



Celebrating Culture in Tunisia

- What are some of the customs and traditions that Ahmed celebrates?
- How are these customs connected to the past?

Some of Ahmed's ancestors were people called Berbers. Their language was called Berber, too. Later on, people from Arabia came. They were Muslim. Their religion was Islam. The Berbers mixed with the Arabs and accepted Islam as their new religion. People in Tunisia started to use the Arabic language. It became the official language.

Long after the Arabs came, France took over Tunisia. French became a second language. Today, Tunisia is **independent**.

A mosque is where Muslims gather together. They pray and learn. At the mosque, they also celebrate different festivals.

Most people in Tunisia are Muslims. Some Christians and Jews also live in Tunisia.



This is a street sign in Tunisia. It is in Arabic and French. In Canada, some street signs are in English and French.

Did You Know?

صباح الخير

This means "good morning" in Arabic. In Arabic, you read the words from right to left. In English, you read the words from left to right.



This is a mosque. Mosques are an important part of Muslim culture.



These men are wearing traditional clothes.

Customs and Traditions

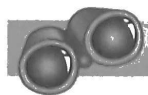
Some **Tunisians** wear traditional clothes. Ahmed's grandmother wears a two-piece dress called a *fouta* and *blousa*. When she goes out, she wears a veil over her hair and body.

Ahmed's grandfather wears a large robe called a *djebba*. Ahmed's parents wear traditional clothes when they go to a wedding or other ceremony.

Last summer, Ahmed's cousin Yasmine got married. On the wedding day, carloads of people rode through the city. They honked horns, played flutes, and beat drums. Yasmine dressed in silk clothes of silver and gold. She wore beautiful jewellery.

A Tunisian Custom

If you met Ahmed, he would greet you with the words "ass'lama." That means "peace be upon you."



Word Watch

People from Tunisia are called **Tunisians**. Customs and other things from Tunisia are called Tunisian.

TRY THIS

Draw a picture of what you think Yasmine's wedding would have been like.



Tunisian jewellery



In My Own Words



This sweet is eaten during *Eid ul-Fitr*. It's a pastry stuffed with dates.

During the Muslim month of Ramadan, my parents fast during the day. That means they don't eat or drink anything from sunrise until sunset. I don't fast because I am too young. After sunset, we eat a big meal.



Pomegranates like these are a popular fruit during festivals.

At the end of the month is *Eid ul-Fitr* (I-dul-FITRE). This is my favourite festival. On that evening, everybody waits until the new moon appears in the sky. Once the moon appears, we start our feast. We eat many kinds of food. I wear new clothes, and I get presents from my parents. Last year, I got a model boat. Sometimes my aunts and uncles give me money. I am saving to buy a new bike.

Mouled is another festival I like. It celebrates the birthday of the prophet Muhammad. People gather in mosques to pray. At night, I help decorate the streets with lanterns. Then I play with my friends.

Ahmed, Tunisia

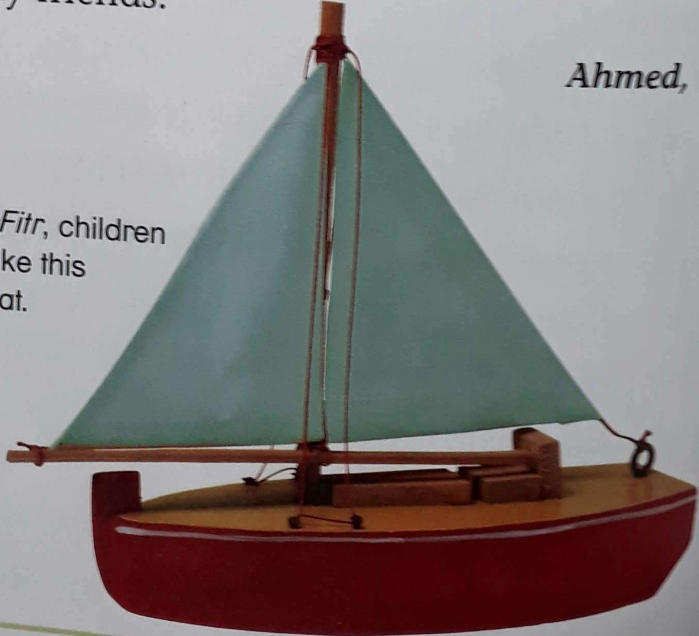
Think About It



Ahmed celebrates many festivals.

- Why do you think these festivals are important to people in Tunisia?

At *Eid ul-Fitr*, children get gifts like this model boat.



Jha and His Donkey

A Tunisian Folktale

Jha sold bright red caps called *shashia stambuli*. One day he fell asleep under a tree.

Monkeys came and stole Jha's caps. When Jha woke up, he was shocked to see the monkeys wearing red caps! Jha waved his arms and begged the monkeys to give back the caps. But the monkeys just imitated him. Angrily, Jha threw his own cap on the ground. The monkeys did the same. Then Jha quickly picked up all his caps.



Sometime later, Jha's donkey was stolen. Jha remembered how he had tricked the monkeys. He decided to trick the thieves. He cried, "Give me back my donkey, or I will have to do what my father did!" This frightened the thieves, so they returned the donkey. Then they asked Jha what his father had done. "He bought another donkey," replied Jha.