

# Countries Around the World™

## Morocco

### Program Summary

Meet 12-year-old Mohamed-Yassine. He and his family live in Marrakesh, a city in central Morocco. Join Mohamed-Yassine as he and his cousin Youssef ride around Marrakesh in a buggy, taking in all the sights. After a tour of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Bahia Palace, Mohamed-Yassine and Youssef visit a *souk* and browse among the items for sale, including rugs, *babouches*, foods and pet iguanas! Next, Mohamed-Yassine and Youssef reveal the religious traditions and customs of Morocco when they attend a prayer service at the Koutoubia Mosque. Experience the vibrancy of Moroccan culture when Mohamed-Yassine and Youssef walk around bustling Djemma el-Fna, Marrakesh's famous central square, and dance along with the mystic Gnawa musicians before snacking on some snails and joining Mohamed-Yassine's father and sisters for some mint tea. Finally, Mohamed-Yassine and his family travel the countryside to visit a kasbah and enjoy a lunch of *tajine*, all while taking in the beautiful scenery.

### Country Information

- **location:** North Africa, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea; bordered by Algeria and Western Sahara; southern Spain located to the north, across the Strait of Gibraltar
- **capital:** Rabat
- **official language:** Arabic
- **type of government:** constitutional monarchy
- **total area:** approximately 446,550 sq km
- **climate:** Mediterranean on the coast; more arid in the interior
- **terrain:** northern coast and interior are mountainous with large areas of bordering plateaus, valleys and rich coastal plains
- **natural resources:** includes phosphates, iron ore, manganese, lead, zinc, fish and salt
- **industries:** phosphate rock mining and processing, food processing, leather goods, textiles, construction and tourism
- **agricultural products:** includes barley, wheat, citrus, wine, vegetables, olives and livestock

### Vocabulary

**Maghreb** — A geographic region of northwest Africa that includes the Atlas Mountains and the coastal plains of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. Politically, the country of Mauritania is considered part of the Maghreb.

**Berber** — A group of Afro-Asiatic languages, with many dialects, that is spoken throughout North Africa.

**medina** — The old section of an Arab city in North Africa.

**vizier** — A high officer in a Muslim government.

**harem** — The part of a Muslim palace or house reserved for the residence of women.

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**souk** — A traditional market found in many cities of the Arab world. It is usually an outdoor marketplace that features many separate shops that sell a wide variety of products.

**tanner** — A person who converts an animal hide into leather.

**babouches** — A type of slipper that is often embroidered and made from leather.

**date** — The sweet, edible, oblong or oval fruit of the date palm.

**dirham** — The currency of Morocco.

**minaret** — A tall, thin tower, connected to a mosque, from which people of the Islamic faith are called to prayer.

**muezzin** — The official who calls Muslims to daily prayer.

**mosque** — A Muslim place of worship.

**Koran** — Also "Qur'an." The holy book of Islam.

**surah** — Also sura. The name for any of the 114 chapters in the Koran.

**Ramadan** — A month-long period of fasting during the ninth month of the year in the Islamic calendar.

**Mecca** — A city of western Saudi Arabia and the holiest city of Islam. Mecca was the birthplace of Muhammad and is a pilgrimage site for all devout believers of the faith.

**esplanade** — A flat, open stretch of pavement or grass that is often used as a promenade.

**sultan** — A sovereign of a Muslim country.

**Djemma el-Fna** — Also "Jamaâ El Fna." A large, open-air, central square in Marrakesh.

**Gnawa** — Also "Gnaoua." A style of Moroccan music that some believe has healing powers. Also refers to people who play this style of music.

**kasbah** — Also "casbah." A fortified castle or palace in northern Africa. "Kasbah" can also refer to the older section of a city in North Africa or the Middle East.

**tajine** — A dish made up of meat, vegetables and spices stewed in a traditional clay pottery dish.

### Pre-viewing Discussion

- Distribute outline maps of Morocco to the class. Have students find and label the capital, other major cities, neighboring countries and major bodies of water. Questions to ask include: Which countries border Morocco to the north, east and south? Based on Morocco's location, what do you think the climate is like? If you were moving to Morocco, where would you choose to live?
- Discuss why learning about a different country and a different culture is important. Begin by asking students to brainstorm a list of things that they think make up culture. Ask students to provide examples of these cultural elements by talking about the foods they eat, the clothes they wear and the music they listen to, etc. Point out that the different things that students listed are ways of understanding who they are. Then, move the discussion toward why learning about other cultures is important. What can learning about other cultures help you understand about people around the world? What can it help you understand about your own culture? Do you have to travel to a different country to experience a different culture? What do you think life would be like if everyone were the same? Ask students to share any stories they might have about traveling to different places and experiencing different cultures.
- A person's identity can be based upon many different factors, such as religion, nationality, gender and ethnicity. Lead a discussion on what constitutes identity and how it factors into students' lives. Ask questions, such as: If you had to describe who you are as a person, what would you say? What are some things that you identify with? How are those things a part of your identity? How is the place where you live a part of your identity? As they prepare to watch the program, instruct students to look out for examples of Moroccan identity.

## Follow-up Activities

- Students can learn the letters of the Arabic alphabet and listen to sound files of their pronunciations by visiting [www.shariahprogram.ca/Arabic-alphabet.shtml](http://www.shariahprogram.ca/Arabic-alphabet.shtml). Then, assign each student an Arabic letter and have students create cards that feature their letters, their names and their Latin-alphabet equivalents. Students can take turns leading the class in pronouncing their Arabic letters. Finally, students can work together to post their cards in the classroom for an Arabic-alphabet display. As an extension, students can listen to a song that teaches the letters of the Arabic alphabet by visiting [www.funwitharabic.com/song.htm](http://www.funwitharabic.com/song.htm). Students can sing along with the aid of their Arabic alphabet cards. For a classroom with fluent Arabic speakers, have them act as classroom leaders in pronunciation.
- Moroccan weaving, known for its intricate designs and eye-catching colors, is an expression of the rich culture, varied history and distinct character of Morocco. The subtle shifts in pattern and use of imagery in Moroccan weaving are more than just decorations; they are windows into the cultures and value systems of the people who created them. Invite students to share in this art form by designing and illustrating their own Moroccan rugs. For information about Moroccan weaving, including commonly used imagery and a printable, Moroccan rug template for coloring, visit [www.nmafa.si.edu/exhibits/fabric/education.html](http://www.nmafa.si.edu/exhibits/fabric/education.html). After students have finished designing their rugs, they can take turns presenting their creations to the class, and explaining their designs and what they mean. Display the rugs in the classroom.
- One of the world's major religions, Islam is followed by millions of people around the world and plays an important role in the daily lives of the people of Morocco. Engage students in a study of Islam. Begin by dividing the class into small groups and assigning each group a topic to cover (e.g., five pillars, holidays, art, the Koran). Each group can collect facts and create a few pages for inclusion in a class book about Islam. Each group can also plan and give a short presentation on its topic. Information about Islam can be found at [atschool.eduweb.co.uk/carolrb/islam/islamintro.html](http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk/carolrb/islam/islamintro.html). If you have Muslim students, encourage them to be classroom leaders and to provide more insight and detail about Islam.
- “Gnawa” refers both to an ethnic group in Morocco descended from enslaved Africans and the style of music that they play. Moreover, Gnawa music has its roots in pre-Islamic, animist beliefs, and some people believe that Gnawa has the power to heal! Students can learn about this ancient and mystic form of music and listen to clips of Gnawa music and interviews with Gnawa musicians by visiting [www.ibiblio.org/gnawastories/](http://www.ibiblio.org/gnawastories/). Then, students can collect facts about Gnawa musicians and create pages for inclusion in a class book. Students can take turns talking about what they learned and their impressions of the Gnawa and their music.
- Found in many cities throughout the Middle East and North Africa, *souks* are lively places where people go to shop and meet others. Working in groups, students can pretend that they are merchants planning to set up a stand at a *souk* in Morocco. Based on information from the program and other sources, have students determine what types of things are sold at a Moroccan *souk*. Students should come up with names and slogans for their businesses, what they will sell and a price list featuring prices in both Moroccan dirhams and U.S. dollars. Then, using various props, have students set up their stands and perform skits about shopping in a *souk*. And remember, since haggling over prices is common in a *souk*, those price lists are open to interpretation! Students can take turns role playing as vendors and customers.
- Share in the customs of Morocco by preparing and serving some mint tea to students. A recipe can be found at: [www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/ontheline/explore/journey/algeria/recipe1.htm](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/ontheline/explore/journey/algeria/recipe1.htm). Then, have students find facts about the history of tea in addition to how other cultures around the world use tea. Students might enjoy reading Carrie Gleason's *Biography of Tea* (Crabtree, 2007). Using this information, students can create time lines, flip books and fact posters about tea to share with the class.

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- Read Stefan Czernecki's *Zorab's Magic Carpet* (Hyperion Books for Children, 1996) to the class. Then, have students recreate this tale in the classroom by acting it out. This can be done as a puppet show, a mime skit, a student play, etc. Divide the students into small groups and have each one prepare its own production by choosing a format and thinking about the story's elements of character, setting and plot. After each performance, conduct a question and answer session in which students explain why they chose to retell the stories in the ways that they did. As an extension, students can write, illustrate and share their own original tales based on elements from *Zorab's Magic Carpet*. Collect the students' stories for inclusion in a class book.
- Hello from Morocco! Postcards are a fun way show people the different places you've visited. Using information from the program, have students design and write a postcard as if they had visited Morocco and wanted to tell their friends back home all about it. Students can visit [www.readwritethink.org/materials/postcard/](http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/postcard/) to create postcards online. For added authenticity, students can use Arabic words, like “marhaba” (hello) and “ma’assalama” (goodbye) in their postcards.
- Morocco is part of the Maghreb, a region of North African countries that includes Algeria, Libya, Mauritania and Tunisia. Have students find facts about these countries and compare and contrast them using Venn diagrams. Students can focus on areas such as language, food, clothing, climate and wildlife. Consider watching the program on Algeria in this series.
- Using clay, salt dough or another medium, students can create raised relief maps of Morocco. Advise students to sketch the country on sturdy pieces of cardboard first. When molding the clay, be sure to clearly depict the different landforms of Morocco, like the Atlas Mountains, coastal plains and the Sahara Desert. When the models dry, students can use paint or colored markers to designate the various climate regions of Morocco (e.g., green=temperate coastal regions, white=cold, mountainous regions, red=arid desert, etc.). Students can also create “color keys” for their maps that explain what the colors mean. For added detail, have students label the capital and other major cities of Morocco.

## Suggested Internet Resources

- [news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/country\\_profiles/791867.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/country_profiles/791867.stm)  
Learn more about Morocco's history, geography, leaders and culture at this up-to-date site by the BBC.
- [www.peacecorps.gov/kids/world/europemed/morocco.html](http://www.peacecorps.gov/kids/world/europemed/morocco.html)  
This child-friendly site provides basic facts and information about Morocco.
- [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)  
The CIA World Factbook web site presents detailed and up-to-date information on Morocco and many other countries. Topics include geography, people, government, economy, transportation and communication. On the main page of the CIA site, click on the “World Factbook” link.

## Suggested Print Resources

- Blauer, Etagale. *Morocco*. Children's Press, Danbury, CT; 1999.
- Bravo, Jacques, Izza Genini and Xavier Richer. *Splendors of Morocco*. I.B. Tauris, London, England; 2000. A resource for teachers.
- Hargraves, Orin and Pat Seward. *Morocco*. Marshall Cavendish, Tarrytown, NY; 2006.

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