Enrich your vocabulary through Spanish the Arabic connection

A little bit of history Did you know that the word "orange" comes from Arabic? As a matter of fact, the English language contains many common words of Arabic origin. Why is this? Again, let us turn to the history of Spain.

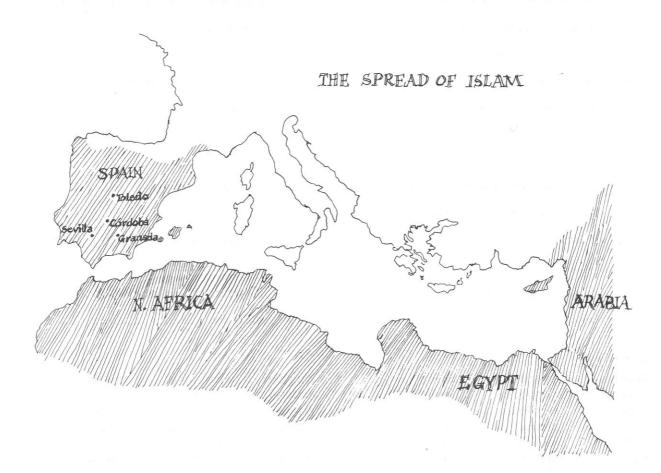
At the beginning of the seventh century A.D. a new religion appeared in the Middle East. This religion, Islam, was founded by Mohammed (570-632), a well-to-do Arab merchant born in Mecca. The success of Islam, the Moslem religion, was phenomenal. Less than one hundred years after Mohammed's death it had spread across the entire Arabian peninsula into Persia, Turkestan, Egypt and North Africa. In 711 an army of Moors, an Arabic tribe from North Africa, crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and invaded Spain.

The Moors were to occupy most of Spain for

nearly eight centuries, bringing with them a sophisticated civilization. Learning and culture flourished in Islamic Spain, especially around Toledo, Granada, Córdoba and Sevilla. This period witnessed great achievements in architecture, medicine, mathematics, chemistry, philosophy and literature.

However, the Moors did not impose their religion on the Spanish people, who remained Christians. Little by little the Christian princes reconquered Spain, until the last Moslem king was defeated in 1492 (the year Columbus landed in America!).

The Moslems departed from Spain, but left behind many reminders of their 800-year occupation. The Spanish language, for example, absorbed many Arabic words which subsequently passed into other European languages such as French, Italian and English.



Arabic words in English

The English words defined below are of Arabic origin. Can you identify them? To help you, these words are listed alphabetically at the bottom of the page with their Spanish and Arabic equivalents.

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| 1. | food | ∮ C |
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| | a. | a tropical fruit which grows in Florida and California: | j. | a chemical base which may contain potassium or sodium: |
|----|------|---|----------|---|
| | b. | a product used to sweeten tea and coffee: | k. | a medieval science whose aim was to transform lead into gold: |
| | c. | a reddish-yellow fruit which may be eaten dry: | 1. | the highest point in the sky: |
| | d. | a substance found in wine, beer and whisky: | 3. other | r words |
| | e. | a yellow spice used in oriental cooking: | m. | the top rank in the navy: |
| | f. | you nibble the leaves and eat the heart of this vegetable: | n. | a natural textile used in making shirts and dresses: |
| 2. | scie | nce and geography | 0. | a container for storing honey or |
| | g. | a field of mathematics which uses symbols such as x and y: | p. | what you say to end a game of chess: |
| | h. | a number which alone is nothing, but which can increase another number by | q. | a deep red color: |
| | | a factor of ten: | r. | a clover-type plant which is fed to cows: |
| | i. | a large rock at the southern tip of Spain: | s. | a system which lets you code a secret message: |
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