

Unit Assessment: *Empires in the Middle Ages* (Lessons 16–24)

Reading

Today you will read two selections related to the Islamic empires. Read the first selection, and answer the questions about it. Then, read the second selection, and answer the questions about it. Some of the questions have two parts. Note that the sections' paragraphs are numbered along the right-hand margin for easy reference.

Two Great Doctors of the Islamic Classical Age

- The Classical Age of Islam was a time of great progress in many fields, including science, mathematics, poetry, and art. Some of the most important advances of the Classical Age, however, were in the field of medicine. Two men, who lived thousands of miles apart at opposite ends of the Islamic empire, stand out as two of the most important physicians of the Middle Ages.

- The first of these men, Abu al-Qasim Al-Zahrawi (also known as Albucasis), was born in the western part of the empire in 936, in the city of Córdoba, which today is in Spain. Some of his most important contributions to medicine were in the area of surgery. His book *On Surgery and Instruments* was an illustrated guide that provided step-by-step diagrams of how to perform different operations and what tools to use. Among the surgical instruments he invented were tools to remove objects from his patients' throats and ears. Some of the instruments he introduced are still being used today, including a thread that doctors use to stitch up internal organs.

- Albucasis also wrote important works about dentistry, childbirth, and the ingredients that go into different medicine. The personal side of being a doctor was also very important to him. He encouraged the medical students he taught to have good relationships with their patients and to give them all individual attention. In addition, he believed that rich and poor alike deserved the same treatment from doctors.

- The other great doctor of the Islamic Classical Age was Ibn Sina, who was born around the year 980 in Central Asia, which is in the eastern part of the Islamic empire. He was a very intelligent child with an amazing memory. In fact, by the age of ten he had memorized the entire Qur'an. As a teenager, he spent years studying the works of the Greek philosopher Aristotle; he turned to medicine at the age of sixteen.

- Ibn Sina's most famous book, *The Canon of Medicine*, was translated into many languages and studied by physicians all over the world, even hundreds of years after his death. Today we still follow much of Ibn Sina's advice about setting broken bones and staying healthy through exercise, a nutritious diet, and by getting plenty of sleep. He even wrote about the