, desert life, and tribal pride.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Plate 1.5 Imru’ al-Qays reciting his Mu‘allaqa*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create an illustration of Imru’ al-Qays reciting his Mu‘allaqa to a tribal audience.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Box 1.3 Notable pre-Islamic poets and their contributions*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a text box listing notable pre-Islamic poets and their contributions: Antara, Zuhayr, Labīd.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Figure 1.6 Transition from pre-Islamic to Islamic poetry*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create a diagram showing the transition of themes from pre-Islamic poetry to Islamic poetry.”



- Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Box 1.4 Themes of early Islamic poetry*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a text box listing the themes of early Islamic poetry: religious devotion, moral instruction, social change.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Plate 1.7 Ḥassān ibn Thābit reciting poetry in the early Islamic era*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create an illustration of Ḥassān ibn Thābit reciting poetry in praise of the Prophet Muhammad.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.



Series 2: Proverbs, Wise Sayings, and Folktales

Part 2.1 Proverbs in Arabic Tradition

- 2.1.1 Definition and characteristics of proverbs
- 2.1.2 Social and cultural functions of proverbs
- 2.1.3 Examples of common Arabic proverbs and their meanings

Part 2.2 Wise Sayings and Moral Lessons

- 2.2.1 Distinction between proverbs and wise sayings
- 2.2.2 Themes of wisdom, morality, and guidance
- 2.2.3 Selected wise sayings and their interpretations

Part 2.3 Folktales in Arabic Literature

- 2.3.1 Nature and role of folktales in society
- 2.3.2 Themes and motifs in Arabic folktales
- 2.3.3 Selected folktale analysis

Part 2.4 Comparative and Contemporary Perspectives

- 2.4.1 Similarities and differences with other cultural traditions
- 2.4.2 Influence on modern Arabic literature and oral storytelling
- 2.4.3 Relevance of proverbs and folktales in contemporary society

Introduction

Across cultures, proverbs, wise sayings, and folktales have long served as powerful tools for teaching, guiding, and entertaining. In Arabic tradition, these forms of oral literature capture the wisdom of generations, reflect social values, and preserve cultural identity. Just as poetry provided a record of tribal



life in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic eras, proverbs and folktales offer insight into everyday experiences, moral lessons, and collective imagination. This Series will help you appreciate how these expressions shaped thought and behaviour, while also connecting them to broader literary heritage.

The aim of this Series is to introduce you to the richness of Arabic proverbs, wise sayings, and folktales, and to equip you with the ability to interpret their meanings, understand their functions, and evaluate their relevance both historically and in contemporary society.

We shall commence this Series by exploring proverbs in Arabic tradition, examining their definitions, characteristics, and cultural functions. Next, we will move on to wise sayings and moral lessons, distinguishing them from proverbs and considering their themes of guidance and morality. Following that, we will study folktales in Arabic literature, focusing on their role in society, recurring motifs, and selected examples. Finally, we will conclude with comparative and contemporary perspectives, highlighting similarities with other traditions and discussing the continuing relevance of proverbs and folktales today.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

SLO 2.1 define the characteristics of Arabic proverbs and explain their social and cultural functions.

SLO 2.2 interpret selected Arabic proverbs by analysing their meanings and contextual applications.

SLO 2.3 distinguish wise sayings from proverbs by identifying their themes of wisdom, morality, and guidance.

SLO 2.4 analyse selected wise sayings to demonstrate how they convey moral lessons and practical advice.

SLO 2.5 describe the nature and role of folktales in Arabic society and literature.



SLO 2.6 evaluate the themes and motifs of selected Arabic folktales through textual and cultural analysis.

SLO 2.7 compare Arabic proverbs and folktales with those from other cultural traditions, highlighting similarities and differences.

SLO 2.8 assess the relevance of proverbs, wise sayings, and folktales in contemporary Arabic society and literature.

2.1 Proverbs in Arabic Tradition

Proverbs are among the most enduring forms of oral literature, offering concise expressions of wisdom, cultural values, and everyday experiences. In Arabic tradition, they serve as a mirror of society, encapsulating lessons that guide behaviour and decision-making. This Part introduces you to the nature of Arabic proverbs, their social and cultural functions, and examples that illustrate their richness.

2.1.1 Definition and characteristics of proverbs

A **proverb** (**مثال** *mathal*) is a short, commonly known saying that expresses a truth, piece of advice, or moral lesson in a memorable way. In Arabic, proverbs are valued for their brevity, clarity, and ability to convey complex ideas through simple language. They often employ imagery, metaphor, and rhythm to make them easy to recall and transmit orally.

Fill in the blank: A short, commonly known saying that conveys wisdom or advice is called a

_____.



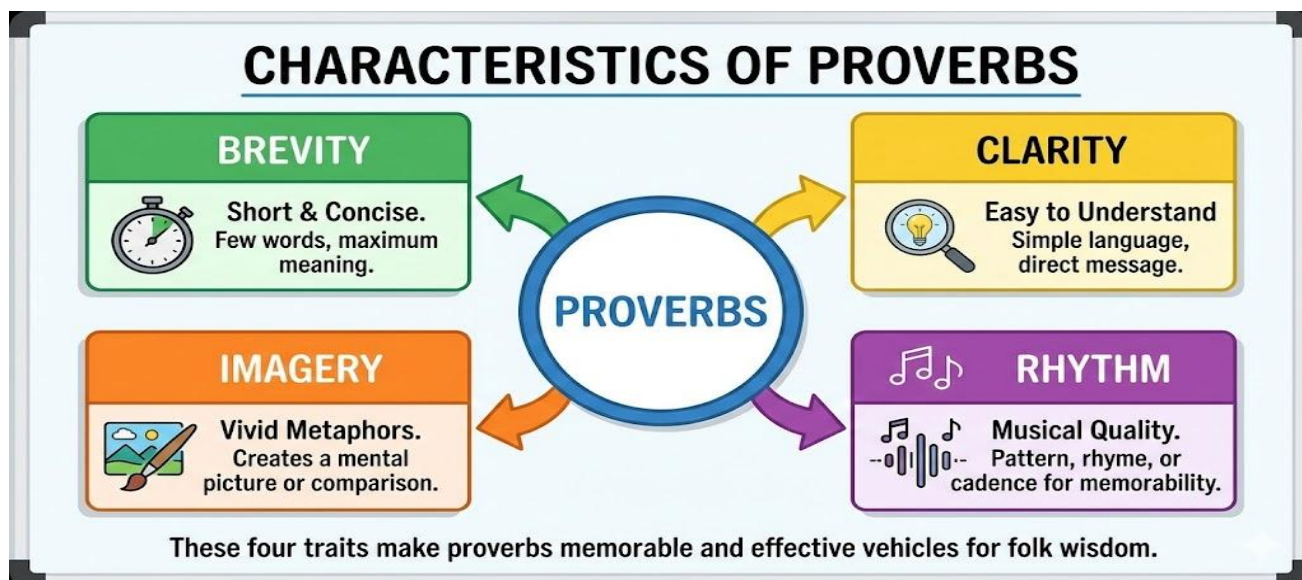


Figure 2.1 Characteristics of proverbs

2.1.2 Social and cultural functions of proverbs

Proverbs play a vital role in shaping and reflecting social norms. They are used in everyday conversation to advise, warn, or encourage. In tribal and family settings, elders often employ proverbs to pass on wisdom to younger generations. Proverbs also serve as tools of persuasion, reinforcing moral values and guiding social conduct.

Fill in the blank: Elders often use _____ to pass wisdom to younger generations.

<i>Function</i>	<i>Arabic Example</i>	<i>Translation</i>	<i>Role / Explanation</i>
<i>Advising (النصح)</i>	من جدَّ وجدَّ	Whoever strives, finds.	Offers guidance and practical life lessons.
<i>Warning (التحذير)</i>	كما تدبِّن تُدان	As you judge, you shall be judged.	Warns against wrongdoing and its consequences.



Encouraging (التشجيع)	الصبر مفتاح الفرج	<i>Patience is the key to relief.</i>	<i>Motivates perseverance and resilience.</i>
Persuading (الإقناع)	العجلة من الشيطان	<i>Haste is from the devil.</i>	<i>Persuades against rash decisions, urging careful thought.</i>
Transmitting Wisdom (نقل الحكمة)	درهم وقاية خير من قنطار علاج	<i>An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure.</i>	<i>Passes down collective wisdom and cultural values.</i>

Box 2.1 Functions of proverbs in Arabic society

2.1.3 Examples of common Arabic proverbs and their meanings

Arabic proverbs often draw upon everyday life, nature, and cultural experiences. For instance:

- الصبر مفتاح الفرج (*Al-ṣabr mafātīḥ al-faraḥ*) – “Patience is the key to relief.” This proverb highlights the value of endurance in overcoming difficulties.
- من جدّ وجد (*Man jadda wajada*) – “He who strives, finds.” This encourages persistence and effort as the path to success.
- الجار قبل الدار (*Al-jār qabla al-dār*) – “The neighbour before the house.” This stresses the importance of good relations with neighbours over material possessions.
- درهم وقاية خير من قنطار علاج (*Dirham wiqāya khayr min qinṭār ‘ilāj*) – “An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure.” This teaches foresight and caution.
- العجلة من الشيطان (*Al-‘ajala min al-shayṭān*) – “Haste is from the devil.” This warns against rushing decisions.

These examples show how proverbs condense wisdom into memorable phrases that remain relevant across generations.

Fill in the blank: The proverb “من جدّ وجد” teaches the value of _____.





Plate 2.2 Transmission of proverbs in Arabic tradition

Pilot questions 2.1

1. What Arabic word is used for “proverb”?
2. What are the main characteristics of proverbs?
3. How do proverbs function in Arabic society?
4. Give one Arabic proverb and explain its meaning.
5. Why are proverbs considered important in oral tradition?

2.2 Wise Sayings and Moral Lessons

Wise sayings are closely related to proverbs but often carry a more reflective or philosophical tone. They are concise expressions of wisdom, guidance, or moral instruction, usually attributed to respected figures such as scholars, leaders, or elders. In Arabic tradition, wise sayings are valued for their ability to inspire ethical behaviour and provide direction in life. This Part



introduces the distinction between proverbs and wise sayings, explores their themes, and analyses selected examples.

2.2.1 Distinction between proverbs and wise sayings

A **wise saying** (قول حكيم *qawl ḥakīm*) is a statement that conveys wisdom or moral guidance, often attributed to a known source. Unlike **proverbs** (مَثَل *mathal*), which are anonymous and rooted in collective experience, wise sayings are linked to individuals and carry authority because of their origin. They are less concerned with everyday situations and more focused on universal truths and ethical principles.

Fill in the blank: A statement of wisdom attributed to a respected figure is called a _____.

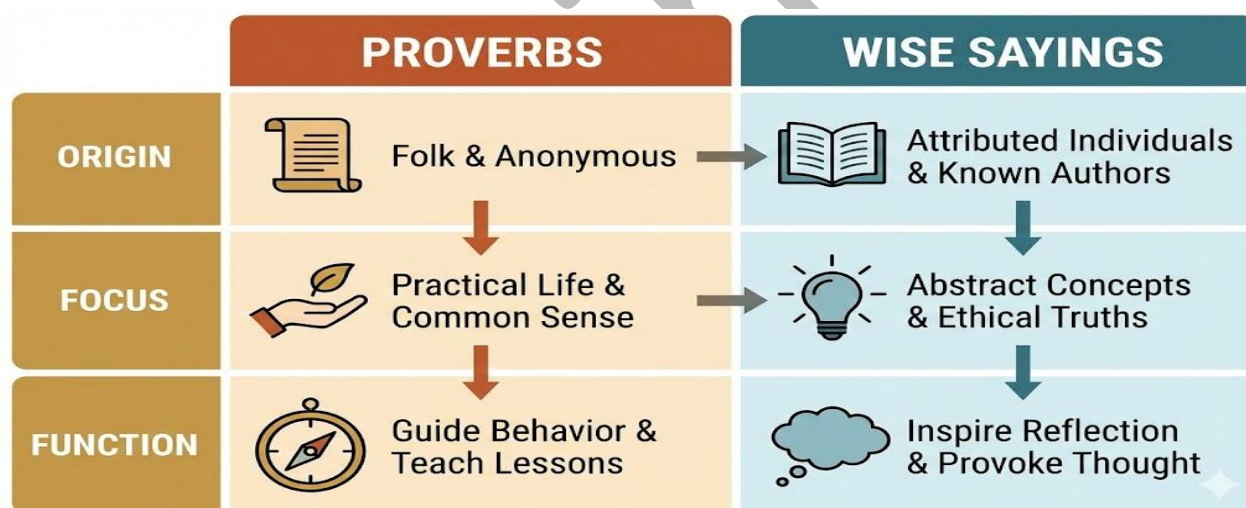


Figure 2.3 Distinction between proverbs and wise sayings

2.2.2 Themes of wisdom, morality, and guidance

Wise sayings often emphasise values such as justice, patience, humility, and honesty. They serve as reminders of ethical conduct and provide guidance in decision-making. For example:



- العدل أساس الملك (Al- 'adl asās al-mulk) – “Justice is the foundation of rule.” This highlights the importance of fairness in leadership.
- العلم نور (Al- 'ilm nūr) – “Knowledge is light.” This stresses the value of learning and enlightenment.
- من تواضع لله رفعه (Man tawāḍa 'a lillāh rafa 'ahu) – “Whoever humbles himself for God, He raises him.” This teaches humility and spiritual reward.

Fill in the blank: The saying “العلم نور” teaches the value of _____.

Theme	Arabic Example	Translation	Function / Explanation
Justice (العدل)	العدل أساس الملك	Justice is the foundation of rule.	Emphasizes fairness as the basis of leadership and society.
Patience (الصبر)	الصبر مفتاح الفرج	Patience is the key to relief.	Encourages endurance and resilience in hardship.
Humility (التواضع)	من تواضع لله رفعه	Whoever humbles himself for God, He elevates him.	Promotes modesty and avoidance of arrogance.
Honesty (الصدق)	الصدق منجاة	Honesty is salvation.	Highlights truthfulness as a path to safety and trust.
Knowledge (العلم)	العلم نور	Knowledge is light.	Stresses the value of learning as guidance and enlightenment.

Box 2.2 Themes of wise sayings in Arabic tradition

2.2.3 Selected wise sayings and their interpretations

Wise sayings are often used in teaching, sermons, and personal reflection. They provide moral lessons that transcend time and place. For instance:



- **رحم الله امرءًا عرف قدر نفسه** (*Raḥim Allāh imra' an 'arafa qadra nafsihi*) – “God bless the one who knows his own worth.” This encourages self-awareness and dignity.
- **اللسان حصان إن صنته صانك وإن خنته خاتك** (*Al-lisān ḥiṣān in ṣuntahu ṣānaka wa-in khuntahu khānaka*) – “The tongue is like a horse; if you protect it, it protects you, but if you betray it, it betrays you.” This warns about the power of speech and the need for restraint.
- **الوقت كالسيف إن لم تقطعه قطعك** (*Al-waqt ka-l-sayf in lam taqṭa 'hu qaṭa 'aka*) – “Time is like a sword; if you do not cut it, it cuts you.” This stresses the importance of using time wisely.

Fill in the blank: The saying “الوقت كالسيف إن لم تقطعه قطعك” teaches the importance of managing _____ effectively.



Caption: Plate 2.4 Transmission of wise sayings in Arabic tradition

Pilot questions 2.2

1. What Arabic term is used for “wise saying”?
2. How do wise sayings differ from proverbs in origin and focus?
3. What themes are commonly found in Arabic wise sayings?
4. Give one Arabic wise saying and explain its meaning.
5. Why are wise sayings considered important for moral and ethical guidance?



2.3 Folktales in Arabic Literature

Folktales are an essential part of Arabic oral tradition, blending entertainment with moral instruction and cultural preservation. They reflect the imagination of communities, embody shared values, and often explain social practices or natural phenomena. This Part introduces the nature and role of folktales, explores their recurring themes and motifs, and provides analysis of selected examples.

2.3.1 Nature and role of folktales in society

A **folktale** (**حكاية شعبية** *ḥikāya sha 'biyya*) is a traditional story passed orally from generation to generation, often featuring imaginative plots, symbolic characters, and moral lessons. In Arabic society, folktales served as a means of entertainment during communal gatherings, but they also reinforced cultural identity and transmitted wisdom. They often addressed universal human concerns such as justice, loyalty, and courage, while reflecting local customs and beliefs.

Fill in the blank: A traditional story passed orally through generations is called a _____.

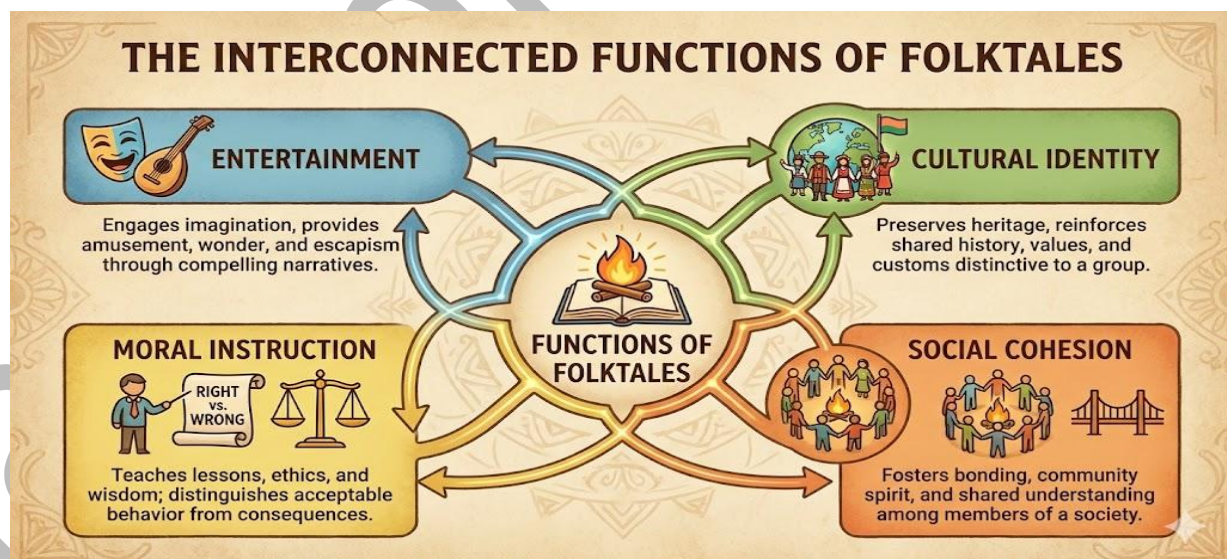


Figure 2.5 Functions of folktales in Arabic society



2.3.2 Themes and motifs in Arabic folktales

Folktales often revolve around recurring **themes**, meaning central ideas such as justice, bravery, or wisdom, and **motifs**, meaning repeated narrative elements like magical helpers, trickster figures, or journeys. For example, many Arabic folktales highlight the triumph of good over evil, the rewards of patience, or the dangers of greed. Symbolic animals, enchanted objects, and clever heroes are common motifs that make the stories memorable and engaging.

Fill in the blank: Repeated narrative elements such as magical helpers or tricksters are known as _____.

<i>Theme / Motif</i>	<i>Arabic Example</i>	<i>Translation</i>	<i>Function / Explanation</i>
Justice (العدل)	العدل يرفع الظلم	Justice removes oppression.	Folktales often end with fairness prevailing over tyranny.
Bravery (الشجاعة)	البطل يقاتل التنين	The hero fights the dragon.	Heroes display courage against overwhelming odds.
Wisdom (الحكمة)	الحكيم ينقذ القرية بنصيحة	The wise man saves the village with advice.	Wise figures guide communities through clever solutions.
Patience (الصبر)	بالصبر نال الفقير الغنى	Through patience, the poor man gained wealth.	Characters endure hardship before achieving reward.
Magical Helpers (المساعدون السحريون)	الجنّي يساعد الفتى	The genie helps the boy.	Supernatural beings aid heroes in their quests.
Tricksters (المحتالون)	الثعلب يخدع الأسد	The fox tricks the lion.	Trickster figures use wit to outsmart stronger foes.
Journeys (الرحلات)	سافر التاجر عبر الصحارى	The merchant traveled across the deserts.	Adventures involve travel, discovery, and transformation.



Enchanted Objects (الأشياء المسحورة)	المصباح السحري يحقّق الأمنيات	The magic lamp fulfills wishes.	Magical items grant power, wealth, or protection.
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Box 2.3 Common themes and motifs in Arabic folktales

2.3.3 Selected folktale analysis

One famous Arabic folktale is the story of **Juha (جحا)**, a humorous trickster figure who appears in countless tales across the Arab world. Juha's stories often involve clever twists, exposing human folly while teaching lessons about wisdom, humility, or justice. Another example is the tale of 'Antar ibn Shaddād, which blends folklore with history, portraying the legendary warrior-poet whose bravery and love became symbols of Arab identity. These stories illustrate how folktales combine entertainment with moral and cultural significance.

Fill in the blank: The humorous trickster figure who appears in many Arabic folktales is called _____.



Plate 2.6 Storytelling of Juha's folktales in Arabic tradition



Pilot questions 2.3

1. What Arabic term is used for “folktale”?
2. What are the main functions of folktales in society?
3. What themes and motifs are commonly found in Arabic folktales?
4. Who is Juha, and why is he significant in Arabic folklore?
5. How do folktales combine entertainment with moral and cultural lessons?

2.4 Comparative and Contemporary Perspectives

Proverbs, wise sayings, and folktales are not unique to Arabic culture. They are part of a global heritage of oral traditions, reflecting the shared human need to express wisdom, transmit values, and entertain through storytelling. This Part explores how Arabic traditions compare with those of other cultures, examines their influence on modern Arabic literature, and considers their continuing relevance in contemporary society.

2.4.1 Similarities and differences with other cultural traditions

Across cultures, proverbs and folktales often share universal themes such as justice, patience, and the triumph of good over evil. For example, the Arabic proverb **من جدّ وجد** (*Man jadda wajada* – “He who strives, finds”) parallels the English saying “Where there is a will, there is a way.” At the same time, cultural differences shape the imagery and context of these expressions. Arabic folktales may feature desert animals and tribal settings, while European tales often include forests and castles.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic proverb “**من جدّ وجد**” is similar in meaning to the English saying _____.



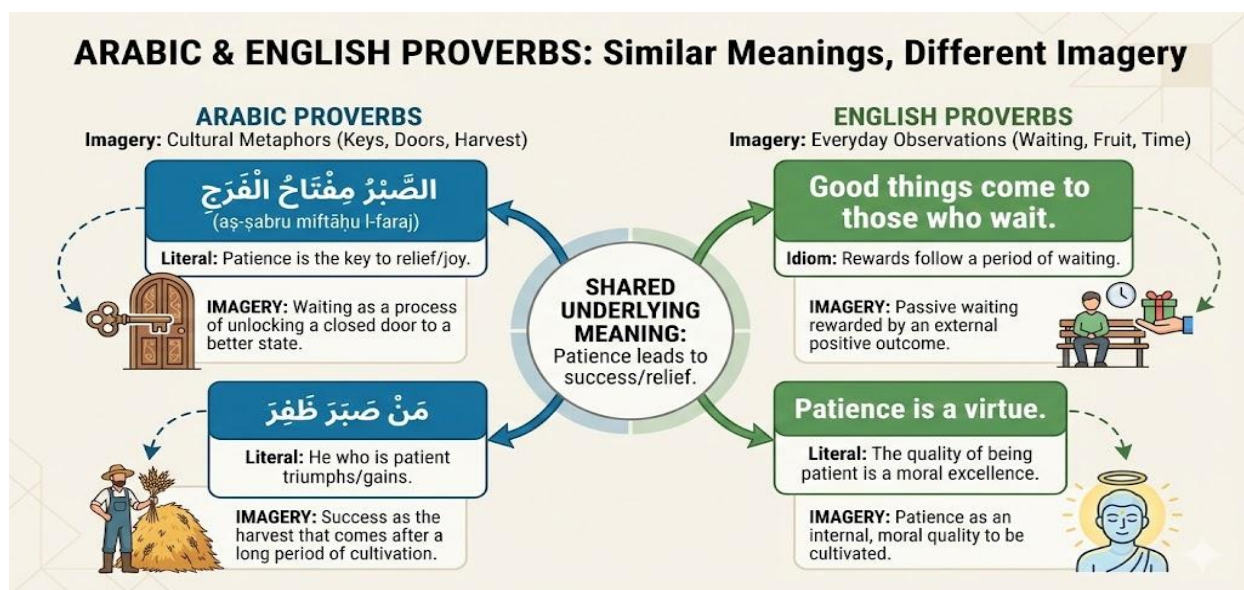


Figure 2.7 Comparative perspectives on proverbs across cultures

2.4.2 Influence on modern Arabic literature and oral storytelling

The legacy of proverbs and folktales continues to shape modern Arabic literature. Writers often weave traditional sayings into novels, plays, and poetry to add cultural depth and authenticity. Folktale characters such as Juha remain popular in contemporary storytelling, appearing in children's books, theatre, and even media adaptations. This demonstrates the adaptability of oral traditions, as they evolve while retaining their core values.

Fill in the blank: The humorous folktale character who continues to appear in modern Arabic literature is _____.

<i>Oral Tradition</i>	<i>Modern Literary Example</i>	<i>Influence / Function</i>
Juha Stories (حكايات جحا)	<i>Juha appears in short stories and children's literature.</i>	<i>His humorous anecdotes are adapted to critique society, politics, and human folly.</i>
Proverbs in Novels (الأمثال في الروايات)	<i>Writers weave proverbs into dialogue and narration.</i>	<i>Proverbs add authenticity, cultural depth, and moral resonance to modern fiction.</i>



Folktale Motifs in Plays (الموتيفات الشعبية في المسرحيات)	<i>Motifs like magical helpers or tricksters appear in modern drama.</i>	<i>Folktale elements enrich plots, symbolize social struggles, and connect audiences to heritage.</i>
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Box 2.4 Influence of oral traditions on modern Arabic literature

2.4.3 Relevance of proverbs and folktales in contemporary society

In today's world, proverbs and folktales remain relevant as tools for teaching, motivating, and preserving identity. Proverbs are frequently used in everyday speech, social media, and public discourse to convey wisdom in a concise form. Folktales continue to inspire films, television, and educational materials, ensuring that younger generations remain connected to their cultural heritage. Their adaptability shows that oral traditions are not relics of the past but living elements of culture.

Fill in the blank: Proverbs are often used in contemporary society through _____ and public discourse.



Plate 2.8 Contemporary use of proverbs and folktales in education



Pilot questions 2.4

1. How do Arabic proverbs compare with those from other cultures?
2. What cultural differences influence the imagery used in proverbs and folktales?
3. How have oral traditions influenced modern Arabic literature?
4. Which folktale character continues to appear in contemporary Arabic storytelling?
5. Why are proverbs and folktales still relevant in today's society?

Series Summary

This Series has introduced you to the richness of Arabic oral traditions, focusing on proverbs, wise sayings, and folktales. These forms of expression have long served as vehicles for transmitting wisdom, shaping social values, and preserving cultural identity. Starting with proverbs, we examined their definition, characteristics, and social functions, before moving on to wise sayings, where we distinguished them from proverbs and explored their themes of morality and guidance. We then studied folktales, considering their role in society, recurring motifs, and selected examples such as Juha. Finally, we broadened our perspective by comparing Arabic traditions with those of other cultures and reflecting on their influence in modern literature and contemporary life.

Upon completing this Series, you should now be able to define the characteristics of Arabic proverbs, interpret their meanings, distinguish wise sayings from proverbs, analyse their moral lessons, describe the nature and role of folktales, evaluate their themes and motifs, compare Arabic oral traditions with those of other cultures, and assess their relevance today. These outcomes align directly with the Series Learning Outcomes, equipping you with the knowledge and skills to appreciate oral traditions as both cultural heritage and living expressions of wisdom.



Glossary of Terms

‘Antar ibn Shaddād – A legendary Arab warrior-poet whose stories blend folklore with history, symbolising bravery and love.

Folktale (حكاية شعبية ḥikāya sha‘biyya) – A traditional story passed orally through generations, often featuring imaginative plots, symbolic characters, and moral lessons.

Juha (جحا) – A humorous trickster figure in Arabic folklore, known for witty stories that expose human folly while teaching wisdom.

Mathal (مثل) – The Arabic word for “proverb,” meaning a short, commonly known saying that conveys wisdom or advice.

Motif – A repeated narrative element in folktales, such as magical helpers, tricksters, journeys, or enchanted objects.

Proverb (مثل mathal) – A brief, memorable saying that expresses a truth, piece of advice, or moral lesson, often anonymous and rooted in collective experience.

Qawl ḥakīm (قول حكيم) – The Arabic term for “wise saying,” referring to a statement of wisdom or moral guidance usually attributed to a respected figure.

Theme – The central idea or message in a folktale or wise saying, such as justice, patience, humility, or bravery.

Wise saying (قول حكيم qawl ḥakīm) – A concise statement of wisdom or moral instruction, often linked to a known source like a scholar or elder.

Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā – A pre-Islamic poet whose works are sometimes referenced in folktale traditions for their moral and reflective qualities.



Objective Questions

1. Identify the Arabic word for “proverb.” (Linked to SLO 2.1)
2. Match the following with their meanings:
 - من جدّ وجد _____
 - العلم نور _____
 - الوقت كالسيف إن لم تقطعه قطعك _____ (Linked to SLOs 2.2, 2.4)
3. Select the figure commonly known as a humorous trickster in Arabic folktales:
 - a. ‘Antar ibn Shaddād
 - b. Juha
 - c. Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā
 - d. Imru’ al-Qays (Linked to SLO 2.5)
4. State one common motif found in Arabic folktales. (Linked to SLO 2.6)

Short-Answer Questions

5. Define a wise saying and explain how it differs from a proverb. (Linked to SLO 2.3)
6. Describe the main functions of proverbs in Arabic society. (Linked to SLO 2.1)
7. Give one example of a wise saying and interpret its moral lesson. (Linked to SLO 2.4)
8. Explain the role of folktales in preserving cultural identity. (Linked to SLO 2.5)
9. Compare one Arabic proverb with a similar expression from another culture. (Linked to SLO 2.7)

Long-Answer Questions

10. Analyse the themes and motifs commonly found in Arabic folktales, using examples to illustrate your points. (Linked to SLO 2.6)
11. Evaluate the relevance of proverbs, wise sayings, and folktales in contemporary Arabic society. (Linked to SLO 2.8)



Objective Questions

1. Mathal (مثال).
 2.
 - من جدّ وجد → “He who strives, finds.”
 - العلم نور → “Knowledge is light.”
 - الوقت كالسيف إن لم تقطعه قطعك → “Time is like a sword; if you do not cut it, it cuts you.”
 3.
 - b. Juha.
4. Examples include magical helpers, tricksters, journeys, or enchanted objects.

Short-Answer Questions

5. A wise saying (قول حكيم *qawl ḥakīm*) is a statement of wisdom or moral guidance attributed to a respected figure. Unlike proverbs, which are anonymous and rooted in collective experience, wise sayings carry authority due to their source.
6. Proverbs advise, warn, encourage, persuade, and transmit wisdom across generations.
7. Example: العدل أساس الملك – “Justice is the foundation of rule.” It teaches the importance of fairness in leadership.
8. Folktales preserve cultural identity by transmitting values, customs, and collective imagination through storytelling.
9. The Arabic proverb من جدّ وجد (“He who strives, finds”) is similar to the English saying “Where there is a will, there is a way.” Both emphasise persistence and effort.

Long-Answer Questions



10. **Basic response:** Arabic folktales often emphasise themes such as justice, bravery, patience, and wisdom. Common motifs include magical helpers, trickster figures like Juha, and journeys that test characters' resilience. These elements make the stories memorable and meaningful.

Value-added response: Beyond these themes, folktales reflect the social environment of Arab communities, incorporating desert imagery, tribal values, and moral lessons relevant to everyday life. They also serve as cultural archives, linking oral traditions to historical figures such as 'Antar ibn Shaddād, thereby blending folklore with history.

11. **Basic response:** Proverbs, wise sayings, and folktales remain relevant today because they continue to teach moral lessons, inspire ethical behaviour, and preserve cultural heritage. They are still used in everyday speech, literature, and education.

Value-added response: In contemporary society, these traditions have adapted to new platforms such as social media, literature, and theatre. Proverbs are quoted in political speeches and online discussions, while folktales inspire modern films and children's books. Their enduring relevance demonstrates how oral traditions evolve while maintaining their cultural significance.



Part 2.1

- Mathal (مثال).
- Brevity, clarity, imagery, rhythm.
- Advising, warning, encouraging, persuading, transmitting wisdom.
- Examples: من جدّ وجد ("He who strives, finds"), الصبر مفتاح الفرج ("Patience is the key to relief"), الجار قبل الدار ("The neighbour before the house").
- Proverbs are important because they preserve collective wisdom, guide behaviour, and strengthen oral tradition.

Part 2.2

- Qawl ḥakīm (قول حكيم).
- Wise sayings are attributed to respected figures and focus on universal truths, while proverbs are anonymous and rooted in collective experience.
- Justice, patience, humility, honesty, knowledge.
- Example: العدل أساس الملك – "Justice is the foundation of rule." It teaches fairness in leadership.
- Wise sayings are important because they provide moral and ethical guidance for individuals and communities.

Part 2.3

- Ḥikāya sha‘biyya (حكاية شعبية).
- Entertainment, cultural identity, moral instruction, social cohesion.
- Themes: justice, bravery, wisdom, patience. Motifs: magical helpers, tricksters, journeys, enchanted objects.
- Juha, a humorous trickster figure, significant for teaching wisdom through humour.
- Folktales combine entertainment with moral and cultural lessons, reinforcing values while engaging audiences.

Part 2.4



- Arabic proverbs often share universal meanings with those from other cultures, such as persistence or patience.
- Cultural differences influence imagery, e.g., desert animals in Arabic tales versus forests in European tales.
- Oral traditions influence modern literature by embedding proverbs in novels and plays, and by adapting folktale characters like Juha.
- Juha continues to appear in contemporary Arabic storytelling, including children's books and theatre.
- Proverbs and folktales remain relevant today because they are used in speech, education, media, and cultural identity preservation.

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Open Educational Resources (OERs) Suggested for Learners

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- "Themes and Motifs in Arabic Folktales." Open Access Islamic Studies Resources. Retrieved from <https://openarabic.org>
- "Wise Sayings in Arabic Tradition." Al-Islam OER Repository. Retrieved from <https://www.al-islam.org>



Illustrations (Figures, Plates, Boxes)

- *Figure 2.1 Characteristics of proverbs*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create a diagram showing the characteristics of proverbs: brevity, clarity, imagery, rhythm.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Box 2.1 Functions of proverbs in Arabic society*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a text box listing the functions of proverbs in Arabic society: advising, warning, encouraging, persuading, transmitting wisdom.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Plate 2.2 Transmission of proverbs in Arabic tradition*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create an illustration of an elder reciting Arabic proverbs to younger listeners in a traditional setting.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Figure 2.3 Distinction between proverbs and wise sayings*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create a diagram comparing proverbs and wise sayings: origin, focus, function.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Box 2.2 Themes of wise sayings in Arabic tradition*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a text box listing themes of wise sayings in Arabic tradition: justice, patience, humility, honesty, knowledge.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Plate 2.4 Transmission of wise sayings in Arabic tradition*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create an illustration of a teacher or elder sharing Arabic wise sayings with students in a traditional setting.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Figure 2.5 Functions of folktales in Arabic society*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create a diagram showing the functions of folktales: entertainment, cultural identity, moral instruction, social cohesion.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Box 2.3 Common themes and motifs in Arabic folktales*



- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a text box listing common themes and motifs in Arabic folktales: justice, bravery, wisdom, patience, magical helpers, tricksters, journeys, enchanted objects.”
- Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Plate 2.6 Storytelling of Juha’s folktales in Arabic tradition*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create an illustration of a storyteller narrating Juha’s folktales to a group of listeners in a traditional Arabic setting.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Figure 2.7 Comparative perspectives on proverbs across cultures*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create a diagram comparing Arabic and English proverbs, showing similarities in meaning but differences in imagery.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Box 2.4 Influence of oral traditions on modern Arabic literature*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a text box listing examples of oral traditions influencing modern Arabic literature: Juha stories, proverbs in novels, folktale motifs in plays.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Plate 2.8 Contemporary use of proverbs and folktales in education*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create an illustration of a modern classroom where a teacher uses Arabic proverbs and folktales to engage students.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.



Series 3: Soothsayers' Rhymed Prose and Sermons

Part 3.1 Origins and Nature of Rhymed Prose (Saj')

- 3.1.1 Definition and features of **saj'** (rhymed prose)
- 3.1.2 Role of soothsayers (كُهَّان *kuhhān*) in pre-Islamic society
- 3.1.3 Examples of early rhymed prose

Part 3.2 Functions and Themes of Soothsayers' Prose

- 3.2.1 Religious and spiritual functions
- 3.2.2 Social and political influence of soothsayers
- 3.2.3 Common themes: fate, destiny, warnings, and guidance

Part 3.3 Transition to Islamic Sermons (Khuṭba)

- 3.3.1 Definition and structure of **khuṭba** (sermon)
- 3.3.2 Early Islamic sermons and their purposes
- 3.3.3 Stylistic continuity and change from saj' to khuṭba

Part 3.4 Comparative and Literary Perspectives

- 3.4.1 Comparison between soothsayers' prose and Islamic sermons
- 3.4.2 Influence on later Arabic literature and rhetoric
- 3.4.3 Contemporary relevance of saj' and khuṭba traditions

Introduction

In the last Series, we explored proverbs, wise sayings, and folktales, which revealed how oral traditions shaped cultural identity and transmitted wisdom across generations. Building on that foundation, we now turn to another fascinating aspect of early Arabic expression: the rhymed prose of soothsayers and the



sermons that followed in the Islamic period. These forms of speech were not only artistic but also influential, guiding communities, shaping beliefs, and laying the groundwork for later Arabic rhetoric and literature.

The aim of this Series is to introduce you to the stylistic features, functions, and cultural significance of soothsayers' rhymed prose and early Islamic sermons, and to equip you with the ability to analyse their themes, compare their roles, and evaluate their continuing relevance.

We shall commence this Series by examining the origins and nature of rhymed prose, focusing on its definition, features, and the role of soothsayers in pre-Islamic society. Next, we will consider the functions and themes of soothsayers' prose, highlighting its religious, social, and political influence. Following that, we will move on to the transition into Islamic sermons, studying their structure, purposes, and stylistic continuity with rhymed prose. Finally, we will conclude with comparative and contemporary perspectives, reflecting on how these traditions influenced later Arabic literature and why they remain significant today.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

SLO 3.1 define the stylistic features of **saj'** (rhymed prose) and explain its role in pre-Islamic society.

SLO 3.2 analyse the functions and themes of soothsayers' rhymed prose, including its religious, social, and political influence.

SLO 3.3 describe the structure and purposes of early Islamic sermons (**khuṭab**) and identify their stylistic continuity with rhymed prose.

SLO 3.4 compare soothsayers' rhymed prose with Islamic sermons, highlighting similarities and differences in form and function.

SLO 3.5 evaluate the influence of rhymed prose and sermons on later Arabic literature and rhetoric.



SLO 3.6 assess the relevance of saj‘ and khuṭba traditions in contemporary Arabic society and discourse.

3.1 Origins and Nature of Rhymed Prose (Saj‘)

Rhymed prose, known in Arabic as **saj‘** (سجع), is one of the earliest stylistic forms of Arabic expression. It is characterised by rhythmical phrasing and end-rhyme, often used to convey solemnity, authority, and memorability. In pre-Islamic Arabia, saj‘ was the preferred medium of soothsayers (كُهَّان *kuhhān*), who employed it to deliver prophecies, warnings, and guidance. This Part introduces the definition and features of saj‘, its role in society, and examples that illustrate its enduring influence.

3.1.1 Definition and features of saj‘

Saj‘ is a form of prose distinguished by balanced phrases and recurring rhyme at the end of clauses. Unlike poetry, it does not follow strict metrical patterns, but it achieves musicality through rhythm and repetition. Saj‘ was valued for its persuasive power, as its cadence made messages memorable and authoritative.

Fill in the blank: A form of prose marked by rhythmical phrasing and end-rhyme is called _____.



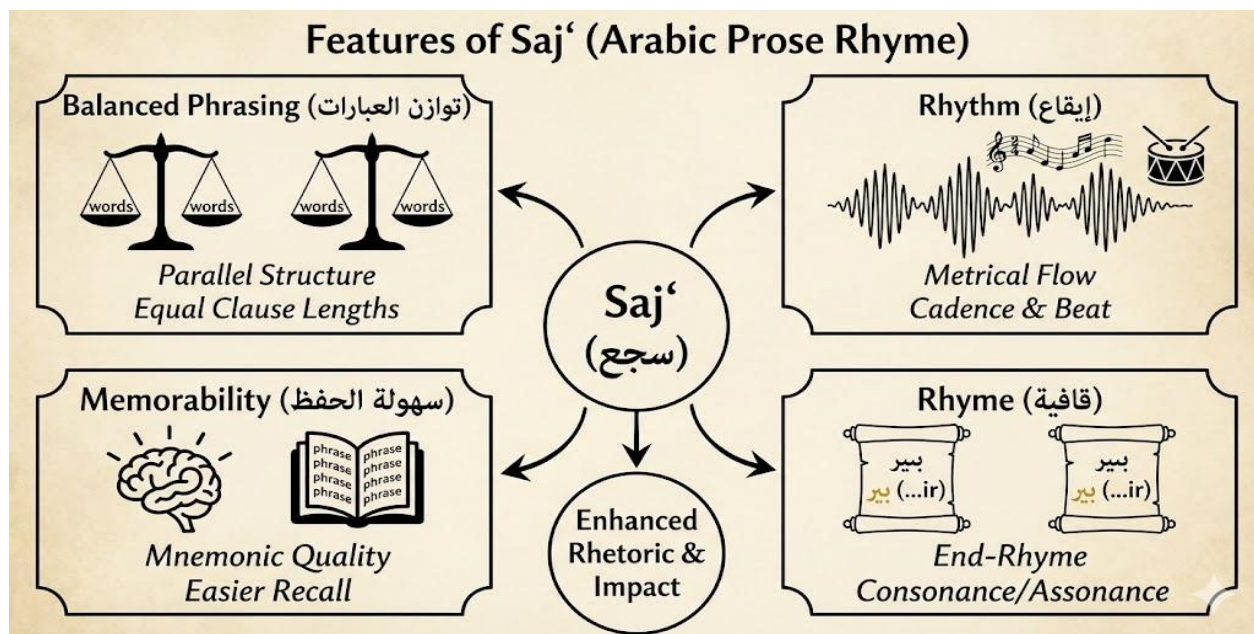


Figure 3.1 Features of saj' (rhymed prose)

3.1.2 Role of soothsayers (kuhhān) in pre-Islamic society

Soothsayers, known as **kuhhān** (كُهَّان), were influential figures in pre-Islamic Arabia. They were believed to possess insight into unseen matters, such as fate, destiny, and divine will. Their pronouncements were delivered in saj', which gave their words a sense of mystery and authority. Communities often consulted kuhhān for guidance in times of uncertainty, whether in matters of war, trade, or personal decisions.

Fill in the blank: In pre-Islamic Arabia, soothsayers were called _____.





Plate 3.2 A soothsayer delivering *sajʿ* in pre-Islamic Arabia

3.1.3 Examples of early rhymed prose

Early examples of *sajʿ* often dealt with themes of fate, warnings, and divine signs. For instance, a soothsayer might declare:

- **“Al-layl wa-mā yughshih, wa-n-nahār wa-mā yuḍī”** – “By the night and what it covers, and the day and what it illuminates.”

This style, with its parallelism and rhyme, anticipates later Qurʾānic *sajʿ*, though the Qurʾān elevated the form to a divine level.

Another example:

- **“Al-ḥaqqu yaʿlū wa-lā yuʿlā ʿalayh”** – “Truth rises and is never overcome.”

Such expressions reveal how *sajʿ* was used to assert moral and spiritual authority.

Fill in the blank: The phrase “Al-ḥaqqu yaʿlū wa-lā yuʿlā ʿalayh” teaches the supremacy of _____.



Example of Saj' (Arabic)	Translation	Theme
من عاش مات، ومن مات فات، وكل ما هو آت آت	"Whoever lives shall die, whoever dies is gone, and whatever is to come will surely come."	Fate / Destiny — stresses inevitability of life's cycle.
الحقُّ أبلج، والباطلُ لجلج	"Truth is radiant, while falsehood is shaky."	Truth — contrasts clarity of truth with instability of falsehood.
في السماء آيات، وفي الأرض عبر	"In the heavens are signs, and on earth are lessons."	Divine Signs — points to cosmic and earthly phenomena as proofs of divine wisdom.
الليلُ داج، والنهارُ ساج	"The night is dark, and the day is bright."	Divine Signs / Natural Order — reflects on creation's rhythm as evidence of divine power.
أما بعد، فكل شيء هالك إلا وجهه	"Lo, everything is perishing except His Face."	Fate / Mortality — emphasizes impermanence of worldly things and divine permanence.

Box 3.3 Selected examples of early saj'

Pilot questions 3.1

1. What is the Arabic term for rhymed prose?
2. What are the main features of saj'?
3. Who were the kuhhān, and what role did they play in pre-Islamic society?
4. Give one example of early saj' and explain its theme.
5. Why was saj' considered persuasive and authoritative in oral tradition?



3.2 Functions and Themes of Soothsayers' Prose

Soothsayers' rhymed prose, or **saj'** (سجع), was not merely a stylistic form but a powerful medium through which messages of guidance, warning, and authority were conveyed. In pre-Islamic Arabia, soothsayers (كُهَّان *kuhhān*) used saj' to influence communities, address spiritual concerns, and reinforce social norms. This Part explores the functions of soothsayers' prose and the recurring themes that shaped its content.

3.2.1 Religious and spiritual functions

One of the primary functions of saj' was to provide spiritual guidance. Soothsayers were believed to have access to hidden knowledge, often attributed to divine or supernatural sources. Their rhymed pronouncements addressed matters of fate, destiny, and the unseen world. By using saj', they gave their words a sense of solemnity and authority, which reinforced their role as spiritual intermediaries.

Fill in the blank: Soothsayers were regarded as intermediaries with access to _____ knowledge.



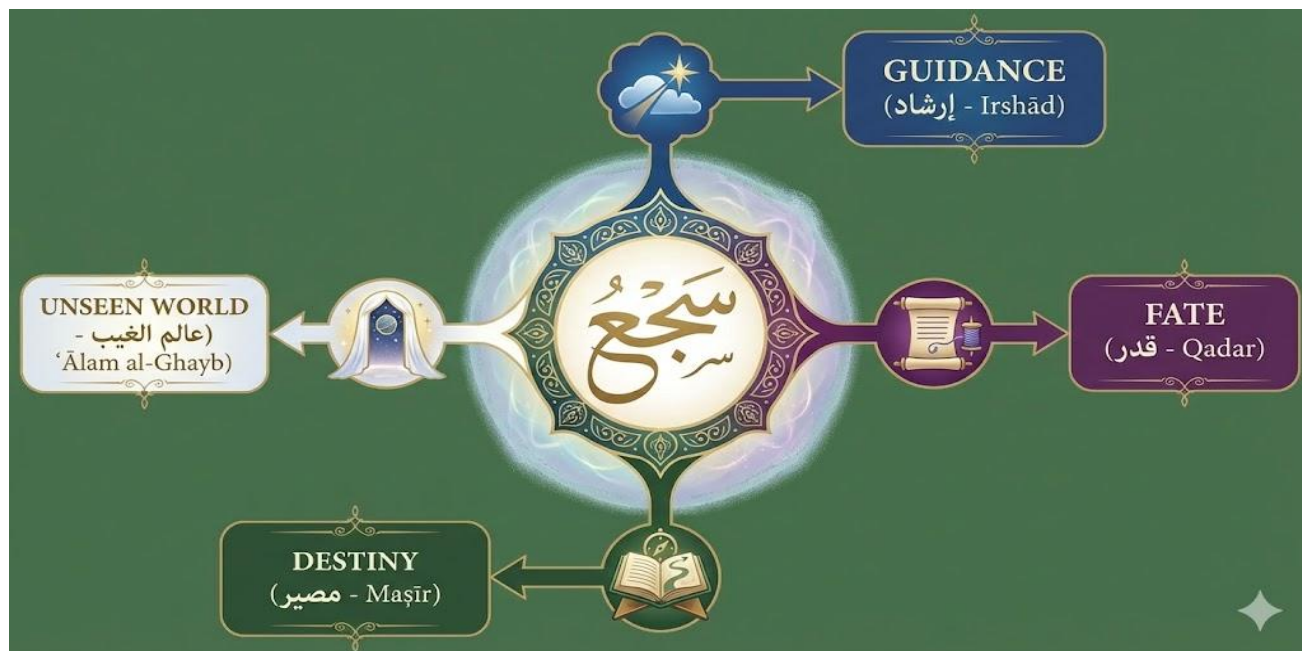


Figure 3.4 Religious and spiritual functions of saj'

3.2.2 Social and political influence of soothsayers

Beyond spiritual matters, saj' played a role in shaping social and political life. Soothsayers were consulted before battles, trade ventures, or tribal decisions. Their pronouncements could legitimise leadership, encourage unity, or warn against actions that might bring harm. The rhythmic and persuasive nature of saj' made it effective in rallying communities and reinforcing authority.

Fill in the blank: Communities often consulted soothsayers before making decisions about _____ or tribal affairs.





Plate 3.5 Social and political influence of saj‘

3.2.3 Common themes: fate, destiny, warnings, and guidance

The themes of saj‘ were often universal, addressing human concerns that transcended time. **Fate** (*قدر* *qadar*) and **destiny** (*مصير* *maṣīr*) were recurring subjects, reminding listeners of the inevitability of life’s outcomes. **Warnings** against arrogance, greed, or disobedience were common, while **guidance** offered reassurance and direction in uncertain times. These themes gave saj‘ its enduring relevance, as they spoke to both spiritual and practical aspects of life.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic term for destiny, often used in saj‘, is _____.

Theme	Arabic Term	Short Explanation
Fate	المصير	Highlights the inevitability of life’s end and the certainty of death.
Destiny	القدر	Emphasizes that events unfold according to divine will and predetermined order.
Warnings	التحذير	Serves to caution against wrongdoing, injustice, or neglect of moral duties.



Guidance	الهداية	Provides moral and spiritual direction, urging adherence to truth and virtue.
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Box 3.6 Common themes in soothsayers' prose

Pilot questions 3.2

1. What spiritual role did *saj'* play in pre-Islamic society?
2. How did soothsayers influence social and political decisions?
3. What are the main themes found in soothsayers' prose?
4. Give one example of how *saj'* was used to warn or guide communities.
5. Why was *saj'* considered persuasive in both spiritual and social contexts?

3.3 Transition to Islamic Sermons (Khuṭba)

The emergence of Islam brought significant changes to the use of rhymed prose. While *saj'* (سجع) had been the medium of soothsayers, it was adapted and elevated in the form of **khuṭba** (خطبة), meaning sermon. These sermons became central to Islamic religious and social life, serving as vehicles for moral instruction, community guidance, and spiritual reflection. This Part explores the definition and structure of *khuṭba*, the purposes of early Islamic sermons, and the stylistic continuity between *saj'* and *khuṭba*.

3.3.1 Definition and structure of *khuṭba*

A **khuṭba** is a formal sermon delivered in a religious or communal setting, often during Friday prayers, festivals, or important occasions. It typically begins with praise of God, followed by moral exhortation, guidance for the community, and supplication. The structure of *khuṭba* reflects both spiritual and social concerns, combining religious devotion with practical advice.



Fill in the blank: A formal sermon delivered during Friday prayers or festivals is called a _____.

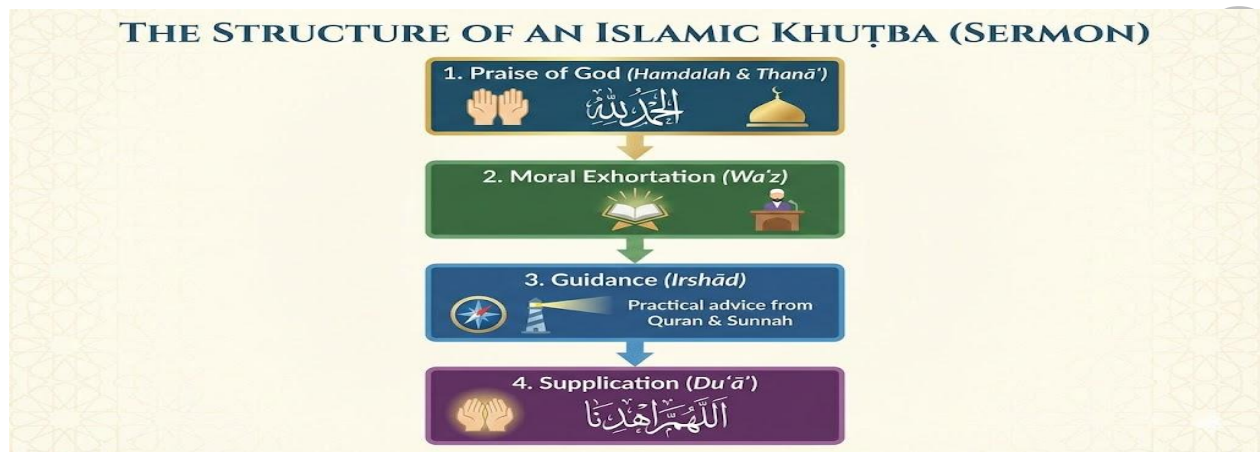


Figure 3.7 Structure of a khuṭba

3.3.2 Early Islamic sermons and their purposes

Early Islamic sermons were delivered by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, addressing both spiritual and worldly matters. They reinforced the principles of faith, encouraged ethical conduct, and provided guidance on social responsibilities. Sermons also served as a means of unifying the community, reminding believers of their duties to God and one another.

Fill in the blank: Early Islamic sermons reinforced the principles of _____ and ethical conduct.



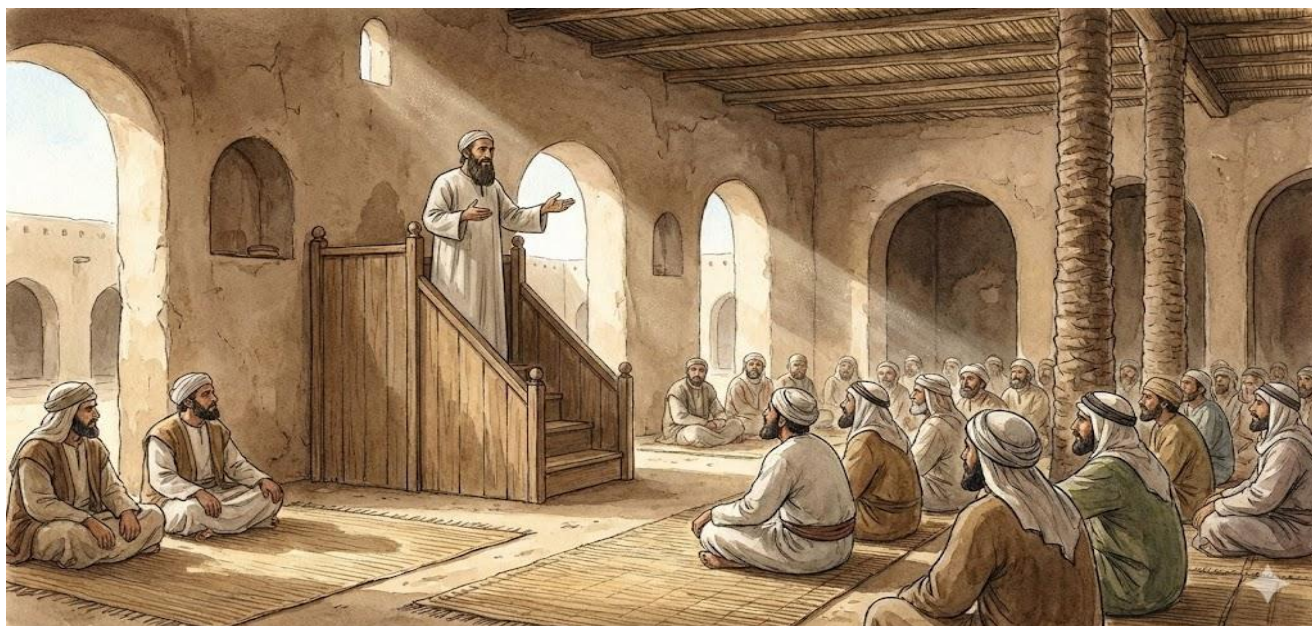


Plate 3.8 Early Islamic sermon in a communal setting

3.3.3 Stylistic continuity and change from *sajʿ* to *khuṭba*

Although *khuṭba* differed in purpose from soothsayers' *sajʿ*, it retained stylistic features such as rhythm, parallelism, and rhyme. This continuity made sermons memorable and impactful, while the shift in content reflected the new religious and moral framework of Islam. The adaptation of *sajʿ* into *khuṭba* demonstrates how a pre-Islamic literary form was transformed into a tool for spiritual and communal guidance.

Fill in the blank: The stylistic feature of rhythm and rhyme found in *sajʿ* was also retained in

Aspect	<i>Sajʿ</i> (السجع)	<i>Khuṭba</i> (الخطبة)	Comparison
Form	Rhymed prose with balanced phrases and end rhyme.	Structured speech, often beginning with praise of God and moral exhortation.	Both rely on rhythm and eloquence, but <i>sajʿ</i> is more ornamental.



Function	Used by soothsayers, preachers, and in literary expression.	Delivered in religious, political, or social contexts to instruct or guide.	<i>Sajʿ</i> emphasizes style; <i>khuṭba</i> emphasizes purpose.
Themes	Fate, destiny, divine signs, wisdom.	Guidance, moral instruction, community affairs, religious devotion.	Overlap in moral and spiritual themes, but <i>khuṭba</i> is more practical.
Audience Impact	Captivates through rhyme, rhythm, and memorable phrasing.	Persuades and instructs through clarity, authority, and communal relevance.	Both aim to move the audience, but with different emphases.
Stylistic Devices	Parallelism, rhyme, brevity, metaphor.	Structured argument, Qurʿanic citations, moral appeals.	<i>Sajʿ</i> is stylistically ornate; <i>khuṭba</i> blends style with didactic content.

Box 3.9 Continuity between sajʿ and khuṭba

Pilot questions 3.3

1. What is the Arabic term for sermon?
2. What is the typical structure of a khuṭba?
3. What purposes did early Islamic sermons serve?
4. How did khuṭba retain stylistic features of sajʿ?
5. Why was the transition from sajʿ to khuṭba significant in Islamic society?

3.4 Comparative and Literary Perspectives

The study of soothsayers' rhymed prose (**sajʿ**) and Islamic sermons (**khuṭab**) is enriched when viewed in comparative and literary contexts. These traditions not only shaped Arabic rhetoric but also influenced broader literary developments. This Part examines the similarities and differences between sajʿ and khuṭba, their impact on later Arabic literature, and their relevance in contemporary society.



3.4.1 Comparison between soothsayers' prose and Islamic sermons

Although saj' and khuṭba differ in purpose, they share stylistic features such as rhythm, rhyme, and parallelism. Saj' was often associated with mystery and prophecy, while khuṭba became a tool for moral instruction and communal guidance. The shift from saj' to khuṭba illustrates how a literary form was adapted to serve new religious and social functions.

Fill in the blank: While saj' was linked to prophecy and mystery, khuṭba was primarily used for _____ instruction.

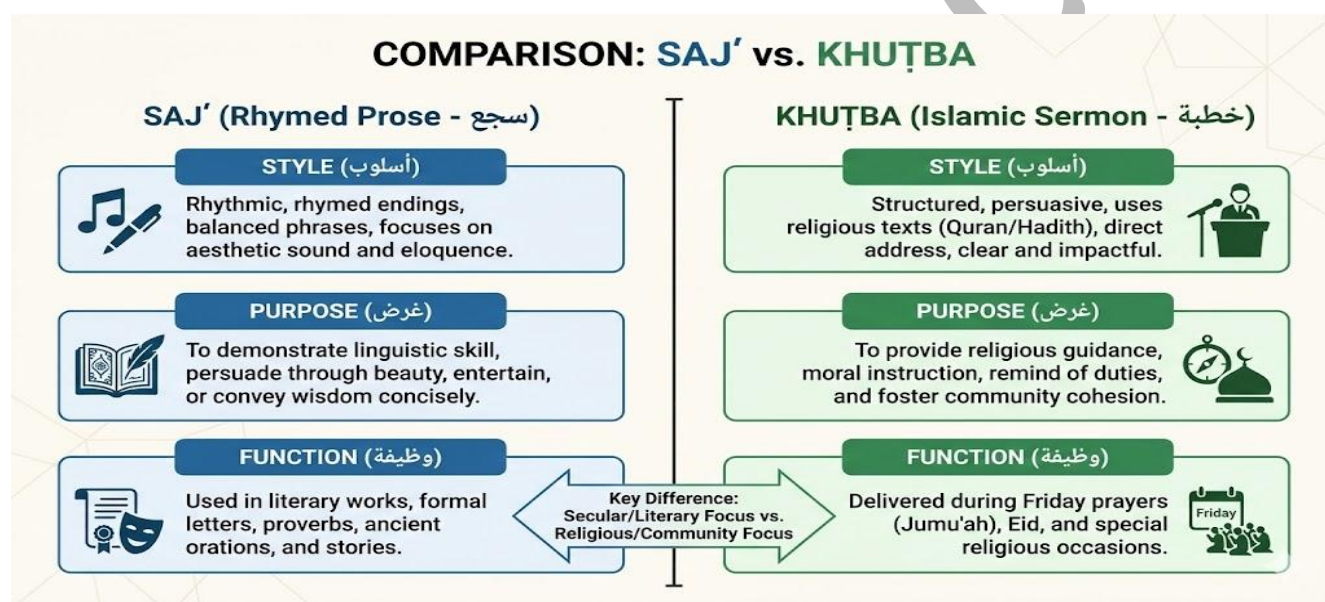


Figure 3.10 Comparison between saj' and khuṭba

3.4.2 Influence on later Arabic literature and rhetoric

The stylistic qualities of saj' and khuṭba influenced later Arabic prose, particularly in fields such as religious preaching, political oratory, and literary composition. Writers and scholars adopted rhythmic phrasing and rhetorical devices to enhance persuasion and memorability. This continuity demonstrates the enduring legacy of oral traditions in shaping Arabic literary aesthetics.



Fill in the blank: The stylistic qualities of saj‘ and khuṭba influenced later Arabic _____ and oratory.

Area	Influence of Saj‘ & Khuṭba	Explanation
Preaching (الوعظ والإرشاد)	<i>Elevated sermons with rhythmic, memorable phrasing.</i>	<i>Early Islamic preachers adopted saj‘ to make moral and religious guidance impactful.</i>
Oratory (الخطابة)	<i>Strengthened public speaking traditions.</i>	<i>Khuṭba became a model for eloquent speech in political, religious, and social contexts.</i>
Composition (الكتابة)	<i>Inspired prose style in letters and literary works.</i>	<i>Writers used saj‘’s rhythm and parallelism to enhance beauty and persuasion in texts.</i>
Rhetoric (البلاغة)	<i>Shaped Arabic rhetorical theory and stylistics.</i>	<i>Both forms emphasized clarity, persuasion, and artistry, laying foundations for classical rhetoric.</i>

Box 3.11 Influence of saj‘ and khuṭba on Arabic literature

3.4.3 Contemporary relevance of saj‘ and khuṭba traditions

In modern times, the traditions of saj‘ and khuṭba remain relevant. Sermons continue to be central to religious practice, while the stylistic features of saj‘ are echoed in speeches, media, and literature. These traditions remind us of the power of language to inspire, persuade, and unify communities. Their adaptability ensures that they remain living elements of Arabic culture.

Fill in the blank: The continued use of sermons in religious practice shows the contemporary relevance of _____ traditions.





Plate 3.12 Contemporary relevance of khuṭba traditions

Pilot questions 3.4

1. What stylistic features are shared between saj' and khuṭba?
2. How do saj' and khuṭba differ in purpose and function?
3. In what ways did saj' and khuṭba influence later Arabic literature?
4. Why are saj' and khuṭba considered relevant in contemporary society?
5. Give one example of how these traditions continue to shape modern communication.

Series Summary

This Series has explored the origins, functions, and transformation of soothsayers' rhymed prose (**saj'**) into Islamic sermons (**khuṭab**), highlighting their importance in shaping Arabic literary and cultural traditions. We began by examining the definition and stylistic features of saj', followed by its role in pre-Islamic society through the pronouncements of soothsayers. We then considered the functions and themes of this prose, focusing on its spiritual, social, and political influence. Moving forward, we studied the transition to Islamic sermons, looking at their structure, purposes, and stylistic continuity with saj'. Finally, we broadened our perspective by



comparing saj‘ and khuṭba, assessing their influence on later Arabic literature and reflecting on their relevance in contemporary society.

Upon completing this Series, you should now be able to define the features of saj‘, analyse its functions and themes, describe the structure and purposes of khuṭba, compare soothsayers’ prose with Islamic sermons, evaluate their influence on Arabic literature, and assess their continuing relevance today. These outcomes align directly with the Series Learning Outcomes, equipping you with the knowledge and skills to appreciate how oral traditions evolved into powerful literary and rhetorical forms that continue to shape Arabic culture.

Glossary of Terms

Khuṭba (خطبة) – An Islamic sermon delivered in a religious or communal setting, often during Friday prayers, festivals, or special occasions. It combines praise of God, moral exhortation, and guidance for the community.

Kuhhān (كهان) – Soothsayers in pre-Islamic Arabia who were believed to possess insight into hidden matters such as fate and destiny. They often delivered their pronouncements in rhymed prose.

Qadar (قدر) – The Arabic term for fate, often used in soothsayers’ prose to emphasise the inevitability of life’s outcomes.

Rhymed prose (سجع saj‘) – A form of Arabic prose characterised by rhythmical phrasing and end-rhyme. It was used by soothsayers to deliver prophecies and later adapted into Islamic sermons.

Saj‘ (سجع) – The Arabic word for rhymed prose, marked by balanced phrases, rhythm, and rhyme. It was a stylistic form that gave authority and memorability to spoken messages.

Soothsayers’ prose – The body of rhymed pronouncements delivered by kuhhān in pre-Islamic Arabia, often addressing themes of fate, destiny, warnings, and guidance.



Themes of sajʿ – Recurring ideas in soothsayers’ prose, including fate, destiny, warnings against arrogance or greed, and guidance for communities.

Destiny (مصير maṣīr) – The Arabic term for destiny, referring to the ultimate outcome or course of events in a person’s life, frequently emphasised in sajʿ.

Concept Check Questions [Series 3]

Objective Questions

1. Identify the Arabic term for rhymed prose. (Linked to SLO 3.1)
2. Select the correct role of kuhhān in pre-Islamic society:
 - a. Poets
 - b. Soothsayers
 - c. Merchants
 - d. Warriors (Linked to SLO 3.2)
3. State one common theme found in soothsayers’ prose. (Linked to SLO 3.2)
4. Define khuṭba in one sentence. (Linked to SLO 3.3)

Short-Answer Questions

5. Explain the main features of sajʿ and why it was persuasive. (Linked to SLO 3.1)
6. Describe how soothsayers influenced social and political decisions in pre-Islamic Arabia. (Linked to SLO 3.2)
7. Outline the typical structure of a khuṭba. (Linked to SLO 3.3)
8. Compare sajʿ and khuṭba in terms of style and purpose. (Linked to SLO 3.4)
9. Give one example of how sajʿ and khuṭba influenced later Arabic literature. (Linked to SLO 3.5)



Long-Answer Questions

10. Analyse the functions and themes of soothsayers' prose, using examples to illustrate your points. (Linked to SLO 3.2)

11. Evaluate the relevance of saj' and khuṭba traditions in contemporary Arabic society. (Linked to SLO 3.6)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 3]

Objective Questions

1. Saj' (سجع).
2.
 - b. Soothsayers.
3. Fate, destiny, warnings, or guidance.
4. A khuṭba is a formal Islamic sermon delivered in religious or communal settings.

Short-Answer Questions

5. Saj' is characterised by rhythmical phrasing, balanced clauses, and end-rhyme. It was persuasive because its cadence made messages memorable and authoritative.

6. Soothsayers advised tribes before battles, trade ventures, or communal decisions, legitimising leadership and guiding actions.

7. A khuṭba typically includes praise of God, moral exhortation, guidance for the community, and supplication.

8. Saj' and khuṭba both use rhythm and rhyme, but saj' was linked to prophecy and mystery, while khuṭba served moral and communal instruction.

9. Saj' and khuṭba influenced Arabic preaching, political oratory, and literary composition by introducing rhythmic and rhetorical styles.



Long-Answer Questions

10. **Basic response:** Soothsayers' prose provided spiritual guidance, social influence, and warnings. Themes included fate, destiny, and moral caution. Examples such as "Truth rises and is never overcome" illustrate its authority.

Value-added response: Beyond these functions, saj' reflected the cultural environment of pre-Islamic Arabia, reinforcing tribal cohesion and legitimising decisions. Its stylistic features later influenced Qur'ānic expression and Arabic rhetoric, showing continuity between oral tradition and literary development.

11. **Basic response:** Saj' and khuṭba remain relevant because sermons are central to religious practice, and stylistic features of saj' appear in speeches and literature.

Value-added response: In contemporary society, these traditions adapt to new platforms such as media and education. Sermons unify communities, while saj''s stylistic rhythm enhances modern communication. Their enduring relevance demonstrates the power of oral traditions to evolve while preserving cultural identity.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 3]

Part 3.1

- Saj' (سجع).
- Balanced phrasing, rhythm, rhyme, and memorability.
- Kūhhān (soothsayers), who guided communities in spiritual and social matters.
- Example: *Al-ḥaqqu ya 'lū wa-lā yu 'lā 'alayh* – "Truth rises and is never overcome," teaching the supremacy of truth.
- Saj' was persuasive because its rhythm and rhyme made messages authoritative and easy to remember.

Part 3.2



- Access to hidden or unseen knowledge.
- Matters of war, trade, or tribal affairs.
- Qadar (قدر).
- Themes included fate, destiny, warnings against arrogance or greed, and guidance for communities.
- Sajʿ was persuasive because it combined spiritual authority with rhythmic language that influenced both belief and action.

Part 3.3

- Khuṭba (خطبة).
- Praise of God, moral exhortation, guidance for the community, and supplication.
- Faith.
- Khuṭba.
- The transition was significant because it transformed sajʿ from prophecy into a structured tool for moral and communal instruction in Islam.

Part 3.4

- Rhythm, rhyme, and parallelism.
- Sajʿ was linked to prophecy and mystery, while khuṭba was used for moral and communal instruction.
- They influenced religious preaching, political oratory, and literary composition.
- They remain relevant because sermons are central to religious practice and sajʿ's stylistic features appear in modern communication.
- Example: Contemporary sermons and speeches still use rhythmic phrasing and persuasive language rooted in these traditions.

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Open Educational Resources (OERs) Suggested for Learners

- “Arabic Rhetoric and Sermons.” OER Commons. Retrieved from <https://www.oercommons.org>
- “Pre-Islamic Literary Traditions.” Open Access Islamic Studies Resources. Retrieved from <https://openarabic.org>
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Illustrations (Figures, Plates, Boxes)

- *Figure 3.1 Features of saj‘ (rhymed prose)*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create a diagram showing the features of saj‘: balanced phrasing, rhythm, rhyme, memorability.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Plate 3.2 A soothsayer delivering saj‘ in pre-Islamic Arabia*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create an illustration of a pre-Islamic soothsayer delivering rhymed prose to a tribal audience.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Box 3.3 Selected examples of early saj‘*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a text box listing selected examples of early saj‘ with translations and themes: fate, truth, divine signs.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Figure 3.4 Religious and spiritual functions of saj‘*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create a diagram showing the religious and spiritual functions of saj‘: guidance, fate, destiny, unseen world.”



- Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Plate 3.5 Social and political influence of saj‘*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create an illustration of a tribal leader listening to a soothsayer’s rhymed prose before a communal decision.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Box 3.6 Common themes in soothsayers’ prose*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a text box listing common themes in saj‘: fate, destiny, warnings, guidance, with short explanations.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Figure 3.7 Structure of a khuṭba*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create a diagram showing the structure of a khuṭba: praise of God, moral exhortation, guidance, supplication.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Plate 3.8 Early Islamic sermon in a communal setting*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create an illustration of an early Islamic sermon being delivered to a congregation in a mosque.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Box 3.9 Continuity between saj‘ and khuṭba*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a text box comparing stylistic similarities and differences between saj‘ and khuṭba.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Figure 3.10 Comparison between saj‘ and khuṭba*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create a diagram comparing saj‘ and khuṭba in terms of style, purpose, and function.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Box 3.11 Influence of saj‘ and khuṭba on Arabic literature*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a text box listing areas where saj‘ and khuṭba influenced Arabic literature: preaching, oratory, composition, rhetoric.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Plate 3.12 Contemporary relevance of khuṭba traditions*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create an illustration of a modern preacher delivering a sermon to a congregation, showing continuity with tradition.”



- Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.



Series 4: The Qur'ān and Its Contribution to the Development of Arabic Language

Part 4.1 The Qur'ān as a Linguistic and Literary Text

- 4.1.1 Definition of the Qur'ān as a revealed text
- 4.1.2 Stylistic features: rhythm, rhyme, and imagery
- 4.1.3 Distinction between Qur'ānic style and pre-Islamic poetry/prose

Part 4.2 The Qur'ān's Role in Standardising Arabic

- 4.2.1 Emergence of Classical Arabic through Qur'ānic usage
- 4.2.2 Influence on grammar and lexicon
- 4.2.3 Preservation of dialects and unification of linguistic norms

Part 4.3 The Qur'ān and Arabic Rhetoric

- 4.3.1 Development of rhetorical devices (parallelism, metaphor, repetition)
- 4.3.2 Impact on oratory and literary composition
- 4.3.3 Examples of rhetorical excellence in Qur'ānic passages

Part 4.4 The Qur'ān's Enduring Influence on Arabic Literature and Culture

- 4.4.1 Qur'ānic inspiration in poetry and prose
- 4.4.2 Role in education and intellectual traditions
- 4.4.3 Contemporary relevance in Arabic language and society

Introduction

The Qur'ān is not only the central religious text of Islam but also a cornerstone in the history of the Arabic language. Its revelation marked a turning point in the development of Arabic, elevating the language to new levels of precision, eloquence, and universality. For learners of Arabic literature and



culture, understanding the Qur'ān's linguistic and literary contribution is essential, as it shaped grammar, rhetoric, and stylistic traditions that continue to influence Arabic communication today.

The aim of this Series is to examine the Qur'ān as a linguistic and literary text, to highlight its role in standardising Arabic, and to explore its enduring influence on rhetoric, literature, and culture. By the end of the Series, you will be equipped to analyse how the Qur'ān contributed to the richness and resilience of the Arabic language.

We shall commence this Series by studying the Qur'ān as a linguistic and literary text, focusing on its stylistic features and its distinction from pre-Islamic poetry and prose. Next, we will explore how the Qur'ān contributed to the standardisation of Arabic, shaping grammar, vocabulary, and dialectal unity. Following that, we will move on to its impact on Arabic rhetoric, considering the development of devices such as parallelism and metaphor. Finally, we will conclude by assessing the Qur'ān's enduring influence on Arabic literature, education, and culture, and reflecting on its relevance in contemporary society.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

SLO 4.1 define the Qur'ān as a linguistic and literary text and identify its stylistic features.

SLO 4.2 explain how the Qur'ān differs from pre-Islamic poetry and prose in style and purpose.

SLO 4.3 analyse the Qur'ān's role in standardising Arabic grammar, vocabulary, and dialectal usage.

SLO 4.4 describe the rhetorical devices developed through Qur'ānic expression, such as parallelism and metaphor.

SLO 4.5 evaluate the impact of Qur'ānic rhetoric on Arabic oratory and literary composition.

SLO 4.6 assess the enduring influence of the Qur'ān on Arabic literature, education, and culture in both historical and contemporary contexts.



4.1 The Qur'ān as a Linguistic and Literary Text

The Qur'ān is recognised not only as the sacred scripture of Islam but also as a masterpiece of Arabic language and literature. Its revelation introduced a style that was distinct from pre-Islamic poetry and prose, combining rhythm, imagery, and rhetorical power in ways that elevated Arabic expression. In this Part, we will explore the Qur'ān as a linguistic and literary text, focusing on its definition, stylistic features, and its distinction from earlier forms of Arabic expression.

4.1.1 Definition of the Qur'ān as a revealed text

The **Qur'ān** is the divine revelation received by the Prophet Muhammad over a period of 23 years. It is regarded by Muslims as the word of God, preserved in Arabic. As a text, it is unique because it combines spiritual authority with linguistic excellence. Unlike ordinary prose or poetry, the Qur'ān's language is considered inimitable, meaning no human composition can match its style or impact.

Fill in the blank: The Qur'ān is regarded by Muslims as the _____ word revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.





Figure 4.1 The Qur'ān as a revealed text

4.1.2 Stylistic features: rhythm, rhyme, and imagery

One of the most striking aspects of the Qur'ān is its **stylistic features**, which include rhythm, rhyme, and vivid imagery. The rhythm of its verses creates a musical quality that enhances memorisation and recitation. Rhyme at the end of clauses adds cohesion and beauty, while imagery conveys abstract ideas in powerful visual terms. These features distinguish the Qur'ān from ordinary speech and make it both a literary and spiritual experience.

Fill in the blank: The musical quality of Qur'ānic verses is achieved through _____ and rhyme.





Plate 4.2 Recitation of the Qur'ān with rhythm and rhyme

4.1.3 Distinction between Qur'ānic style and pre-Islamic poetry/prose

Pre-Islamic poetry was based on strict metre and often celebrated tribal values such as bravery and honour. Pre-Islamic prose, including *saj'*, relied on rhythm and rhyme but was used mainly by soothsayers. The Qur'ān, however, introduced a new style that combined elements of both but transcended them in purpose and impact. Its verses addressed universal themes such as faith, morality, and guidance, while its language was elevated beyond human composition.

Fill in the blank: Unlike pre-Islamic poetry, which focused on tribal values, the Qur'ān addressed universal themes such as _____ and morality.

Aspect	<i>Qur'ānic Style</i> (الأسلوب القرآني)	<i>Pre-Islamic Poetry</i> (الشعر الجاهلي)	<i>Pre-Islamic Prose</i> (النثر الجاهلي)
Metre (الوزن)	Not bound by fixed poetic metre; flows with rhythmic cadence unique to revelation.	Strictly bound by quantitative metres ('arūd) defined by al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad.	Free prose without metre, often irregular.



Rhyme (القافية)	<i>Employs recurring rhymes (fawāsil) that enhance memorability and impact.</i>	<i>Monorhyme (qaṣīda) dominates, with one rhyme throughout the poem.</i>	<i>Occasional rhyme in saǰʿ (rhymed prose), but less systematic.</i>
Themes (الموضوعات)	<i>Faith, divine signs, guidance, morality, eschatology, law.</i>	<i>Tribal honor, bravery, love, satire, wisdom, desert life.</i>	<i>Fate, omens, wisdom, soothsaying, tribal affairs.</i>
Purpose (الغاية)	<i>Spiritual revelation, moral instruction, universal guidance.</i>	<i>Celebration of tribal identity, personal expression, entertainment.</i>	<i>Persuasion, prophecy, oratory, and social mediation.</i>

Box 4.3 Distinction between Qurʾānic style and pre-Islamic forms

Pilot questions 4.1

1. What is the Qurʾān regarded as by Muslims?
2. What stylistic features make the Qurʾān distinct?
3. How does the Qurʾān differ from pre-Islamic poetry?
4. What role does imagery play in Qurʾānic expression?
5. Why is the Qurʾān considered inimitable as a text?

4.2 The Qurʾān's Role in Standardising Arabic

The Qurʾān played a decisive role in shaping and standardising the Arabic language. Before its revelation, Arabic existed in multiple dialects, each with its own variations in vocabulary and grammar. The Qurʾān, revealed in Classical Arabic, provided a unified linguistic model that became the foundation for Arabic grammar, lexicon, and literary expression. In this Part, we will explore how the Qurʾān contributed to the emergence of Classical Arabic, influenced grammar and vocabulary, and preserved dialectal diversity while promoting unity.



4.2.1 Emergence of Classical Arabic through Qur'ānic usage

Classical Arabic refers to the standardised form of Arabic that developed during and after the revelation of the Qur'ān. By being recited, memorised, and written down, the Qur'ān established a common linguistic reference point across diverse tribes. This form of Arabic became the basis for scholarly works, literature, and education, ensuring consistency in communication and cultural identity.

Fill in the blank: The Qur'ān provided a unified linguistic model that became the foundation of _____ Arabic.

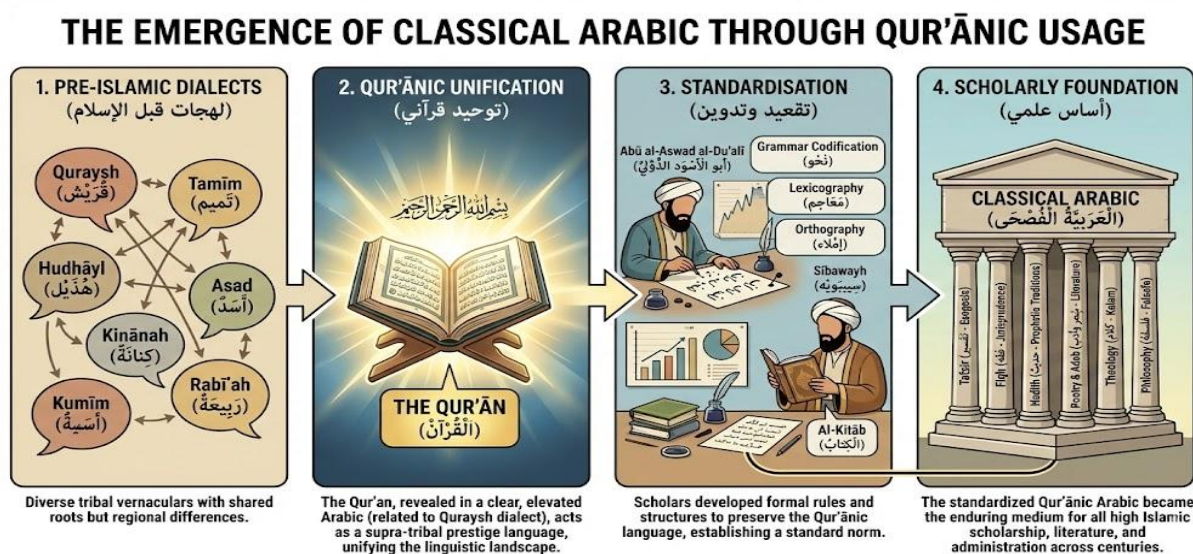


Figure 4.4 Emergence of Classical Arabic through Qur'ānic usage

4.2.2 Influence on grammar and lexicon

The Qur'ān influenced the development of **Arabic grammar** (rules governing sentence structure) and **lexicon** (the vocabulary of a language). Scholars studied the Qur'ān to establish grammatical rules and preserve correct usage. Many words and expressions found in the Qur'ān



became standardised, enriching the Arabic lexicon and ensuring precision in meaning. This process laid the groundwork for Arabic linguistic sciences, such as syntax and morphology.

Fill in the blank: Scholars studied the Qur'ān to establish rules of _____ and preserve correct usage.

<i>Area</i>	<i>Example</i>	<i>Influence / Explanation</i>
Syntax (النحو)	Use of nominal sentences like <i>﴿اللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ﴾</i> (Allah is Forgiving, Merciful)	Reinforced the importance of nominal sentences in Arabic grammar and their role in conveying timeless truths.
Morphology (الصرف)	Verb forms such as <i>فَعَّلَ</i> and <i>تَفَعَّلَ</i> appear frequently in Qur'ānic discourse.	Helped standardize verb patterns and highlighted nuances of causative, reflexive, and intensive forms.
Standardised Expressions (التراكيب الثابتة)	Phrases like <i>الحمد لله رب العالمين</i> (Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds)	Established fixed formulaic expressions that became models for eloquence and liturgical usage.
Case Endings (الإعراب)	Clear use of nominative, accusative, and genitive endings in recitation.	Preserved and codified case endings, influencing the development of classical Arabic grammar.
Lexical Choices (المفردات)	Terms like <i>تقوى</i> (piety), <i>كفر</i> (disbelief), <i>إيمان</i> (faith).	Introduced and standardized key religious and ethical vocabulary in Arabic.

Box 4.5 Influence of the Qur'ān on grammar and lexicon

4.2.3 Preservation of dialects and unification of linguistic norms

Although the Qur'ān was revealed in Classical Arabic, it acknowledged the existence of multiple dialects. Recitation traditions (known as **qirā'āt**) preserved these variations, while the written



text provided a unified standard. This balance allowed Arabic to remain diverse yet cohesive, strengthening its role as a language of culture, religion, and scholarship.

Fill in the blank: Variations in Qur'ānic recitation are known as _____.



Plate 4.6 Preservation of dialects through Qur'ānic recitation traditions

Pilot questions 4.2

1. What role did the Qur'ān play in the emergence of Classical Arabic?
2. How did the Qur'ān influence Arabic grammar and vocabulary?
3. What is meant by the term lexicon in relation to language?
4. How did the Qur'ān preserve dialectal diversity while promoting unity?
5. What are Qur'ānic recitation traditions called?



4.3 The Qur'ān and Arabic Rhetoric

The Qur'ān is widely recognised as the pinnacle of Arabic rhetoric. Its verses employ powerful linguistic devices that elevate meaning, inspire reflection, and persuade audiences. By combining artistry with spiritual authority, the Qur'ān shaped the development of Arabic rhetorical traditions and influenced later oratory and literature. In this Part, we will explore the rhetorical devices found in the Qur'ān, their impact on Arabic oratory and literary composition, and examples of rhetorical excellence in Qur'ānic passages.

4.3.1 Development of rhetorical devices (parallelism, metaphor, repetition)

The Qur'ān makes extensive use of **rhetorical devices**, which are techniques that enhance the effectiveness and beauty of language. **Parallelism** refers to the repetition of similar structures in successive clauses, creating rhythm and emphasis. **Metaphor** is the use of imagery to convey abstract ideas in vivid terms. **Repetition** reinforces key messages, ensuring they are memorable and impactful. Together, these devices gave the Qur'ān its distinctive style and contributed to the development of Arabic rhetoric.

Fill in the blank: The repetition of similar structures in successive clauses is known as _____.



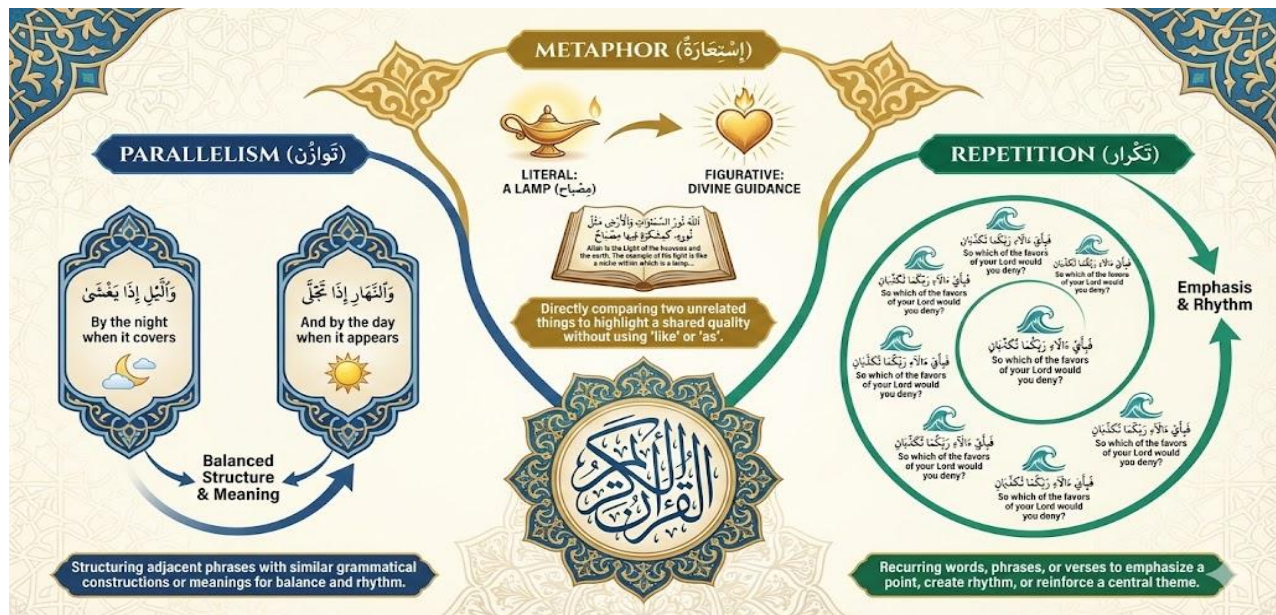


Figure 4.7 Rhetorical devices in the Qur'ān

4.3.2 Impact on oratory and literary composition

The rhetorical style of the Qur'ān influenced Arabic **oratory** (formal public speaking) and **literary composition**. Preachers, scholars, and writers adopted Qur'ānic techniques to strengthen their arguments and inspire audiences. The rhythm and imagery of Qur'ānic rhetoric became models for sermons, speeches, and prose, ensuring that Arabic communication remained persuasive and aesthetically rich.

Fill in the blank: The Qur'ān's rhetorical style influenced both Arabic oratory and _____ composition.





Plate 4.8 Influence of Qur'ānic rhetoric on Arabic oratory

4.3.3 Examples of rhetorical excellence in Qur'ānic passages

The Qur'ān contains numerous passages that demonstrate rhetorical excellence. For instance, the verse *“By the morning brightness, and by the night when it covers with darkness”* (Qur'ān 93:1–2) uses parallelism and imagery to contrast light and darkness, symbolising hope and despair. Another example is the repetition of the phrase *“Which of the favours of your Lord will you deny?”* (Qur'ān 55), which reinforces gratitude and reflection. These examples illustrate how rhetorical devices were employed to convey profound spiritual and moral lessons.

Fill in the blank: The repeated phrase *“Which of the favours of your Lord will you deny?”* is an example of _____.

Device	Qur'ānic Example	Translation	Rhetorical Effect
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Parallelism (الموازنة)	﴿فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُعْطِيَ وَاتَّقَى • (Q 92:5–6) وَصَدَّقَ بِالْحُسْنَى﴾	“As for he who gives and fears God, and affirms the best...”	Balanced clauses reinforce moral contrast and rhythm.
Imagery (التصوير)	﴿وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُمْ مِنْ بُطُونِ (Q 16:78) أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا﴾	“God brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers knowing nothing...”	Vivid image of birth conveys dependence on divine guidance.
Repetition (التكرار)	﴿فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ﴾ 55:13, repeated throughout Sūrat al-Raḥmān)	“So which of your Lord’s favors will you deny?”	Repetition engraves gratitude and reflection in the listener’s mind.
Parallelism + Contrast	﴿إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا • إِنَّ مَعَ (Q 94:6–7) الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا﴾	“Indeed, with hardship comes ease. Indeed, with hardship comes ease.”	Parallel repetition emphasizes divine promise and reassurance.
Imagery + Symbolism	﴿اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ﴾ (Q 24:35)	“God is the Light of the heavens and the earth.”	Metaphorical imagery conveys divine guidance as illumination.

Box 4.9 Examples of rhetorical excellence in the Qur’ān

Pilot questions 4.3

1. What are the main rhetorical devices found in the Qur’ān?
2. How does parallelism enhance the effectiveness of Qur’ānic verses?
3. In what ways did Qur’ānic rhetoric influence Arabic oratory and literary composition?
4. Give one example of rhetorical excellence from the Qur’ān.
5. Why is repetition an important rhetorical device in Qur’ānic expression?



4.4 The Qur'ān's Enduring Influence on Arabic Literature and Culture

The Qur'ān has left a lasting imprint on Arabic literature and culture, shaping intellectual traditions, artistic expression, and educational practices across centuries. Its influence extends beyond religious devotion, providing a linguistic and cultural framework that continues to inspire writers, poets, and scholars. In this Part, we will examine how the Qur'ān inspired literary creativity, contributed to education and intellectual life, and remains relevant in contemporary society.

4.4.1 Qur'ānic inspiration in poetry and prose

The Qur'ān inspired generations of poets and prose writers by offering a model of eloquence and depth. Its use of imagery, rhythm, and rhetorical devices encouraged literary creativity while setting a high standard for expression. Writers often drew upon Qur'ānic themes such as morality, justice, and divine guidance to enrich their works. This influence ensured that Arabic literature remained closely tied to spiritual and ethical concerns.

Fill in the blank: Writers often drew upon Qur'ānic themes such as morality, justice, and _____ guidance.



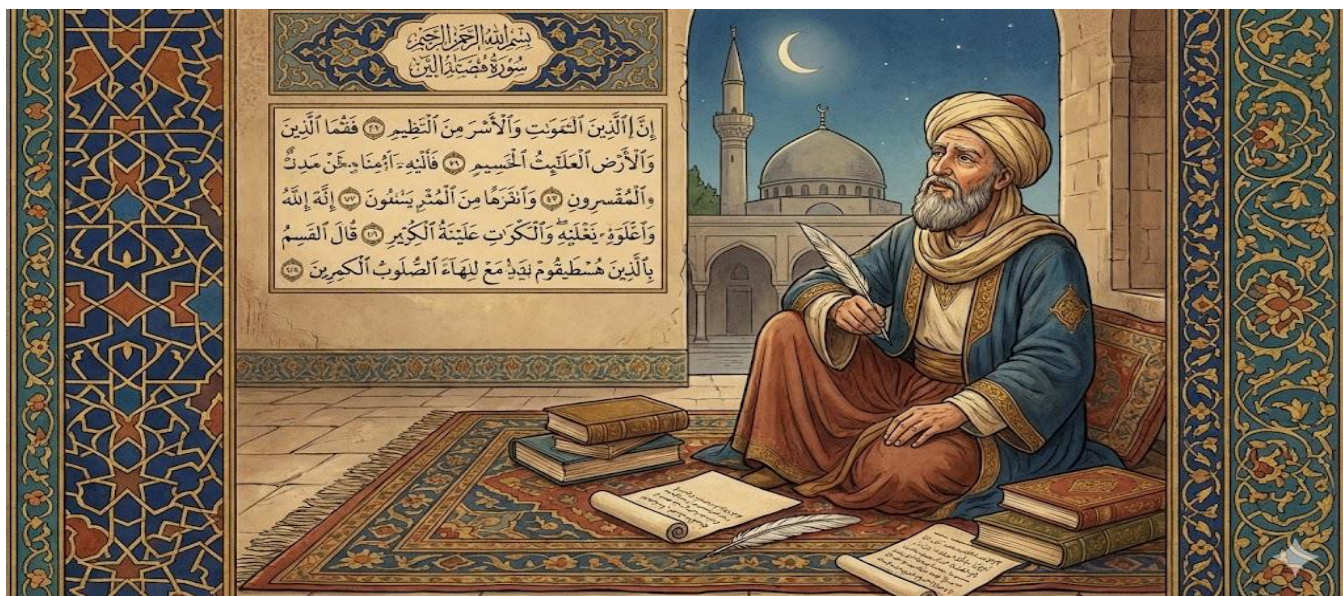


Plate 4.10 Qur'ānic inspiration in Arabic poetry and prose

4.4.2 Role in education and intellectual traditions

The Qur'ān became the foundation of **education** in the Islamic world. Learning to read and recite the Qur'ān was often the first step in formal education, and its language shaped the study of grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy. Intellectual traditions such as tafsīr (Qur'ānic exegesis) and fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) developed around the text, reinforcing its role as both a spiritual and intellectual guide.

Fill in the blank: The study of Qur'ānic interpretation is known as _____.





Figure 4.11 The Qur'ān as the foundation of education and intellectual traditions

4.4.3 Contemporary relevance in Arabic language and society

The Qur'ān continues to shape Arabic language and culture today. Sermons, speeches, and literature often echo its stylistic features, while its themes remain central to moral and social discourse. In modern education, the Qur'ān is studied not only for its religious significance but also for its linguistic and literary excellence. This enduring relevance demonstrates the Qur'ān's ability to adapt to changing contexts while preserving its cultural authority.

Fill in the blank: The Qur'ān is studied in modern education for both its religious significance and its _____ excellence.

Domain	Contemporary Relevance	Explanation
Sermons (الخطب الدينية)	Central source for moral and spiritual guidance.	Qur'ānic verses are recited and interpreted to inspire faith, ethical conduct, and communal unity.
Speeches (الخطابات العامة)	Provides rhetorical authority and cultural resonance.	Leaders and orators draw on Qur'ānic language to strengthen arguments and connect with audiences.



Literature (الأدب)	Shapes themes, imagery, and style in modern Arabic writing.	Writers use Qur'ānic motifs, symbolism, and expressions to enrich poetry, novels, and essays.
Education (التعليم)	Foundation of linguistic, ethical, and spiritual instruction.	Qur'ān is studied for grammar, vocabulary, and values, forming a core part of curricula.

Box 4.12 Contemporary relevance of the Qur'ān

Pilot questions 4.4

1. How did the Qur'ān inspire Arabic poetry and prose?
2. What role did the Qur'ān play in education and intellectual traditions?
3. What is the term for Qur'ānic interpretation?
4. How does the Qur'ān continue to influence Arabic language and society today?
5. Why is the Qur'ān considered both a spiritual and cultural authority?

Series Summary

This Series has examined the Qur'ān as both a sacred text and a cornerstone of Arabic language development. Its purpose was to highlight how the Qur'ān shaped linguistic standards, enriched rhetorical traditions, and continues to influence literature and culture. By situating the Qur'ān within its historical and literary context, we have seen how it elevated Arabic expression and provided a unifying model for communication across diverse communities.

We began by exploring the Qur'ān as a linguistic and literary text, focusing on its stylistic features and distinction from pre-Islamic forms. We then considered its role in standardising Arabic, particularly in grammar, vocabulary, and dialectal unity. Following that, we studied its contribution to Arabic rhetoric, noting devices such as parallelism, metaphor, and repetition, and their impact on oratory and literary composition. Finally, we assessed the Qur'ān's enduring influence on Arabic literature, education, and culture, including its contemporary relevance. In line with the Series Learning Outcomes, you should now be able to define the Qur'ān as a



linguistic text, explain its stylistic features, analyse its role in standardisation, describe its rhetorical devices, evaluate its impact on literature, and assess its continuing cultural significance.

Glossary of Terms

Classical Arabic – The standardised form of Arabic that developed during and after the revelation of the Qur’ān, serving as the foundation for grammar, literature, and scholarly works.

Grammar – The set of rules that govern how words and sentences are structured in a language. In Arabic, many of these rules were derived from the study of the Qur’ān.

Lexicon – The vocabulary of a language. The Qur’ān enriched the Arabic lexicon by introducing words and expressions that became standardised.

Metaphor – A rhetorical device that uses imagery to represent abstract ideas in vivid and imaginative terms. The Qur’ān frequently employs metaphors to convey spiritual and moral lessons.

Parallelism – A rhetorical device involving the repetition of similar structures in successive clauses, creating rhythm and emphasis. It is a common feature in Qur’ānic verses.

Qirā’āt – The recognised traditions of Qur’ānic recitation that preserve dialectal variations while maintaining a unified text.

Qur’ān – The sacred scripture of Islam, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in Arabic over 23 years. It is regarded as the word of God and a model of linguistic and literary excellence.

Repetition – A rhetorical device used to reinforce key messages by repeating words or phrases. The Qur’ān employs repetition to emphasise important themes.

Rhetorical devices – Techniques used to enhance the effectiveness and beauty of language, such as parallelism, metaphor, and repetition. The Qur’ān is considered a pinnacle of Arabic rhetoric.



Tafsīr – The scholarly study and interpretation of the Qur’ān, aimed at explaining its meanings and applications.

Fiqh – Islamic jurisprudence, or the study of law and legal principles, developed around the Qur’ān and prophetic traditions.

Imagery – The use of descriptive language to create vivid mental pictures. Qur’ānic imagery often conveys abstract spiritual concepts in accessible ways.

Concept Check Questions [Series 4]

Objective Questions

1. Identify the Arabic term for the sacred scripture of Islam. (Linked to SLO 4.1)
2. Select the stylistic feature that contributes to the musical quality of Qur’ānic verses:
 - a. Metre
 - b. Rhythm
 - c. Imagery
 - d. Syntax (Linked to SLO 4.2)
3. State the term used for recognised traditions of Qur’ānic recitation. (Linked to SLO 4.3)
4. Define tafsir in one sentence. (Linked to SLO 4.6)

Short-Answer Questions

5. Explain why the Qur’ān is considered inimitable as a text. (Linked to SLO 4.1)
6. Describe how the Qur’ān contributed to the standardisation of Arabic grammar and vocabulary. (Linked to SLO 4.3)
7. Outline the main rhetorical devices found in the Qur’ān. (Linked to SLO 4.4)
8. Compare the themes of pre-Islamic poetry with those of the Qur’ān. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
9. Give one example of how the Qur’ān influenced Arabic education and intellectual traditions. (Linked to SLO 4.6)



Long-Answer Questions

10. Analyse the stylistic features of the Qur'ān, explaining how they distinguish it from pre-Islamic poetry and prose. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
11. Evaluate the enduring influence of the Qur'ān on Arabic literature and culture, with reference to both historical and contemporary contexts. (Linked to SLO 4.6)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 4]

Objective Questions

1. Qur'ān.
2.
 - b. Rhythm.
3. Qirā'āt.
4. Tafsīr is the scholarly interpretation and explanation of the Qur'ān.

Short-Answer Questions

5. The Qur'ān is considered inimitable because no human composition can match its linguistic style, depth, and impact.
6. The Qur'ān provided a unified model of Arabic, which scholars studied to establish grammatical rules and standardise vocabulary.
7. The main rhetorical devices are parallelism, metaphor, and repetition.
8. Pre-Islamic poetry focused on tribal values such as bravery and honour, while the Qur'ān addressed universal themes such as faith, morality, and divine guidance.
9. The Qur'ān influenced education by forming the basis of grammar studies and intellectual traditions such as tafsīr and fiqh.



Long-Answer Questions

10. **Basic response:** The Qur'ān employs stylistic features such as rhythm, rhyme, and imagery, which distinguish it from pre-Islamic poetry that relied on strict metre and tribal themes. Its prose style also differs from saḥīḥ, as it transcends prophecy to convey universal moral and spiritual lessons.

Value-added response: Beyond these distinctions, the Qur'ān's stylistic features created a new literary paradigm that influenced Arabic rhetoric, oratory, and literary composition. Its inimitability became a benchmark for eloquence, inspiring generations of writers and scholars to emulate its style while acknowledging its divine uniqueness.

11. **Basic response:** The Qur'ān has influenced Arabic literature and culture by inspiring poetry and prose, shaping education, and guiding intellectual traditions. Its themes remain central to sermons, speeches, and literature today.

Value-added response: In addition to its historical impact, the Qur'ān continues to shape modern communication, education, and cultural identity. Its stylistic features are echoed in contemporary Arabic media and literature, while its moral and spiritual authority ensures its relevance in guiding social and cultural discourse across diverse contexts.



Part 4.1

- The revealed word of God.
- Rhythm and rhyme.
- Faith.
- Imagery conveys abstract spiritual and moral concepts in vivid and accessible ways.
- Because no human composition can match its style, depth, and impact.

Part 4.2

- It provided a unified linguistic model that became the foundation of Classical Arabic.
- By establishing rules of grammar and standardising vocabulary through Qur'ānic usage.
- Lexicon refers to the vocabulary of a language.
- Through qirā'āt, which preserved dialectal diversity while maintaining unity.
- Qirā'āt.

Part 4.3

- Parallelism, metaphor, and repetition.
- It creates rhythm and emphasis, making verses more memorable and impactful.
- It influenced sermons, speeches, and prose, enriching Arabic communication.
- Example: "Which of the favours of your Lord will you deny?" (Qur'ān 55).
- Because it reinforces key messages and ensures they are remembered.

Part 4.4

- By offering a model of eloquence and depth, inspiring themes of morality, justice, and divine guidance.
- It formed the foundation of education and intellectual traditions such as tafsīr and fiqh.
- Tafsīr.
- Through sermons, speeches, literature, and education that echo its stylistic features and themes.



- Because it provides both spiritual guidance and cultural authority.

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- Stetkevych, S. (1993). *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual*. Cornell University Press.

Open Educational Resources (OERs) Suggested for Learners

- “Arabic Rhetoric and Sermons.” OER Commons. Retrieved from <https://www.oercommons.org>
- “Pre-Islamic and Qur’ānic Literary Traditions.” Open Access Islamic Studies Resources. Retrieved from <https://openarabic.org>
- “Islamic Sermons and Their Functions.” Al-Islam OER Repository. Retrieved from <https://www.al-islam.org>

Illustrations (Figures, Plates, Boxes)

- *Figure 4.1 The Qur’ān as a revealed text*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create a diagram showing the Qur’ān as a revealed text: divine origin, Arabic language, spiritual authority, linguistic excellence.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Plate 4.2 Recitation of the Qur’ān with rhythm and rhyme*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create an illustration of a reciter chanting Qur’ānic verses, highlighting rhythm and rhyme.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Box 4.3 Distinction between Qur’ānic style and pre-Islamic forms*



- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a text box comparing Qur’ānic style with pre-Islamic poetry and prose: metre, rhyme, themes, purpose.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Figure 4.4 Emergence of Classical Arabic through Qur’ānic usage*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create a diagram showing the emergence of Classical Arabic through Qur’ānic usage: dialects, unification, standardisation, scholarly foundation.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Box 4.5 Influence of the Qur’ān on grammar and lexicon*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a text box listing examples of Qur’ānic influence on grammar and vocabulary: syntax, morphology, standardised expressions.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Plate 4.6 Preservation of dialects through Qur’ānic recitation traditions*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create an illustration of scholars studying Qur’ānic recitation traditions to preserve dialectal diversity.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Figure 4.7 Rhetorical devices in the Qur’ān*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create a diagram showing rhetorical devices in the Qur’ān: parallelism, metaphor, repetition.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Plate 4.8 Influence of Qur’ānic rhetoric on Arabic oratory*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create an illustration of an Arabic orator delivering a sermon using rhetorical techniques inspired by the Qur’ān.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Box 4.9 Examples of rhetorical excellence in the Qur’ān*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a text box listing examples of rhetorical excellence in Qur’ānic passages: parallelism, imagery, repetition.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Plate 4.10 Qur’ānic inspiration in Arabic poetry and prose*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create an illustration of a medieval Arabic poet composing verses inspired by Qur’ānic themes.”



- Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Figure 4.11 The Qur'ān as the foundation of education and intellectual traditions*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create a diagram showing the role of the Qur'ān in education: recitation, grammar, rhetoric, tafsīr, fiqh.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Box 4.12 Contemporary relevance of the Qur'ān*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a text box highlighting the Qur'ān's contemporary relevance in sermons, speeches, literature, and education.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.



Series 5: The Ḥadīth and Its Contribution to the Development of Arabic Language

Part 5.1 The Ḥadīth as a Linguistic Source

- 5.1.1 Definition of Ḥadīth as reports of the Prophet's sayings and actions
- 5.1.2 Linguistic features of Ḥadīth texts
- 5.1.3 Distinction between Qur'ānic style and Ḥadīth style

Part 5.2 The Ḥadīth and Arabic Grammar

- 5.2.1 Use of Ḥadīth in establishing grammatical rules
- 5.2.2 Contribution to syntax and morphology
- 5.2.3 Examples of grammatical debates based on Ḥadīth texts

Part 5.3 The Ḥadīth and Arabic Vocabulary

- 5.3.1 Enrichment of the Arabic lexicon through Ḥadīth
- 5.3.2 Preservation of colloquial and everyday expressions
- 5.3.3 Influence on semantic development and meaning

Part 5.4 The Ḥadīth's Cultural and Literary Influence

- 5.4.1 Role of Ḥadīth in education and scholarship
- 5.4.2 Impact on literary composition and stylistics
- 5.4.3 Contemporary relevance of Ḥadīth in Arabic language and society

Introduction

In the last Series, we explored the Qur'ān and its profound contribution to the development of Arabic language, noting how it standardised grammar, enriched vocabulary, and shaped rhetorical traditions. Building on that foundation, we now turn to the Ḥadīth, the recorded sayings and actions of the Prophet



Muhammad, which played a complementary role in refining and expanding Arabic. The Ḥadīth not only preserved everyday expressions and colloquial usage but also influenced scholarly debates, education, and literary culture, making it an essential source for understanding the evolution of Arabic.

The aim of this Series is to examine the linguistic, grammatical, lexical, and cultural contributions of the Ḥadīth to Arabic language development. By the end of the Series, you will be able to appreciate how the Ḥadīth enriched Arabic expression, supported the study of grammar and vocabulary, and shaped intellectual and literary traditions.

We shall commence this Series by studying the Ḥadīth as a linguistic source, focusing on its definition, features, and distinction from Qur'ānic style. Next, we will explore how the Ḥadīth contributed to Arabic grammar, particularly in syntax and morphology. Following that, we will move on to its role in enriching the Arabic vocabulary, including the preservation of colloquial expressions and semantic development. Finally, we will conclude by assessing the cultural and literary influence of the Ḥadīth, considering its role in education, scholarship, and its continuing relevance in modern Arabic society.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

SLO 5.1 define the Ḥadīth as a linguistic source and identify its stylistic features.

SLO 5.2 explain the distinction between Qur'ānic style and Ḥadīth style.

SLO 5.3 analyse how the Ḥadīth contributed to the development of Arabic grammar, including syntax and morphology.

SLO 5.4 describe examples of grammatical debates that arose from Ḥadīth texts.

SLO 5.5 demonstrate how the Ḥadīth enriched the Arabic lexicon through everyday expressions and semantic development.

SLO 5.6 evaluate the cultural and literary influence of the Ḥadīth on education, scholarship, and stylistics.



SLO 5.7 assess the continuing relevance of the Ḥadīth in modern Arabic language and society.

5.1 The Ḥadīth as a Linguistic Source

The **Ḥadīth** refers to the recorded sayings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad. Beyond its religious significance, the Ḥadīth is a vital linguistic source that preserves the spoken Arabic of the Prophet's time. It provides insight into everyday expressions, conversational structures, and stylistic features that differ from the elevated style of the Qur'ān. In this Part, we will examine the definition of Ḥadīth, its linguistic features, and how its style contrasts with that of the Qur'ān.

5.1.1 Definition of Ḥadīth as reports of the Prophet's sayings and actions

The **Ḥadīth** is a collection of reports that document what the Prophet Muhammad said, did, or approved of. These reports were transmitted orally and later compiled into written collections. As a linguistic source, the Ḥadīth preserves authentic examples of spoken Arabic, reflecting the language used in daily life, teaching, and guidance. Unlike the Qur'ān, which is considered divine revelation, the Ḥadīth represents human speech recorded with care and precision.

Fill in the blank: The Ḥadīth preserves authentic examples of _____ Arabic from the Prophet's time.



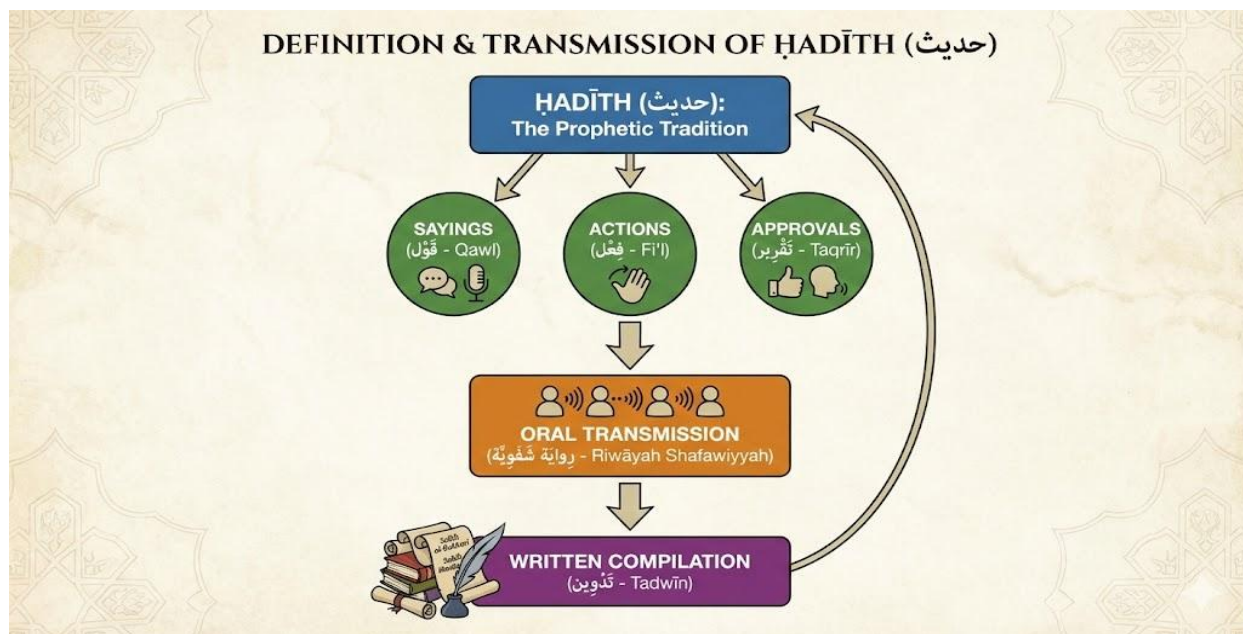


Figure 5.1 Definition of Ḥadīth as reports of the Prophet

5.1.2 Linguistic features of Ḥadīth texts

The **linguistic features** of Ḥadīth include simplicity, clarity, and accessibility. Unlike the Qur’ān’s elevated style, Ḥadīth texts often use everyday vocabulary and conversational structures. They preserve idiomatic expressions and colloquial usage, making them valuable for understanding how Arabic was spoken in ordinary contexts. These features also provide material for scholars studying grammar, syntax, and semantics.

Fill in the blank: The Ḥadīth often uses everyday _____ and conversational structures.





Plate 5.2 Oral transmission of Ḥadīth in early Islamic society

5.1.3 Distinction between Qur'ānic style and Ḥadīth style

The Qur'ān and Ḥadīth differ significantly in style. The **Qur'ān** employs elevated rhetoric, rhythm, and imagery, while the **Ḥadīth** reflects natural speech patterns. The Qur'ān addresses universal themes of faith and morality, whereas the Ḥadīth often deals with practical guidance, social interactions, and everyday concerns. This distinction highlights the complementary roles of both sources: the Qur'ān as divine revelation and the Ḥadīth as a record of prophetic teaching and lived experience.

Fill in the blank: The Qur'ān employs elevated rhetoric, while the Ḥadīth reflects _____ speech patterns.

Aspect	Qur'ānic Style (الأسلوب القرآني)	Hadith Style (الأسلوب الحديثي)	Comparison



Rhetoric (البلاغة)	Highly rhetorical, elevated, and inimitable; employs parallelism, repetition, and persuasive cadence.	Simple, direct, and conversational; prioritizes clarity over ornamentation.	Qur'ān emphasizes artistry and divine authority, Hadith emphasizes accessibility and human transmission.
Rhythm (الإيقاع)	Distinct cadence with rhymed endings (<i>fawāṣil</i>) that enhance memorability.	Natural speech rhythm, closer to everyday dialogue.	Qur'ān is rhythmic and stylized, Hadith is plain and functional.
Imagery (التصوير)	Rich metaphors and vivid imagery (light, darkness, gardens, fire) to evoke reflection.	Limited imagery; focuses on concrete examples and real-life situations.	Qur'ān appeals to imagination, Hadith appeals to practical understanding.
Purpose (الغاية)	Spiritual revelation, moral instruction, universal guidance.	Practical guidance, legal rulings, ethical conduct, daily life advice.	Qur'ān provides overarching divine message, Hadith applies it to lived reality.

Box 5.3 Distinction between Qur'ānic style and Ḥadīth style

Pilot questions 5.1

1. What does the Ḥadīth preserve as a linguistic source?
2. What are the main linguistic features of Ḥadīth texts?
3. How does the style of the Qur'ān differ from that of the Ḥadīth?
4. Why is the Ḥadīth valuable for studying everyday Arabic?
5. What role did oral transmission play in preserving the Ḥadīth?

5.2 The Ḥadīth and Arabic Grammar

The **Ḥadīth** is not only a source of religious guidance but also a rich resource for Arabic grammar. Because it preserves authentic speech patterns of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, scholars have long relied on it to establish grammatical rules, clarify syntactic



structures, and resolve linguistic debates. In this Part, we will explore how the Ḥadīth contributed to grammar, syntax, and morphology, and examine examples where grammatical discussions were shaped by Ḥadīth texts.

5.2.1 Use of Ḥadīth in establishing grammatical rules

The study of **grammar** (the rules governing the structure of sentences) in Arabic was heavily influenced by the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth. While the Qur’ān provided elevated and formal usage, the Ḥadīth offered examples of everyday speech, which helped scholars identify practical applications of grammatical rules. For instance, variations in verb forms and sentence structures found in Ḥadīth texts were analysed to determine acceptable usage in Classical Arabic.

Fill in the blank: The Ḥadīth offered examples of everyday _____ that helped scholars establish grammatical rules.

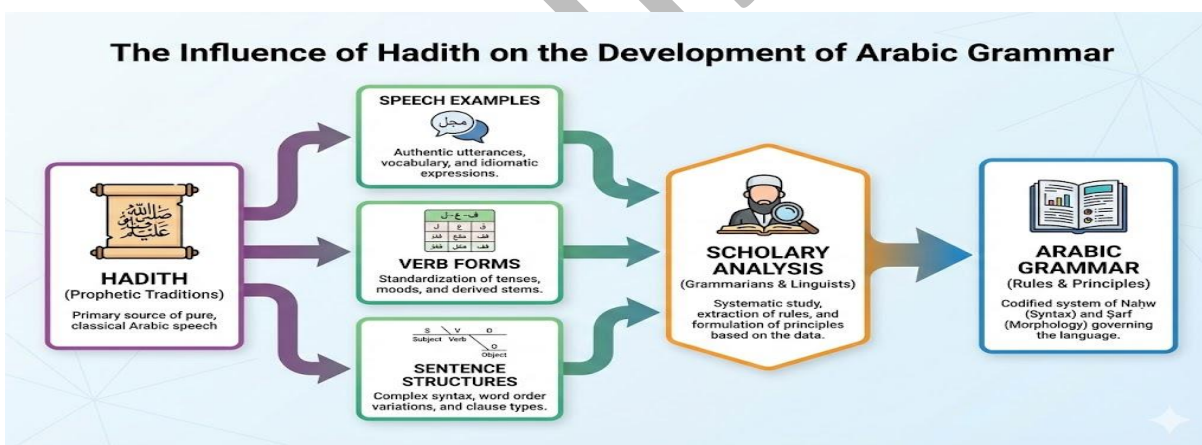


Figure 5.4 Contribution of Ḥadīth to Arabic grammar

5.2.2 Contribution to syntax and morphology

Syntax refers to the arrangement of words and phrases to create meaningful sentences, while **morphology** is the study of word forms and their changes. The Ḥadīth preserves natural speech



patterns that reveal how syntax and morphology functioned in everyday Arabic. Scholars examined these texts to understand variations in word order, verb conjugations, and noun inflections. This helped refine the rules of Arabic grammar and ensured that the language reflected both formal and colloquial usage.

Fill in the blank: Syntax refers to the arrangement of words in sentences, while morphology studies _____ forms and changes.



Plate 5.5 Scholars studying syntax and morphology in Ḥadīth texts

5.2.3 Examples of grammatical debates based on Ḥadīth texts

The Ḥadīth also became a reference point in **grammatical debates**, where scholars discussed the correctness of certain forms or usages. For example, differences in verb conjugation or the placement of particles in Ḥadīth reports were analysed to determine whether they represented acceptable variations or errors in transmission. These debates enriched Arabic linguistic sciences and demonstrated the importance of the Ḥadīth in preserving authentic language.

Fill in the blank: Differences in verb conjugation or the placement of _____ in Ḥadīth reports often led to grammatical debates.



<i>Area of Debate</i>	<i>Example from Hadith</i>	<i>Issue Raised</i>	<i>Scholarly Discussion</i>
Verb Conjugation (تصريف الأفعال)	«مَنْ كَذَبَ عَلَيَّ» «مَتَعَمِّدًا فَلْيَتَّبِعُوا مَقْعَدَهُ» «مَنْ النَّارِ»	Use of past tense كَذَبَ vs. possible present/future forms.	Scholars debated tense choice and its implications for legal rulings and emphasis.
Particle Placement (مواضع الأدوات)	«لا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ» «حَتَّى يَحِبَّ لِأَخِيهِ مَا يَحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ»	Placement of حتى after negation.	Grammarians discussed whether حتى functions as a particle of condition or purpose.
Acceptable Variations (القراءات والاختلافات)	«إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ» «بِالنِّيَّاتِ» vs. variants with الأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّةِ	Singular vs. plural forms of نية	Scholars examined whether variation affects meaning or remains stylistically acceptable.
Case Endings (الإعراب)	«الْمُسْلِمُ أَخُو الْمُسْلِمِ»	Nominative vs. genitive endings in oral transmission.	Debates arose on preserving case endings in Hadith recitation and their grammatical significance.
Pronoun Usage (الضمائر)	«إِذَا قَامَ أَحَدُكُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ»	Use of singular pronoun أَحَدُكُمْ vs. plural alternatives.	Grammarians analyzed pronoun consistency and its impact on clarity.

Box 5.6 Examples of grammatical debates in Ḥadīth

Pilot questions 5.2

1. How did the Ḥadīth help establish grammatical rules?
2. What is the difference between syntax and morphology?
3. Why are Ḥadīth texts valuable for studying everyday Arabic grammar?
4. Give one example of a grammatical debate based on Ḥadīth.



5. How did scholars use Ḥadīth to refine the rules of Arabic grammar?

5.3 The Ḥadīth and Arabic Vocabulary

The **Ḥadīth** is a treasure trove of Arabic vocabulary, preserving words and expressions that reflect the spoken language of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. Unlike the Qur'ān, which employs elevated and universal language, the Ḥadīth often records everyday speech, idioms, and colloquial expressions. This makes it invaluable for understanding the richness of Arabic vocabulary, its semantic development, and its cultural context. In this Part, we will explore how the Ḥadīth enriched the lexicon, preserved colloquial usage, and influenced the evolution of meaning in Arabic.

5.3.1 Enrichment of the Arabic lexicon through Ḥadīth

The **lexicon** refers to the complete vocabulary of a language. The Ḥadīth enriched the Arabic lexicon by introducing words and expressions used in daily life, including terms related to food, clothing, social customs, and religious practices. These additions expanded the scope of Arabic beyond the poetic and rhetorical style of the Qur'ān, offering learners a more comprehensive view of the language.

Fill in the blank: The Ḥadīth enriched the Arabic _____ by introducing words and expressions used in daily life.



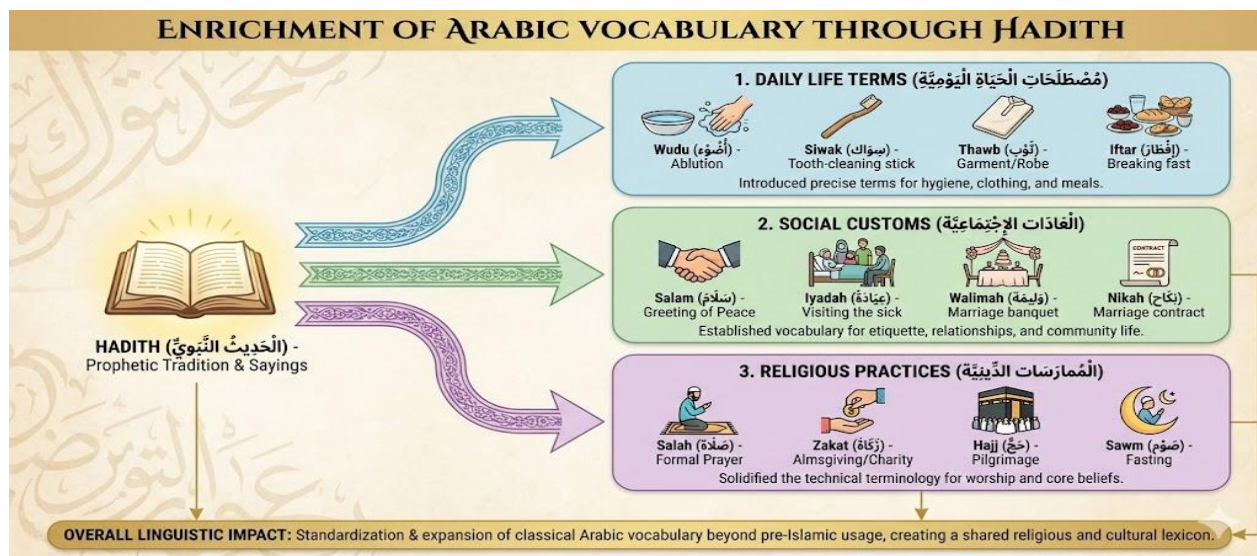


Figure 5.7 Enrichment of Arabic vocabulary through Ḥadīth

5.3.2 Preservation of colloquial and everyday expressions

One of the most valuable aspects of the Ḥadīth is its preservation of **colloquial expressions**, which are informal phrases used in everyday conversation. These expressions provide insight into how Arabic was spoken naturally, beyond the formal structures of poetry and scripture. By recording these expressions, the Ḥadīth ensured that the spoken dimension of Arabic was not lost, helping scholars and learners connect with the language as it was lived.

Fill in the blank: The Ḥadīth preserved informal phrases known as _____ expressions.





Plate 5.8 Everyday expressions preserved in Ḥadīth

5.3.3 Influence on semantic development and meaning

The **semantics** of a language refers to the study of meaning in words and expressions. The Ḥadīth influenced semantic development by showing how words could carry different meanings depending on context. For example, a single term might have a religious meaning in one Ḥadīth and a social meaning in another. This flexibility enriched Arabic and allowed it to adapt to diverse contexts, ensuring its relevance across generations.

Fill in the blank: The study of meaning in words and expressions is known as _____.

Category	Hadith Example	Semantic Development	Explanation
Religious Meaning (المعنى الديني)	«إنما الأعمال بالنيات» (Actions are judged by intentions)	Expanded to emphasize sincerity in worship and moral accountability.	The phrase shaped theological discourse on faith, ethics, and divine judgment.



Social Meaning (المعنى الاجتماعي)	«المسلم أخو المسلم» (The Muslim is the brother of the Muslim)	Broadened to stress solidarity, equality, and communal responsibility.	Used in social contexts to promote unity and discourage tribal divisions.
Contextual Variation (التنوع السياقي)	«لا ضرر ولا ضرار» (No harm and no reciprocating harm)	Applied in legal, medical, and social contexts beyond its original setting.	Became a foundational principle in Islamic jurisprudence, adaptable to diverse situations.

Box 5.9 Influence of Ḥadīth on semantic development

Pilot questions 5.3

1. How did the Ḥadīth enrich the Arabic lexicon?
2. What are colloquial expressions, and why are they important in the study of Arabic?
3. How does the Ḥadīth preserve everyday speech patterns?
4. What is semantics, and how did the Ḥadīth influence semantic development?
5. Give one example of how a word in the Ḥadīth might carry different meanings depending on context.

5.4 The Ḥadīth's Cultural and Literary Influence

The **Ḥadīth** has had a profound impact on Arabic culture and literature. Beyond its role in preserving language, it shaped educational traditions, inspired literary works, and continues to influence modern Arabic society. In this Part, we will examine the role of the Ḥadīth in education and scholarship, its impact on literary composition and stylistics, and its continuing relevance in contemporary culture.



5.4.1 Role of Ḥadīth in education and scholarship

The **Ḥadīth** became a cornerstone of Islamic education. Learning to memorise, interpret, and transmit Ḥadīth was central to scholarly training. It influenced disciplines such as **tafsīr** (Qur'ānic exegesis), **fiqh** (Islamic jurisprudence), and **'ulūm al-ḥadīth** (sciences of Ḥadīth). These fields required mastery of Arabic grammar, vocabulary, and rhetoric, ensuring that the study of Ḥadīth reinforced linguistic competence.

Fill in the blank: The study of Qur'ānic interpretation is known as _____.



Figure 5.10 Role of Ḥadīth in education and scholarship

5.4.2 Impact on literary composition and stylistics

The **stylistics** of Arabic literature were deeply influenced by the Ḥadīth. Writers and poets adopted its concise, clear, and practical style to strengthen their works. Sermons, moral tales, and prose often echoed the language of the Ḥadīth, blending everyday speech with elevated meaning. This influence ensured that Arabic literature remained accessible while retaining depth and moral authority.



Fill in the blank: Writers and poets adopted the concise and practical _____ of the Ḥadīth in their works.



Plate 5.11 Literary composition inspired by Ḥadīth stylistics

5.4.3 Contemporary relevance of Ḥadīth in Arabic language and society

The Ḥadīth continues to shape modern Arabic culture. Its themes of morality, justice, and social conduct are reflected in sermons, speeches, and educational curricula. In contemporary society, the Ḥadīth is studied not only for its religious significance but also for its linguistic and cultural value. This enduring relevance demonstrates how the Ḥadīth bridges historical tradition with modern expression.

Fill in the blank: The Ḥadīth is studied today for both its religious significance and its _____ value.

Domain	Continuing Relevance	Explanation
Sermons (الخطب الدينية)	Core source for moral and spiritual lessons.	Preachers cite Hadith to clarify Qur'ānic teachings and provide practical guidance for daily life.



Speeches (الخطابات العامة)	Adds authority and cultural resonance.	Leaders and orators use Hadith sayings to strengthen arguments and connect with audiences.
Literature (الأدب)	Shapes themes, dialogue, and narrative style.	Writers weave Hadith-inspired wisdom into novels, poetry, and plays to enrich meaning.
Education (التعليم)	Foundation for ethical and linguistic instruction.	Hadith is studied in schools and universities for its role in law, language, and moral values.

Box 5.12 Contemporary relevance of Ḥadīth

Pilot questions 5.4

1. How did the Ḥadīth shape Islamic education and scholarship?
2. What is the term for Qur'ānic interpretation?
3. How did the Ḥadīth influence Arabic literary composition and stylistics?
4. Why is the Ḥadīth considered relevant in modern Arabic society?
5. Give one example of how the Ḥadīth continues to influence contemporary culture.

Series Summary

This Series has highlighted the importance of the Ḥadīth as a linguistic, cultural, and literary source in the development of Arabic. Its purpose was to show how the recorded sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad preserved authentic speech, enriched vocabulary, and influenced grammar, while also shaping education and literary traditions. By situating the Ḥadīth alongside the Qur'ān, we have seen how it provided a complementary perspective on Arabic language and culture.

We began by examining the Ḥadīth as a linguistic source, noting its preservation of everyday speech and distinction from Qur'ānic style. Then we explored its contribution to Arabic grammar, including syntax, morphology, and scholarly debates. Following that, we studied how the Ḥadīth enriched the Arabic lexicon, preserved colloquial expressions, and influenced semantic development. Finally, we assessed its cultural and literary influence, from education



and scholarship to stylistics and modern relevance. In line with the Series Learning Outcomes, you should now be able to define the Ḥadīth as a linguistic source, explain its stylistic features, analyse its role in grammar, describe its impact on vocabulary, evaluate its cultural and literary influence, and assess its continuing relevance in Arabic language and society.

Glossary of Terms

Colloquial expressions – Informal phrases or everyday speech patterns preserved in the Ḥadīth, showing how Arabic was spoken naturally in daily life.

Fiqh – Islamic jurisprudence, the study of law and legal principles developed from the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth.

Grammar – The set of rules that govern how words and sentences are structured in a language. Scholars used the Ḥadīth to refine Arabic grammar.

Ḥadīth – The recorded sayings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad, serving as a key source of religious guidance and linguistic development.

Lexicon – The complete vocabulary of a language. The Ḥadīth enriched the Arabic lexicon by introducing words and expressions from everyday life.

Morphology – The study of word forms and how they change, such as verb conjugations and noun inflections.

Semantics – The study of meaning in words and expressions. The Ḥadīth influenced semantic development by showing how meanings shift depending on context.

Syntax – The arrangement of words and phrases to form meaningful sentences. The Ḥadīth provided examples of natural syntax in spoken Arabic.

Stylistics – The study of language style and expression. Arabic literature and prose were influenced by the concise and practical stylistics of the Ḥadīth.



Tafsīr – The scholarly interpretation and explanation of the Qur’ān, often supported by references to the Ḥadīth.

‘Ulūm al-ḥadīth – The sciences of Ḥadīth, which involve methods of collecting, verifying, and interpreting reports about the Prophet Muhammad.

Concept Check Questions [Series 5]

Objective Questions

1. Define the term Ḥadīth as used in Arabic linguistic studies. (Linked to SLO 5.1)
2. Identify the key difference between Qur’ānic style and Ḥadīth style. (Linked to SLO 5.2)
3. State the Arabic term for Qur’ānic interpretation. (Linked to SLO 5.6)
4. Select the linguistic field that studies word forms and changes:
 - a. Syntax
 - b. Semantics
 - c. Morphology
 - d. Stylistics (Linked to SLO 5.3)

Short-Answer Questions

5. Explain how the Ḥadīth preserves everyday speech patterns. (Linked to SLO 5.1)
6. Describe one way in which the Ḥadīth contributed to Arabic grammar. (Linked to SLO 5.3)
7. Outline how colloquial expressions in the Ḥadīth enrich the Arabic lexicon. (Linked to SLO 5.5)
8. Compare the stylistic features of the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth. (Linked to SLO 5.2)
9. Give one example of how the Ḥadīth continues to influence modern Arabic society. (Linked to SLO 5.7)



Long-Answer Questions

10. Analyse the role of the Ḥadīth in the development of Arabic grammar, focusing on syntax and morphology. (Linked to SLO 5.3)
11. Evaluate the cultural and literary influence of the Ḥadīth, considering both historical and contemporary contexts. (Linked to SLO 5.6, SLO 5.7)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 5]

Objective Questions

1. The Ḥadīth refers to the recorded sayings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad, serving as a linguistic source.
2. The Qur'ān employs elevated rhetoric and rhythm, while the Ḥadīth reflects natural, everyday speech patterns.
3. Tafsīr.
4. c. Morphology.

Short-Answer Questions

5. The Ḥadīth preserves everyday speech by recording colloquial expressions and natural conversational structures.
6. It provided authentic examples of sentence structures and verb forms, which scholars used to establish grammatical rules.
7. Colloquial expressions in the Ḥadīth introduced informal vocabulary into the lexicon, expanding its scope beyond formal usage.
8. The Qur'ān is characterised by elevated rhetoric, rhythm, and imagery, while the Ḥadīth is concise, practical, and conversational.
9. The Ḥadīth continues to influence sermons, speeches, and educational curricula in modern Arabic society.



Long-Answer Questions

10. **Basic response:** The Ḥadīth contributed to grammar by preserving natural syntax and morphology, showing how words were arranged and conjugated in everyday speech. Scholars analysed these patterns to refine grammatical rules.

Value-added response: Beyond this, the Ḥadīth provided material for grammatical debates, where scholars discussed acceptable variations in verb conjugation and particle placement. This enriched Arabic linguistic sciences and demonstrated the dynamic nature of the language.

11. **Basic response:** The Ḥadīth influenced Arabic culture by shaping education, scholarship, and literary composition. Its concise style inspired sermons and prose, while its themes remain relevant today.

Value-added response: In addition, the Ḥadīth continues to bridge tradition and modernity. It informs contemporary discourse on morality and social conduct, influences stylistics in modern literature, and remains central to cultural identity, demonstrating its enduring relevance across centuries.



Part 5.1

- Spoken Arabic from the Prophet's time.
- Everyday vocabulary.
- Natural speech patterns.
- It is valuable because it records authentic conversational structures and idiomatic usage.
- Oral transmission ensured accuracy and preservation of reports.

Part 5.2

- Everyday speech.
- Word forms.
- Because they provide authentic examples of grammar in use.
- Particles.
- By analysing sentence structures, verb forms, and variations in usage.

Part 5.3

- By introducing words and expressions from daily life, including social and religious practices.
- Informal phrases, important because they show natural spoken Arabic.
- By recording idiomatic and conversational language.
- Semantics.
- A word may carry a religious meaning in one context and a social meaning in another.

Part 5.4

- By forming the foundation of tafsir, fiqh, and sciences of Ḥadīth.
- Tafsir.
- Through its concise, practical style that influenced sermons, prose, and moral tales.
- Because it continues to shape sermons, speeches, and education.
- For example, its themes of morality and justice are reflected in modern discourse.



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- Motzki, H. (2002). *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence: Meccan Fiqh before the Classical Schools*. Brill.
- Rahman, F. (1996). *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*. University of Chicago Press.

Open Educational Resources (OERs) Suggested for Learners

- "Introduction to Hadith Studies." OER Commons. Retrieved from <https://www.oercommons.org>
- "Arabic Grammar and Hadith Examples." Open Access Islamic Studies Resources. Retrieved from <https://openarabic.org>
- "Islamic Education and Scholarship." Al-Islam OER Repository. Retrieved from <https://www.al-islam.org>

Illustrations (Figures, Plates, Boxes)

- *Figure 5.1 Definition of Ḥadīth as reports of the Prophet*
 - AI-generated using prompt: "Create a diagram showing the definition of Hadith: sayings, actions, approvals of the Prophet; oral transmission; written compilation."
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Plate 5.2 Oral transmission of Ḥadīth in early Islamic society*
 - AI-generated using prompt: "Create an illustration of early Muslims transmitting Hadith orally in a teaching circle."
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Box 5.3 Distinction between Qur'ānic style and Ḥadīth style*



- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a text box comparing Qur’ānic style and Hadith style: rhetoric, rhythm, imagery vs natural speech, practical guidance.”
- Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Figure 5.4 Contribution of Ḥadīth to Arabic grammar*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create a diagram showing how Hadith contributed to Arabic grammar: speech examples, verb forms, sentence structures, scholarly analysis.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Plate 5.5 Scholars studying syntax and morphology in Ḥadīth texts*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create an illustration of scholars analysing Hadith manuscripts to study syntax and morphology.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Box 5.6 Examples of grammatical debates in Ḥadīth*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a text box listing examples of grammatical debates based on Hadith texts: verb conjugation, particle placement, acceptable variations.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Figure 5.7 Enrichment of Arabic vocabulary through Ḥadīth*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create a diagram showing enrichment of Arabic vocabulary through Hadith: daily life terms, social customs, religious practices.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Plate 5.8 Everyday expressions preserved in Ḥadīth*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create an illustration of companions of the Prophet engaging in everyday conversation, later recorded in Hadith.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Box 5.9 Influence of Ḥadīth on semantic development*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a text box highlighting examples of semantic development in Hadith: religious meaning, social meaning, contextual variation.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Figure 5.10 Role of Ḥadīth in education and scholarship*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create a diagram showing the role of Hadith in education: memorisation, tafsīr, fiqh, linguistic sciences.”



- Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Plate 5.11 Literary composition inspired by Ḥadīth stylistics*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Create an illustration of a medieval Arabic scholar writing prose influenced by Hadith stylistics.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.
- *Box 5.12 Contemporary relevance of Ḥadīth*
 - AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a text box highlighting the continuing relevance of Hadith in sermons, speeches, literature, and education.”
 - Platform: Microsoft Copilot graphic generation.

