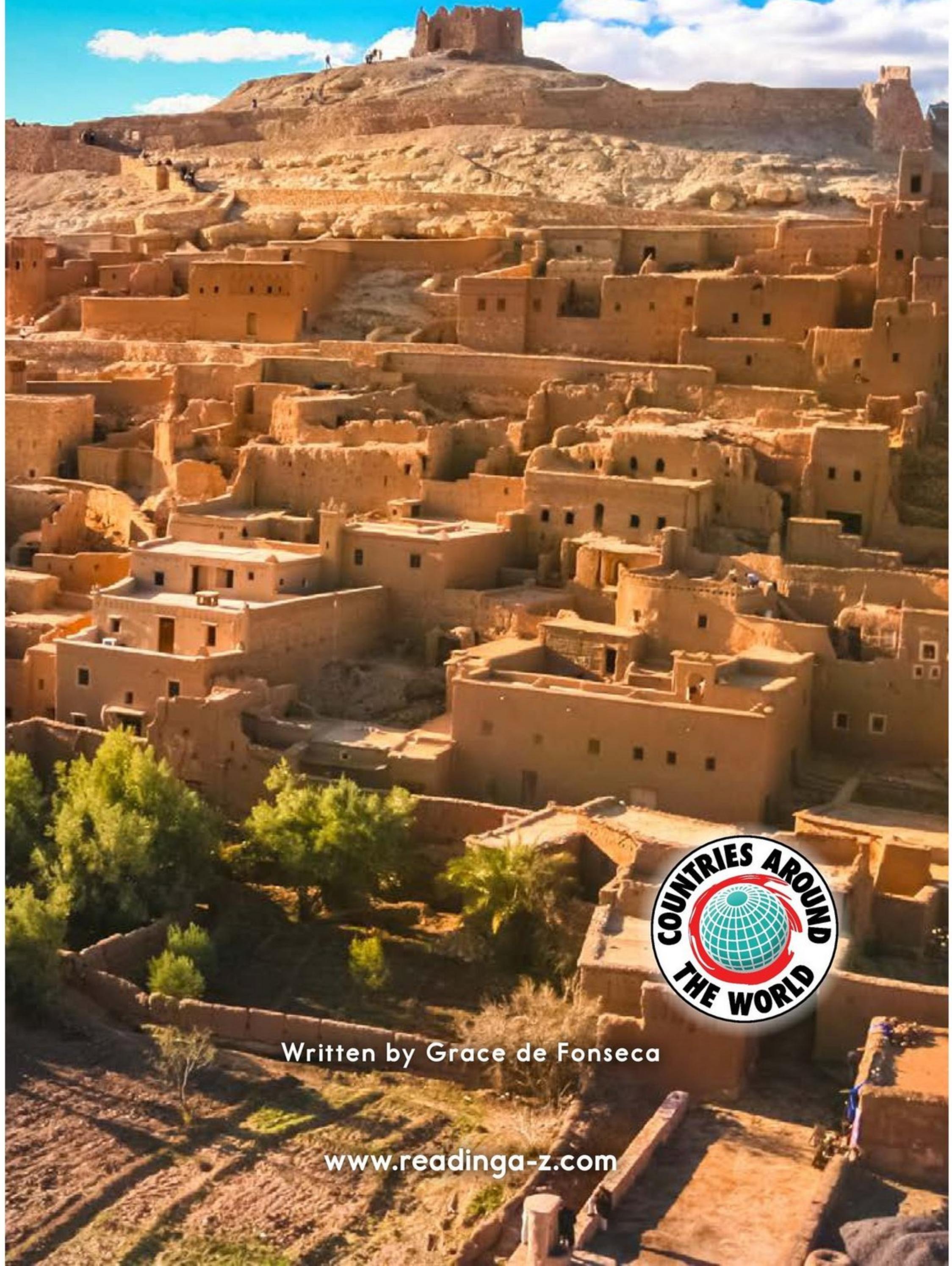


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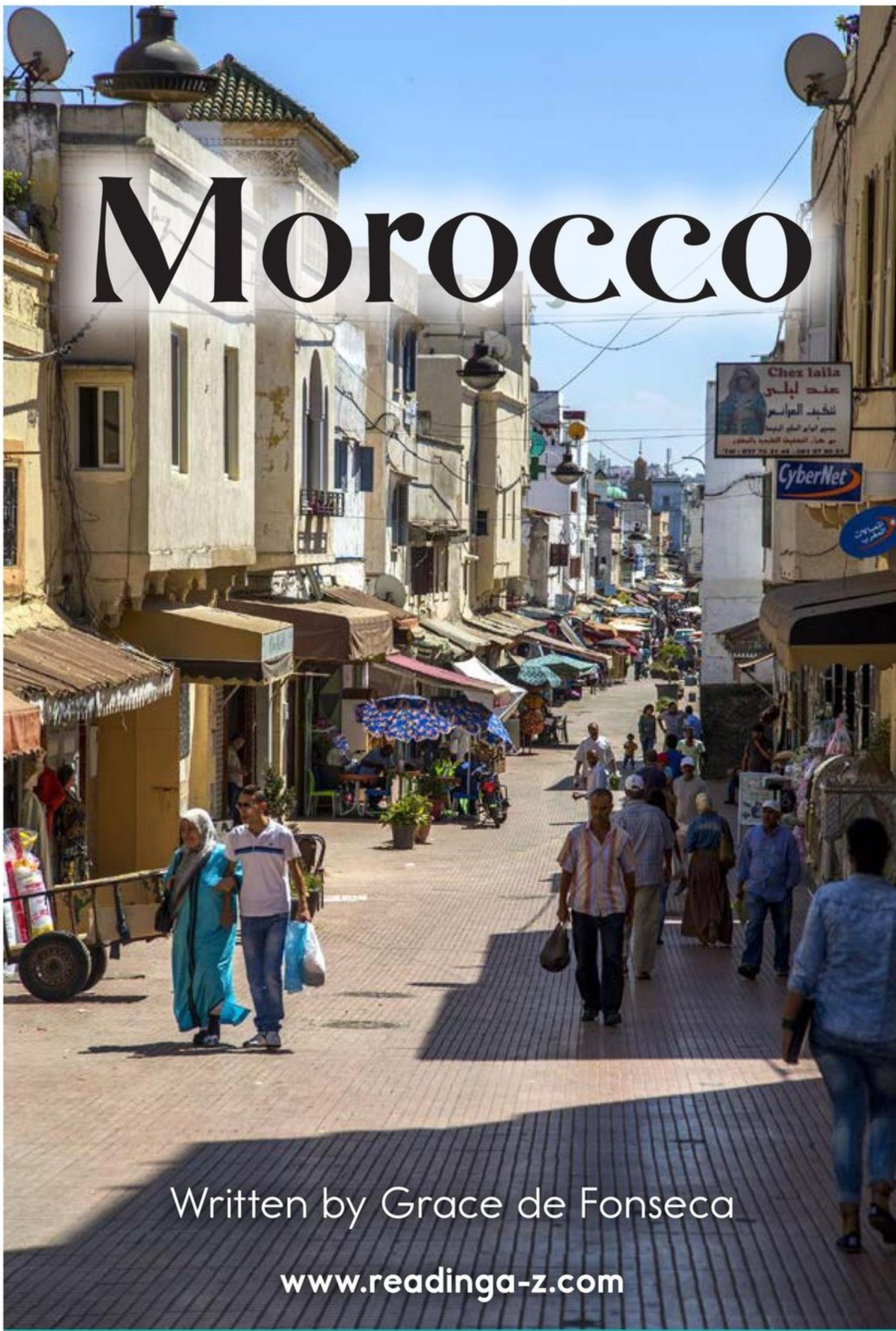
Morocco



Written by Grace de Fonseca

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Morocco



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Focus Question

What makes Morocco an interesting country to learn about?

Words to Know

barren

café

culture

dynasty

industries

Islam

landscape

oases

port

prime minister

strait

tourism

Front cover: A view of the remains of an ancient Moroccan city

Title page: A street in Rabat, Morocco

Page 3: People on a beach along the Mediterranean Sea

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Morocco

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Morocco



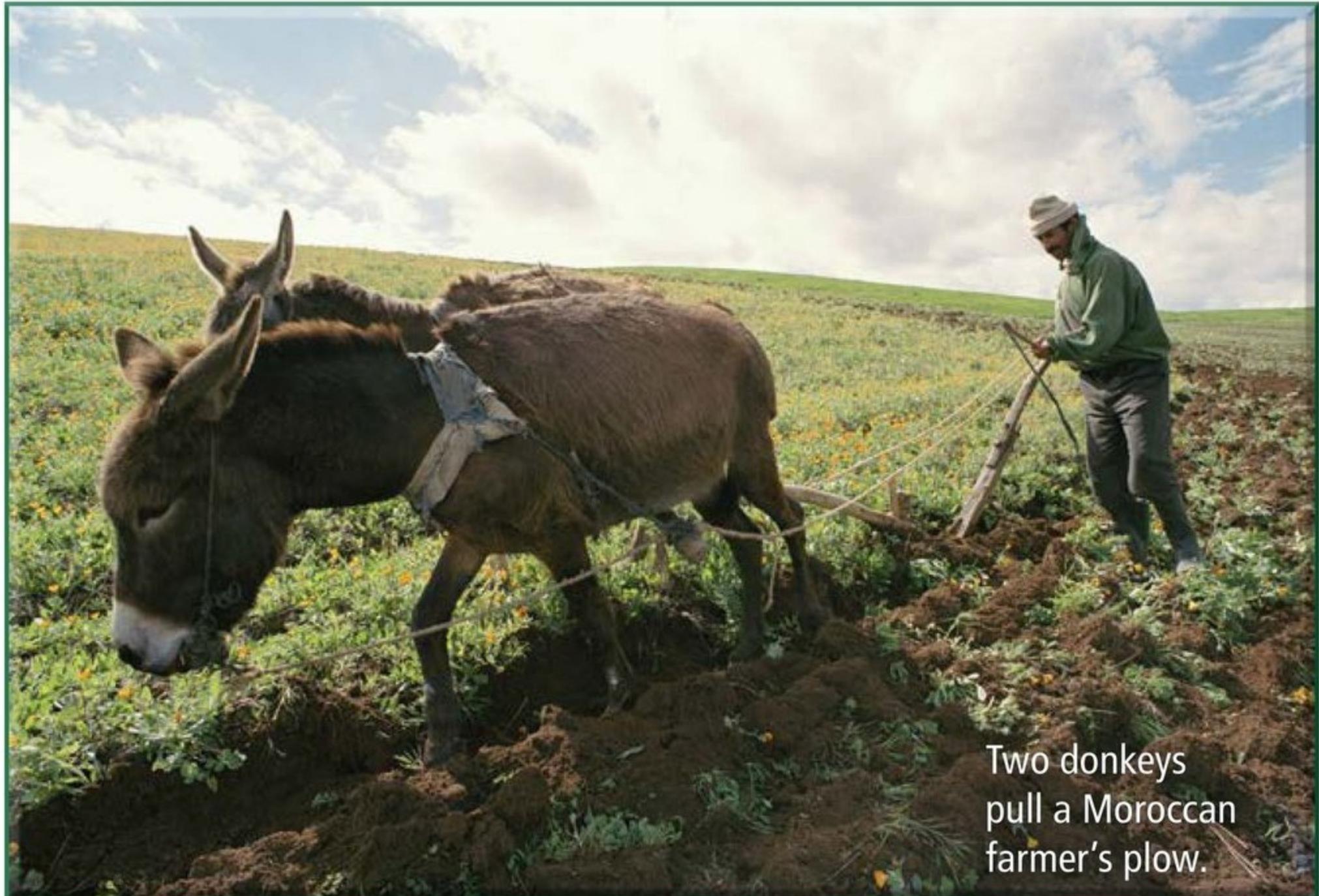
Where Is It?

Morocco is a country in Africa. It is a little smaller than the country of Spain. Morocco is located in northwestern Africa, just west of Algeria. An area called Western Sahara lies along its southern border. Morocco has coasts along both the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. These two bodies of water are connected by a narrow channel called the **Strait of Gibraltar**. Just across the Strait of Gibraltar from Morocco lies Spain. At its closest point, Spain is only about 13 kilometers (8 mi.) away from Morocco.

The capital of Morocco is Rabat. Rabat is on the Atlantic coast where the Bou Regreg River meets the sea. Rabat is an old city and has been around since the 1100s. In the past, Rabat was a major Moroccan **port**, and from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, pirates lived in Rabat and its nearby sister city of Salé. The pirates ranged the seas from North Africa to the shores of European countries such as Spain, Italy, England, and Ireland.



Rabat is home to well over half a million people. Old sections of the city are surrounded by ancient walls, seen here to the right.



Two donkeys
pull a Moroccan
farmer's plow.

People

Morocco is home to a little more than thirty-three million people. Most people are of Berber (people who lived in Morocco originally) or Arab descent. Almost two-thirds of them live in cities like Rabat, Casablanca, and Tangier. **Tourism** is huge in Morocco. The mining, manufacturing, and communications **industries** are also major areas of employment for Moroccans. About one-third of the people in Morocco work in farming. Morocco stands out among neighboring countries because many areas can grow crops well due to its mild climate and fertile land. In other areas of Morocco, farmers don't have enough water for their crops.

City life in Morocco is comfortable for most people. There is more of a social **culture**, and many men like to go to **cafés** to watch soccer, the most popular sport in Morocco today. People in cities enjoy seeing movies, going to restaurants, and shopping.

Islam is the official religion, and 99 percent of Moroccans are Muslim. The laws of Islam are important in Moroccan society. In 2004, the Moroccan government changed some of its laws to give women more rights. As a result, Morocco is more open to the idea of equality for women than some other Arab countries.

Languages of Morocco

Moroccan people speak Arabic, Berber, and French.



The sign for the Princess Lalla Meryem School, named after a Moroccan president's daughter, is in three languages.

Morocco's Landforms



Land

There are many mountains in Morocco. The two major mountain ranges are the Atlas Mountains and the Rif Mountains. The Atlas Mountains run north–south through the middle of Morocco. The Rif Mountains run along the Mediterranean coast. Mount Toubkal is the highest mountain in Morocco. It is 4,165 meters (13,665 ft.) high. A lot of rain and snow fall in the mountains; therefore, Morocco has many streams running through its lands.

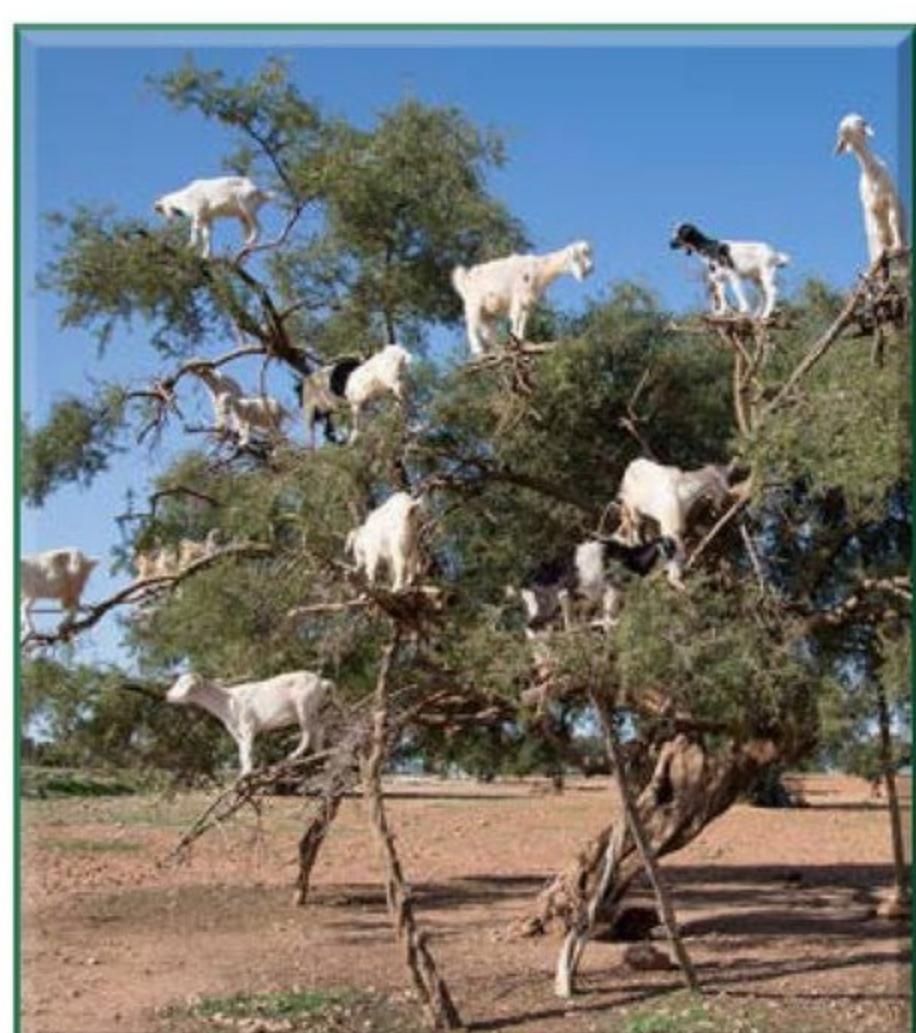
Along the coast, temperatures are between 18°C and 28°C (64°F and 82°F), but the inland areas get more extreme temperatures. The summers there are hot—often more than 35°C (95°F)—and the winters can be freezing cold. In the late spring or early summer, a hot wind called the *sharqī* (shar-KEE) blows out of the Sahara Desert to the south. The *sharqī* increases temperatures, often causing heat waves as high as 41°C (106°F).



Ouzoud Falls

The **landscape** in Morocco varies based on the climate. Beautiful forests grow where the climate is mild. In some high mountain areas, argan trees make up the forests. The argan tree only grows in Morocco. It is valuable because it produces a nut that people use to make cooking oil and some other products. Unlike the mild forested areas, the Saharan part of the country has little plant life, except in **oases**. There are several in Morocco.

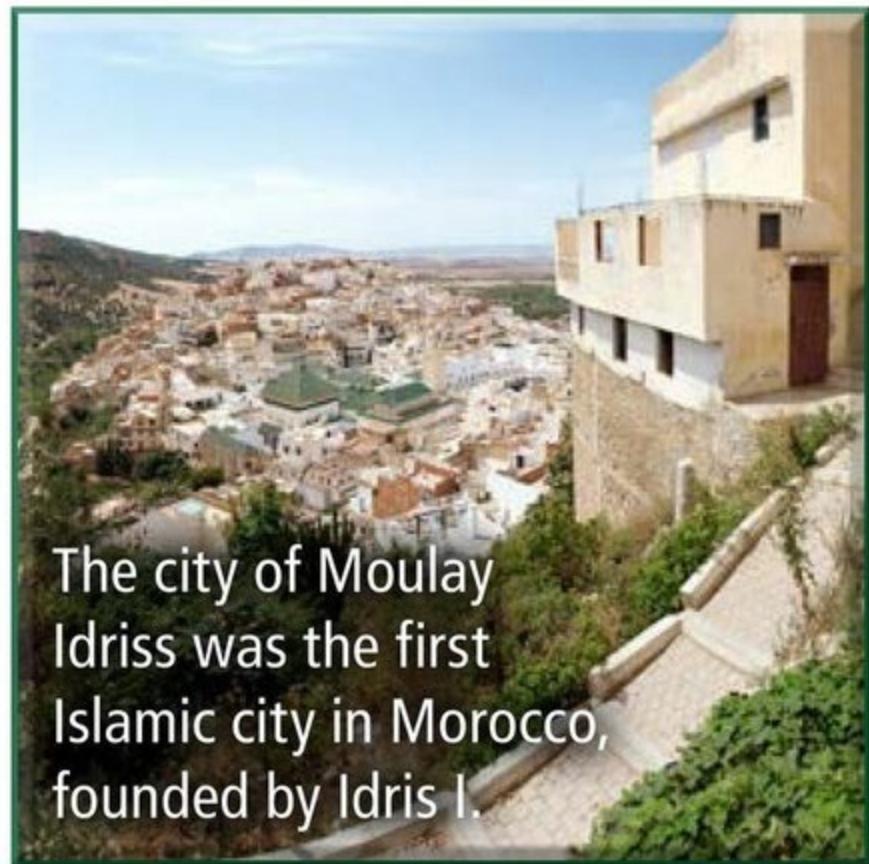
Goats climb into argan trees to eat the fruit.



History

King Idris I came to Morocco from the Middle East to found a Muslim **dynasty** more than twelve hundred years ago. Later Muslim kingdoms from the region controlled parts of what is today Spain until 1492. In the 1800s, European countries began to gain power in Morocco. Spain established control along the Moroccan coast in 1884, and the remainder of the country came under French control in 1912, following civil unrest in Morocco. When Morocco came under French control, the French promised to share their military strength and protect the standing of the Moroccan royal house. Morocco was under French rule until it became free from France in 1956.

Today, Morocco has both a king and a **prime minister**. In the 1970s, Spain gave the desert area of Western Sahara to Morocco and Mauritania. Since then, Morocco has fought armed battles with Algeria and Western Saharan groups over this land. The area is a harsh desert, but beneath the **barren** landscape lie valuable minerals, which could make the country that controls them rich. Morocco claims and controls most of Western Sahara, but many people still question its claim today.



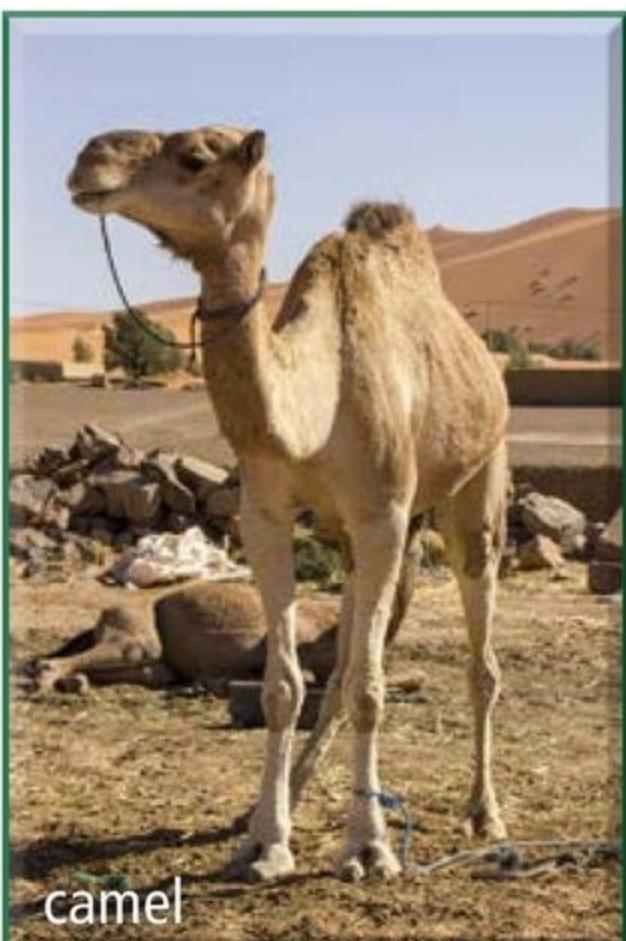
The city of Moulay Idriss was the first Islamic city in Morocco, founded by Idris I.



Flamingos gather in Morocco's waterways.

Animals

Huge flocks of birds travel through Morocco, especially in the winter months. These birds, which include herons, flamingos, ducks, and storks, enjoy visiting Morocco's waterways.



camel

Single-humped camels thrive in Morocco. They play an important part in the country's tourist industry. Visitors can take a ride through the countryside on a camel.

In addition to the impressive kinds of bird life, Morocco is home to a monkey called the Barbary macaque (muh-KAK). Macaques live in Morocco's forests. Barbary macaques also live across the Strait of Gibraltar in Spain and are the only monkeys that live in Europe.



Barbary macaque



The fennec fox's large ears help it release body heat to stay cool.

In Morocco's deserts dwell fennec foxes. Fennec foxes are the smallest foxes in the world. They sleep during the day and come out at night in order to beat the desert heat. An unusual spider with an interesting way of traveling also lives in the Sahara. When it feels danger, it flings itself end over end in a movement called *flic-flac*. The spider can travel forward or backward, and even uphill using this move, and at an impressive speed: 2 meters (6.6 ft.) per second, twice as fast as it usually travels. However, the flipping requires so much energy that the spider can only do it a couple times each day or it will die.



The Moroccan flic-flac spider tumbles down a sand dune.



Moroccans sometimes cook their food in a special clay pot.

Food

Morocco is famous around the world for its food, which includes Spanish, French, Berber, and Arab flavors. A tiny round pasta called couscous is popular in Moroccan foods. Vegetables such as tomatoes, onions, peppers, and eggplant are also common, along with many kinds of fruit. The flavors of garlic, olives, lemons, and spices are often present in Moroccan food. Kebobs are popular, as is a lamb stew that people serve for a Muslim holiday called Ramadan. People in Morocco also enjoy eating pigeon meat, especially when baked into a light, sugar-topped pastry called *b'stillah* (buh-STI-lah). In areas along the coast, people also eat fish often. To wash down their meals, people in Morocco often choose a sweet mint tea or black coffee.



A Moroccan market attracts shoppers on bikes and on foot.

Conclusion

Morocco is a country that many people consider a gateway to Africa and Europe. It has a long history and many beautiful kinds of land, from snowcapped mountains and sandy beaches to lush forests and desert dunes. These lands provide homes for many interesting animals. Rabat and the other cities on the coast have mild climates along with refreshing ocean breezes. Many people in those cities live comfortably, enjoying many different activities and the world-famous foods of their beautiful homeland.



Population: 33,322,699

Land: 446,300 square kilometers
(172,317 sq. mi.)

Capital City: Rabat

Primary Languages: Arabic, Berber

Primary Religion: Islam

Name of Currency: dirham



Source: Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook (2016)

Glossary

barren (<i>adj.</i>)	lacking vegetation (p. 10)
café (<i>n.</i>)	a small restaurant that sells drinks and light meals (p. 7)
culture (<i>n.</i>)	the ideas and customs of a certain group of people (p. 7)
dynasty (<i>n.</i>)	a series of rulers from the same family in a country (p. 10)
industries (<i>n.</i>)	groups of businesses that sell or create the same products or services (p. 6)
Islam (<i>n.</i>)	the monotheistic faith of Muslims, based on the teachings of the prophet Muhammad (p. 7)
landscape (<i>n.</i>)	the visible features of an area of land, seen as a whole (p. 9)
oases (<i>n.</i>)	fertile places with water in a desert (p. 9)
port (<i>n.</i>)	a place along water where ships can be sheltered from storms or load and unload cargo (p. 5)
prime minister (<i>n.</i>)	the leader of the government in most countries that have a parliament (p. 10)
strait (<i>n.</i>)	a narrow passage of water connecting two large areas of water (p. 4)
tourism (<i>n.</i>)	the business of providing services for people who travel for pleasure (p. 6)

Morocco

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Word Count: 1,191

Connections

Writing

Write a postcard to a friend about a pretend visit to Morocco. Use details from the book to describe what you saw, what you ate, and exciting experiences you had.

Social Studies

Make a timeline of the history of Morocco. Include at least five events on your timeline and write a brief description of each. Use details from the book as well as outside resources.



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