

STUDENT VOICE

AMERICAN LANGUAGE CENTER • FES

Submissions to: studentvoice-fes@acamorocco.org

Spring 2024

HORROR, MYTHS & LEGENDS

ONCE upon a time, among the trees of the forest, under the water, within the sand of the desert or around the street corner, legends were born from the mouth of a human and the mind of a genius. Older generations cherished those tales like a piece of their missing memory. Each culture has its own symbolic mythology that tracks down its history. Humans explained natural disasters and daily events with the existence of magical creatures; from monsters and ghosts to mermaids and fairies. So being superstitious made life reasonable with the existence of beings with super-powers. With science and discovery, those once heartily believed stories became fictional folklore. However, it isn't the end of the art of storytelling yet; each story has a moral to clear and a goal to achieve. We no longer just tell, read, or listen to tales to understand our surroundings but to learn and teach. They are tools to argue, persuade, and debate. They are reasons to meet, comfort and protect, to love and hate. They're our human flaws and imperfections held up in a historical mirror. Legends and myths are part of humanity, a historical fiction inspired by reality.

Safae Elouardani, Adv 2

MOROCCAN MYTHOLOGY

Najwa Marradi - Adv2

Morocco, located at the north-western edge of Africa and only a few kilometers from Europe, has for centuries served as a link between the two continents. This geographic location has exposed the country to multiple cultural influences starting with the Berber (Amazigh) natives, sub-Saharan Africans, Jews, the Phoenicians, the Romans and later the Arabs, Portuguese, Spaniards and French. This large scale ethnic interaction left a significant mark on the local culture especially when it comes to beliefs and folklore. These are some of the monsters of Moroccan Mythology that haunted me as a child.

AISHA KANDISHA

As soon as her name is uttered, shivers run down children's spines recalling her gruesome stories. She is often represented as a beautiful woman with long dark hair, however, her legs are those of a hairy hooved beast; a goat or a camel depending on who is telling the story. As the story goes, she uses her beauty to lure men back to her lair where she "finishes them off" by eating them. Sometimes described as a hitchhiker, or a ghoulish inhabiting bodies of still water, some say you can hear the sound of her rusty chains grating on the ground. In the past people would light candles in a shrine to appease her or sacrifice a black goat or black rooster to satisfy her hunger and gain her favor.

BOUGHTAT

A woman describes, "As I was sleeping beside my husband I suddenly opened my eyes. I saw a



Image credit: Benjamin Beni-Face aL Ame-9 c/o FezArtLab

man coming towards me with a hunchback, unkempt hair and big eyes and ugly sharp teeth. I saw him coming straight for me, and I tried to run but I couldn't, I was completely paralyzed. I tried to scream but my husband didn't hear me, then I started whispering verses of the Quran, hoping that the prayers would keep the monster away, but the vicious man sat on my chest and

started to strangle me! I thought I would die, but suddenly he disappeared. I was visited by such entities for a long time after that. When my baby son was 8 months old, I was having a nap at my mothers house, the moment I opened my eyes I thought I saw an old hag sitting by my son's side. She looked at me with vicious smile and said "I'm going to kill him." Again I tried to move or scream but nothing happened. Then I woke up and immediately pulled my sleeping son into my arms and cried fearful tears."

Boughtat is a demon that pays undesired visits to people as they sleep. He paralyzes the victims and silences them. Now, sleep science and neurology have described the phenomenon of sleep paralysis, a normal process of the body to prevent us from acting out our dreams as we sleep. Previously, societies associated these feelings and bad dreams to demons and evil entities, and they would seek guidance or take certain herbs to rid themselves of these nightmares.

THE CEMETERY MULE

This is a terrifying beast from native Berber (Amazigh) folklore. A tale of a cursed widow, whose appearance varies from one region to another. From a mule dragging heavy chains to a half human half horse, similar to the Centaurs of Greek mythology or Aisha Kandisha. According to the legend, a recently widowed woman committed an infidelity with another man before her *iddah*** was over. As a result, God changed her appearance and cursed her to living as a beast during the daytime where she slept underground with the dead, but at sunset she would dig herself screaming, from the dirt and roam the cemetery dragging heavy chains behind her. At dawn she returns to the ground

waiting for the next sunset. Some people say the beast would kill grave-robbers by convincing men to climb on her back then she would take them underground and shred them apart as a kind of revenge to menfolk for her punishable affair. To this day, Berber villagers refuse to pass the cemetery at night for fear of meeting the cemetery mule.

SHAMHAROUCH

Jinns are one of the supernatural beings not only in Moroccan culture but in every Islamic society, but the concept of jinn existed before Islam. According to Islamic mythology, God has created three kinds of sentient beings; Angels from light, Jinn from fire and humans from clay. According to the Quran, Jinn are almost the same as humans, in that they have different races or breeds. They are also subjected to divine judgement, however they can't be seen nor felt by humans as they exist in another dimension. They are like humans in that they have will power, so there are good and evil jinn, called demons, that can't wait for the opportunity to harm humans. Shamharouch is the supreme court judge between humans and jinn and the king of the jinn. Some people still seek Jinn for solutions to their problems that are not solved the way they want and they see Jinn as a last resort, to achieve personal goals. In most cases, it brings more harm than good to the seeker and the person finds themselves the target of black magic.

***Iddah is a period of time that every divorced or widowed woman must observe before being allowed to find a new husband, to ensure the paternity of any unborn children in the case of a pregnancy.*

URBAN LEGEND

Souad Jaarfour & Lina Amrani - Adv 2

Our parents always tell us to respect our neighbors and to help them, because in a time of crisis, it is often our neighbors, rather than our family who are nearest. Once upon a time long, long ago there were two neighbors, Anas and Ahmed. One day Ahmed fell and could not stand up and lay screaming alone in his house. Anas, heard him, but thought it best not to interfere in personal matters, and went about his duties. Unfortunately, Ahmed's injuries were so severe that he later died. That evening when Anas was watching TV, he heard Ahmed's wife crying "My husband is dead!", but again Anas ignored the noise. Until later that night, while Anas was trying to sleep, pieces of his furniture started moving around his house and his lights flickered on and off. He heard a loud deep voice coming from the hallway calling "help!" Terrified, Anas ran outside, but the sounds followed him everywhere, as if from inside his own head! Many believe Ahmed's ghost still haunts the hallways, searching for neighborly assistance.



Image credit: Wassila Mansouri - INT 3

WHY ARE WE HERE?

Aya Ez-Zahraouy - Jun 12 Adv

For those of us who are logical and rational thinkers, have you ever asked yourself, "Why are we here and what are we living for?" This is a deep philosophical question that, most likely, every human asks, and it causes eternal sleeplessness contemplating why we exist but we don't find a satisfactory answer until death. We all have theories, ideas, beliefs and feelings, but there is not yet a real, concise or scientific explanation that truly satisfies everybody. That's one of the big mysteries in life: we have no idea of the reason for our existence, we only have vague theoretical concepts that differ from person to person. Despite our inventions and our discoveries, we still can't answer this question. We are just atomic particles arranged in a particular way. I'm not pretending to answer in this article such a metaphysical, psychological and (religious) problem, but I just wanted to share this idea and show how inept our mind is. In fact, we should be ashamed of our arrogance and pretending to possess knowledge when in fact there are many things we may never understand.

WITCHCRAFT

Alaeddine Boujiouf – Adv 2

Witchcraft usually means the use of magic or supernatural powers to harm others. The concept of witchcraft and the belief in its existence have existed throughout recorded history. It has been found at various times in many forms among cultures worldwide and continues to have an important role in some cultures even today. Most societies have believed in and feared the ability of some individuals to cause supernatural harm and misfortune to others. Historians and anthropologists see the concept of “witchcraft” as one of the ways humans have tried to explain strange misfortunes. Some cultures have feared witchcraft much less than others but usually because they have found explanations to the events in the form of Gods, spirits, demons or people who have cast the evil eye.

BLOODY QUEEN

Reem Sendide – Jun6 Adv

Even if I'm the queen
I've committed an unforgivable sin
You always thought that I was caring
But in reality I was just lying
You'll be my last sacrifice
The one that I will use in this life
I won't be fooled twice
So stop trying to be nice
I will make you suffer
Even if you beg louder
Don't forget that even if I'm the ruler
I am still a sinner
So, never try to break this wall
Unless you wish to fall

H.QUINN

Aya J - Adv 1

I'm Harley Quinn. I'm pretty insane, my boyfriend is The Joker and we were in the movie “Suicide Squad.” It's basically just a bunch of crazy people put into a squad to save the world.



Image credit: Nohayla Omarr

I have blonde hair parted down the middle, half is blue and half is red just for a pop of color. A queen like me always needs to be the center of attention. I'm insanely confident, I don't care about peoples opinions and I do exactly what I want. I go against the law because rules cant stop me, I don't hear “no” answers. I'm extremely emotional and short tempered, so if you diss me, you're on death row, baby. I walk my talk and I don't let anyone step on me. If they do, they'll regret it.



FAIRYTALES

Reem Sendide Adv 2

I fell in love with a fairytale
Spending my whole life
reading sweet fanciful fables
every single day
Stories which then later deceived me
And played me
Ones that made me believe
trust and love triumph all
When none of it's real

I'm a hopeless romantic
But they'd rather call me sick
As I am unable to distinguish
My fantasies from my helpless wish
Sun's peeking through my window
As I realize my desire is
nothing but the shallows
Dreams are meant to come true
So why am I so afraid
to start something new?
Is it the imminent disappointment
Or the fright of the moment
That's holding me back
And gradually making me crack?

Kings, Queens, Princes, Princesses
Knights and damsels in distress
All achieving everlasting happiness
A lie we we're told
One that made our once tiny being, fold
I visited countless ethereal worlds
Through few timeless little words

I fall in love with a fairytale
One that's making me slowly fade away
A myth to the core
A legend I'm relentlessly longing for
They taught us about fated lovers
About soulmates surrounded
by poisonous flowers
Twin flames being each other's destiny
Rarely ending
in heart-wrenching tragedy

I'm falling in love with a fairytale
Ignoring whatever they have to say
Drowning in boredom
I'm constantly writing
to create my own kingdom.

Image credit: Unsplash—Jared Subia