The characteristics of mohammed

The following are descriptions of some of the characteristics of Mohammed. After reading them over, compare these characteristics with those of other great religious figures: the Buddha, Confucius, Moses, Jesus, etc. On the back of this sheet you will find 7 questions. Answer the questions based on the following readings.

***VISIONARY***  -- Mohammed spent time alone in the caves around his hometown of Mecca. In them, he heard a voice speaking to him. He came to realize that this was the voice of the Angel Gabriel. He understood that the angel was revealing to him messages from the same God who had spoken to earlier prophets, ALLAH.

***PREACHER*** – Although at first Mohammed did not know what to do with the messages that he received from Allah, with the encouragement of his wife, Khadijah, he began to preach the message to others. Mohammed was illiterate; he could neither read nor write. Yet, he served so effectively as a worthy messenger of God that he convinced many people of the truth of God’s message as it was revealed to him.

***POLITICAL LEADER*** – Mohammed did not view God’s message as limited to only spirituality concerns. For him, God’s word was meant to rule all areas of life. In effect, Mohammed governed the cities of Mecca and Medina and, by the time of his death, all the territory that the Muslims had converted or conquered as well.

***MILITARY LEADER*** – Mohammed did not renounce violence. Rather, he saw the use of violence in the defense of God’s word to be acceptable and appropriate. He actually led troops in battle.

***MONOTHEIST*** – In a region dominated by polytheists, Mohammed strongly and unequivocally affirmed the belief in one God. At his death, when some of his followers wanted to proclaim him God, his successor, Abu Bakr, announced to those gathered: “O men, if anyone worships Mohammed, let him know that Mohammed is dead. But if anyone worships God, let him know that God is alive and immortal for ever.”

***MORALIST*** – For the most part, Arabs of Mohammed’s time followed a “might makes right” morality. Those in power did as they pleased; those without power made do as best they could. To this morally wanting society Mohammed preached a strict moral code by which all people must abide. A Muslim of whatever degree of wealth or power must follow the same rules set down in the Koran as any Muslim.

***EGALITARIAN*** – Mohammed stood for equality. In his vision, everyone shares a similar relationship to the almighty God; everyone must surrender to God’s will. When Muslims pray together all men form a line or, if necessary, additional lines. No one stands out as occupying a privileged position. Women also share a separate, but equal position with Muslim men, which is far from the situation in the Arab society of Mohammed’s day.

1. Where did the angel Gabriel appear to Mohammed? (visionary)

2. What problem did Mohammed have trying to pass on Allah’s messages? (preacher)

3. Who encouraged him to spread the messages of Allah? (preacher)

4. Was God’s word limited to spirituality? Explain. (politician)

5. How are Mohammed’s military actions misinterpreted today? (Militarist)

6. How does Islam treat the different social classes? (moralist)

7. Why do Muslims pray in a line? (egalitarian)