



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

**Center for  
Middle Eastern Studies**

***Mapping the Spread of Ideas &  
Culture of Morocco***

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### **Background Information for Educators**

Before implementing this unit, it is helpful if students have a basic understanding of the principles of Islam. Additionally, students should know the basic geography of the spread of Islam which extended from the Arabian Peninsula, through North Africa, and into the Iberian Peninsula.

This unit is incorporated within the larger unit of Islam, and fits well with the overarching essential question, “How do ideas grow and spread?”

### **Estimated Timeline**

This mini-unit will take approximately 4-6 class periods (55 minute class periods).

### **Unit Overview**

Day 1: Discover The Importance of Muhammad Al-Idrisi: Global Navigator

- Biography of Al-Idrisi’s life
- Compare his map to a modern map of the area
- Create a map of your school or community

Day 2: Map the Travels of Ibn Battuta

- Biography of Ibn Battuta’s life
- Students read excerpts from his travel diary

Day 3: Map the Spread of Islamic Cultural Relics Around the World

- Stations activity to investigate the architectural, linguistic, culinary, and musical influences that the Islamic culture has had on the cultures of the Iberian Peninsula and the Americas.

Day 4: Create a One Pager

- Review the lives of Ibn Battuta, Al-Idrisi, and the cultural legacies of the Muslim world on Latin America.
- Guide students through the concept of the One Pager
- Present your One Pager to the class

# *Day 1: Discover The Importance of Muhammad Al-Idrisi: Global Navigator*

**Essential Question:** Why is it important to know about geography?

**Anticipatory Set:** Ask students, What is a map? Why are maps important? What would happen if we did not have maps?

## **Lesson Plan**

-Guide students through the biography of Muhammad Al-Idrisi.

-Ask Discussion Questions, and encourage students to keep notes of the discussion, as this will help them when they create their One Pager.

## **Answers to Discussion Questions**

Why would King Roger II want to employ someone who could create accurate maps? **King Roger II would want to have maps so he can control trade routes. Military purposes.**

Look at the picture of Al-Idrisi's statue in Ceuta. Why is this statue a good way to honor his legacy? **He is facing the ocean, where people traveled around the Mediterranean Sea. He is holding a map, which represents the ones he created.**

Why do you think Al-Idrisi named his book *A Diversion for the Man Longing to Travel to Far-Off Places*? Explain your answer.

Why was Sicily's location such an important center for the exchange of goods and ideas? **Sicily was located in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, which was an important trade route connecting Africa, Asia, and Europe.**

-Compare Al-Idrisi's map to a modern day map. What is different, what is the same?



-Have students create their own maps, either of their school campus or their city. Afterwards, ask: Why is map making difficult?

# Muhammad Al-Idrisi

## Key Words

**cartographer** – A person who creates maps

**geographer** – A person who studies the natural environment and land forms

**Egyptologist** – A person who studies ancient Egypt's history and culture

After Prophet Muhammad's death in 632 A.D., Muslim armies converted many people and conquered many lands in the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa. By 711, Muslim invaders entered the Iberian Peninsula, in what is now Spain and Portugal. The Muslim world was vast, and expanded into three continents; Asia, Africa, and Europe. Trade routes through the Arabian and Saharan deserts as well as shipping routes in the Mediterranean Sea helped to link the Muslim world.

It was into this world that Muhammad Al-Idrisi was born. He was a famous **cartographer**, **geographer**, and **Egyptologist**. Muhammad Al-Idrisi was born in the year ca. 1100 in Ceuta, Morocco. Al-Idrisi was born into the Hammudi family, who had ruled Andalusia prior to his birth.

In his youth, Muhammad Al-Idrisi studied at a university in Cordoba, Spain. While still in his teens, Al-Idrisi traveled throughout Asia Minor and Anatolia. He used information from other Muslim merchants who traveled around the Muslim Empire as well as information he gathered from his own travels to create detailed maps.

During a time of hostility and turmoil in Al-Andalus, Muhammad Al-Idrisi decided to move to Sicily, a large island in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. He showed the king of Sicily a set of maps that he had drawn while on his previous travels. Because of his cartography skills and geographic intelligence, Muhammad Al-Idrisi was invited to live in the court of the Norman king Roger II of Sicily.

Roger II hired Al-Idrisi to create a collection of maps and information about places within his kingdom, as well as places outside. Roger II hired many other geographers to help Al-Idrisi in this difficult task. Al-Idrisi remained there for 18 years working on this project. During this time, Al-Idrisi created his most famous maps of North Africa, Southern Europe, and Asia Minor. He used the knowledge from his travels and also incorporated information from Ptolemy and other Arab scholars. The maps he created were some of the most accurate maps of the pre-modern era. His collection of maps also had descriptions of places and people. The complete book of his maps and descriptions was called *A Diversion for the Man Longing to Travel to Far-Off Places*.

Later in life, Al-Idrisi worked as a geography professor in Algeria. After a lifetime of astonishing achievements in geography, Muhammad Al-Idrisi died in ca. 1165. Muhammad Al-Idrisi inspired many explorers such as Christopher Columbus and Vasco da Gama. Ceuta, Al-Idrisi's hometown, now has a statue in his honor.

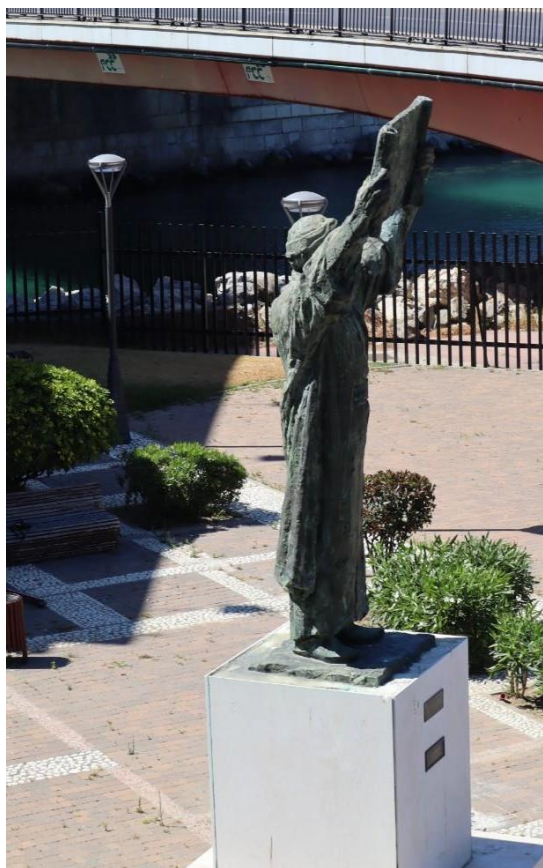


Photo by Deanna Jones

### **Discussion Questions**

Why would King Roger II want to employ someone who could create accurate maps?

Look at the picture of Al-Idrisi's statue in Ceuta. Why is this statue a good way to honor his legacy?

Why do you think Al-Idrisi named his book *A Diversion for the Man Longing to Travel to Far-Off Places*? Explain your answer.

Why was Sicily's location such an important center for the exchange of goods and ideas?

## ***Day 2: Map the Travels of Ibn Battuta***

**Essential Question:** Why do people travel?

**Anticipatory Set:** Ask students if they have traveled outside their city, state, or country. Ask what they learned from their travels. How is life different in those places compared to life in their hometown.

Why is it important to travel? How was travel more difficult in the 1300's than it is today?

### **Lesson Plan**

-Look at a map of the Arabian Peninsula, point out where Islam started, and briefly review how far the religion had spread.

-Read the biography of Ibn Battuta

-Analyze excerpts of his book.

### **Answers to Discussion Questions:**

How did one of Islam's 5 pillars facilitate the need for maps? **people were required to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lives, which meant they had to be able to navigate safely from their homes to Mecca.**

What did most of the cities Ibn Battuta traveled to have in common? **They are mostly Muslim areas**

Ibn Battuta famously said, "Traveling-it leaves you speechless, then turns you into a storyteller". Explain what this quote meant to him.

Why is it appropriate that the airport in Tangier, Morocco is named the Ibn Battuta Airport? **Since Ibn Battuta was famous for traveling all around the world, it makes sense that an international airport is named after him because the people who are at those airports are visiting other countries too.**

Ibn Battuta's travels were written down after the fact, when he was in his old age. Why is this problematic for ensuring the accuracy of when and where he went? **Since he didn't write things down as they were happening, he might not have remembered things very clearly.**

Why are Ibn Battuta's books valuable to this day? **They provide us with a look at how life was around the world by someone who experienced it.**

Why was it especially amazing that Ibn Battuta traveled so far? **Ibn Battuta lacked cars, planes, trains that would have made travel faster. He wrote about his travels that informed people about people and places far from their homes, he inspired others to explore**

Do you think Ibn Battuta and Muhammad Al-Idrisi would have been friends if they were alive at the same time? Explain your answer.

# *Ibn-Battuta*

## Key Words

**caravan** – a group of travelers going across the deserts of North Africa or Asia

**bittersweet** – something that is both happy and sad at the same time

**scribe** – a person who writes things down

After the death of Prophet Muhammad, Islam spread to many areas outside of the Arabian Peninsula. The religion was carried by merchants and soldiers across North Africa, Asia Minor, and southern Europe. By 711, the Iberian Peninsula (the area that is now Spain and Portugal) had been conquered by Muslim forces. With much of the Mediterranean region now connected by the shared religion of Islam, these Muslim areas were also linked by sea and land trade routes. One of those important trading centers was Tangier, a city in Morocco that lies at the Strait of Gibraltar, a narrow channel of water that separates the Atlantic Ocean from the Mediterranean Sea. It also separates Europe and Africa. Because it was such an important trading city that connected the two continents as well as other ports along the Mediterranean coast, Tangier was a hub of activity, and full of people from many different places.

Ibn Battuta was born in Tangier, Morocco on February 25, 1304. Since his hometown was a port city, he most certainly would have come across many people from distant places during his youth. Ibn Battuta may have been inspired to travel to these places by listening to stories of those he met in Tangier. We know that there were two main reasons that Ibn Battuta decided to travel. First, he was driven by his strong Islamic faith, which required a pilgrimage to Mecca. Secondly, since Tangier did not have any centers for higher learning, Ibn Battuta wished to visit cities where he could study to be a legal scholar like many of the men in his family.

In 1325 at the age of 21, Ibn Battuta took off for his pilgrimage to Mecca. At first, he traveled alone. But soon he joined a **caravan** of travelers who hired him to be a judge to help settle their disputes along the way. After stopping in several places for short visits, Ibn Battuta finally made it to Mecca 16 months after he left Tangier.

While in Alexandria, Ibn Battuta met a religious man, who told him that he should visit a few other important religious leaders, two in India, and one in China. He eventually visited both of these places, as well as many of the world's most famous cities, including Damascus, Constantinople, Hormuz, Cairo, and Granada. Wherever he went, Ibn Battuta was welcomed by the city's leaders and was treated very well. But Ibn Battuta never settled down for long. Ibn Battuta continued his journey and eventually settled in India for several years. Then, he went to China. Because his book has few details from his visit to China, and many of the details are incorrect, some scholars now think he may not have ever traveled to China.

In 1349, Ibn Battuta finally returned home, 24 years after he left. His homecoming was **bittersweet**, as he had learned that his father had died 15 years earlier, and his mother died of the plague only a few months before he arrived in Tangier.



Recognizing the value of Ibn Battuta's experiences, the Sultan of Morocco hired a young **scribe** to write down Ibn Battuta's journeys. Ibn Battuta and the scribe worked together for two years recording all of his memories. Ibn Battuta tells of his adventures, the places he went, the people he met, and the things he did while visiting these distant cities. Ibn Battuta experienced many things that most people even today are not able to do. His travels have inspired many people to seek out adventure far from home. In his hometown of Tangier, Morocco, the international airport is named in his honor.

### **Discussion Questions**

How did one of Islam's 5 pillars facilitate the need for maps?

What did most of the cities Ibn Battuta traveled to have in common?

Ibn Battuta famously said, "Traveling-it leaves you speechless, then turns you into a storyteller". Explain what this quote meant to him.

Why is it appropriate that the airport in Tangier, Morocco is named the Ibn Battuta Airport?

Ibn Battuta's travels were written down after the fact, when he was in his old age. Why is this problematic for ensuring the accuracy of when and where he went?

Why are Ibn Battuta's books valuable to this day?

Why was it especially amazing that Ibn Battuta traveled so far?

Do you think Ibn Battuta and Muhammad Al-Idrisi would have been friends if they were alive at the same time? Explain your answer.

## Analyze Primary Sources

From Ibn Battuta's book:

Another of them was the pious ascetic Burhan ad-Din, whom I met during my stay and whose hospitality I enjoyed for three days. One day as I entered his room he said to me "I see that you are fond of travelling through foreign lands." I replied "Yes, I am " (though I had as yet no thought of going to such distant lands as India or China). Then he said "You must certainly visit my brother Farid ad-Din in India, and my brother Rukn ad-Din in Sind, and my brother Burhan ad-Din in China, and when you find them give them greeting from me." I was amazed at his prediction and the idea of going to these countries having been cast into my mind, my journeys never ceased until I had met these three that he named and conveyed his greeting to them.

Burhan ad-Din tells Ibn Battuta to visit his friends in India and China. Do you think Burhan ad-Din actually knew these people (did he travel there) or do you think this part of Ibn Battuta's story might have been embellished? Explain your answer.

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Ibn Battuta's description of the Plague of 1348:

I saw a remarkable instance of the veneration in which the Damascenes hold this mosque during the great pestilence on my return journey through Damascus, in the latter part of July 1348. The viceroy Arghun Shah ordered a crier to proclaim through Damascus that all the people should fast for three days and that no one should cook anything eatable in the market during the daytime. For most of the people there eat no food but what has been prepared in the market. So the people fasted for three successive days, the last of which was a Thursday, then they assembled in the Great Mosque, amirs, sharifs, qadis, theologians, and all the other classes of the people, until the place was filled to overflowing, and there they spent the Thursday night in prayers and litanies. After the dawn prayer next morning they all went out together on foot, holding Korans in their hands, and the amirs barefooted. The procession was joined by the entire population of the town, men and women, small and large; the Jews came with their Book of the Law and the Christians with their Gospel, all of them with their women and children. The whole concourse, weeping and supplicating and seeking the favor of God through His Books and His Prophets, made their way to the Mosque of the Footprints, and there they remained in supplication and invocation until near midday. They then returned to the city and held the Friday service, and God lightened their affliction; for the number of deaths in a single day at Damascus did not attain two thousand, while in Cairo and Old Cairo it reached the figure of twenty-four thousand a day.

How does his description show us how people dealt with the plague?

.....

After this I reached a great pavilion, where the Emperor was seated on his throne, with his wife, the mother of the khatun, before him. At the foot of the throne were the khatun and her brothers,

to the right of it six men and to the left of it four, and behind it four, every one of them armed. The Emperor signed to me, before I had saluted and reached him, to sit down for a moment, in order that my apprehension might be calmed. After doing so I approached him and saluted him, and he signed to me to sit down, but I did not do so. He questioned me about Jerusalem, the Sacred Rock, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the cradle of Jesus, and Bethlehem, and about the city of Abraham [Hebron], then about Damascus, Cairo, Iraq, and Anatolia, and I answered all his questions about these, the Jew interpreting between us. He was pleased with my replies and said to his sons "Treat this man with honor and ensure his safety." Then he bestowed upon me a robe of honor and assigned me a horse with saddle and bridle, and an umbrella of the kind which the king has carried above his head, that being a sign of protection. I requested him to designate someone to ride in the city with me every day, that I might see its marvelous and rare sights and tell of them in my own country, and he appointed a man as I had asked. They have a custom that anyone who wears the king's robe of honor and rides his horse is paraded round with trumpets, fifes and drums, so that the people may see him. They do this mostly with the Turks who come from the territories of Sultan Uzbek, so that the people may not bother them, and I was paraded in this fashion through the bazaars.

Why do you think the king was interested in meeting Ibn Battuta and why did the king give him many gifts and make sure Ibn Battuta saw the beauty of the city?

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## ***Day 3: Map the Spread of Islamic Cultural Relics Around the World***

**Essential Question:** How do cultures blend?

**Anticipatory Set:** Ask students how American culture became what it is today. For example hamburgers and hot dogs are German. Halloween is Celtic. Christianity is from the Middle East. Chocolate and vanilla are from Central America. This should get students to realize that a culture is often a blending of ideas, customs, and traditions from many different places. This is true of Latin America as well.

### **Lesson Plan**

Walk them through a brief history of Muslim control of the Iberian Peninsula beginning in 711 A.D. and lasting for almost 800 years. The Spanish culture was very well blended with Islamic culture by the time King Ferdinand completed the Reconquista of Spain, in 1492 A.D., which was also the year Columbus set sail and landed in the New World. The 1500's were a time of conquest in Latin America. This colonial period was also a time of cultural blending. The Spaniards coming to the New World brought their culture, which still had an Islamic legacy.

Introduce the stations, and the recording sheet.

#### Music

- Show similarities between guitar and oud
- Have students watch a video of both instruments such as this one:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwZrjdy9dCM>
- Draw a picture of each, and describe how they are similar in how they look and sound.

#### Language

- Show students a video of Spanish vs. Arabic words, such as:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOe4mkzBdCs>
- Have placards of words in Arabic and words in Spanish. Then, have students match it to the Spanish word. For students that do not speak Spanish, include the English translation of each item.
- Record some of the Spanish words that have Arabic origins

#### Architecture

- Show pictures of California missions to students, and pictures of mosques
- How did the Muslim architects influence the buildings in colonial Latin America, including California?

#### Cuisine, spices

- Show pictures of "arroz con pollo" (chicken and rice), and chicken couscous
- How are they similar?
- Show students recipes for arroz con pollo and chicken couscous

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

Spanish

Arabic

Ojala

Inshallah

café

kahwah

sandia

sindiyyah

fideo

fidaws

naranja

narang

aceituna

zaytun

almohada

mihaddah

barrio

barri

mascara

masharah



jirafa	zarafah
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For students who do not speak Spanish, write the English translation of each word on the Spanish cards.

Ojala = hopefully

café = coffee

sandia = watermelon

fideo = noodles

naranja = orange

aceituna = olive

almohada = pillow/cushion

mascara = mask

barrio = neighborhood

jirafa = giraffe

## ***Day 4: Create a One Pager***

Review the life and contributions of Muhammad Al-Idrisi

- Why were his maps so important?
- How did his maps compare to modern maps?

Review the travels of Ibn Battuta

- Look at a map, and find the major cities that he visited stops

Review the cultural legacy of the Muslim world upon Latin America

- What linguistic, musical, architectural, culinary legacies are still a part of Latin American culture?

Guide students through the concept of a One Pager

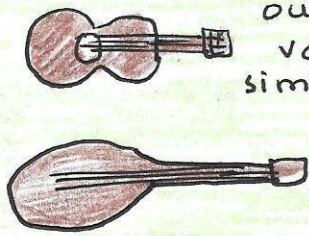
- Show students an example

Present their One Pager



There are many things that Latin American culture got from Muslim culture:

① Music, guitars and ouds are very similar



② Architecture like the Missions in California



③ Food, arroz con pollo is similar to chicken ~~baguette~~ couscous



④ Language  
Cafe = Kahwah  
Aceituna = Zaytoon

Muhammad Al-Idrisi was a famous map maker who

was born in Ceuta, ~~Spain~~ <sup>Morocco</sup>. He worked for a famous King, Roger II and made lots of maps for him. This was impressive because

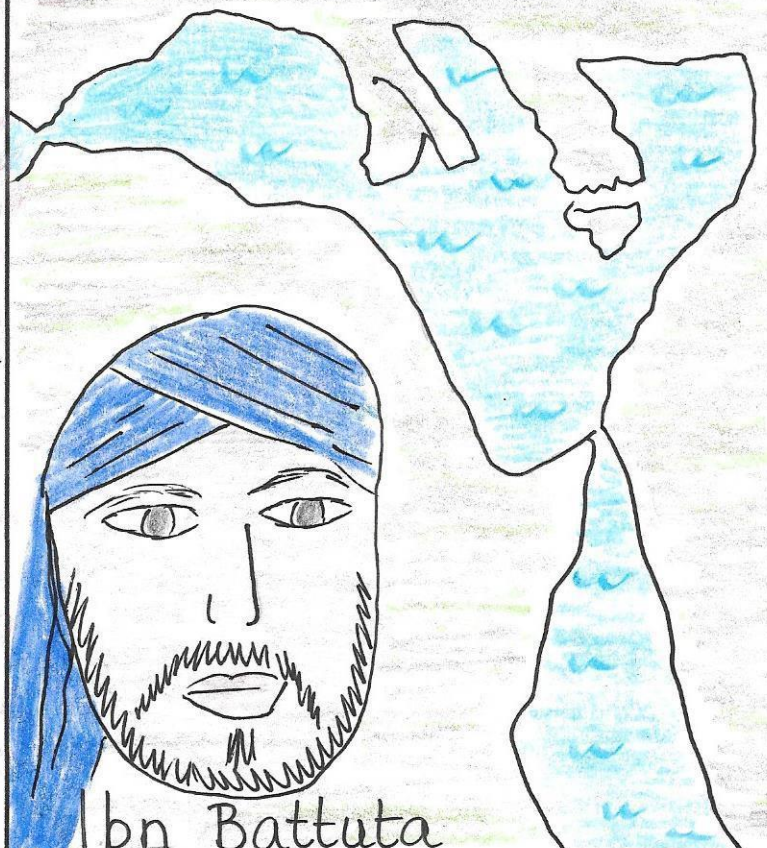
he didn't have Google or anything. His maps were accurate. There's a statue of him in his hometown.



## How Do Ideas Grow & Spread?

### Ibn Battuta

He was a famous traveler who went all over the world. He was from Tangier, Morocco and was born in 1304 A.D. He traveled to Mecca as part of his duties as a Muslim. Then he went to many other places like Egypt, Constantinople and India. He might have gone to China but we aren't sure about that. The airport in his hometown is named after him too.



Ibn Battuta




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