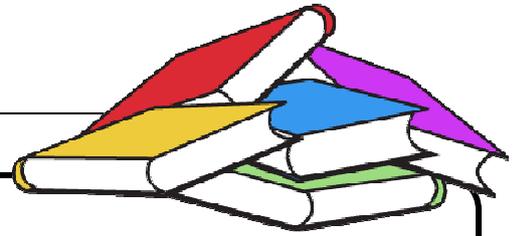


## S4.2 FABLES, LEGENDS AND HISTORY



### S4.2.3

We will look at a historical text based on evidence.

#### A. Read the following.

##### The Arabs in Malta

Extract adapted from Denfil 6.

Around the seventh century a new force rose to power in the Mediterranean. This was Islam and the followers of this religion were the Arabs. Since Malta was in the middle of the Mediterranean, the Arabs took it over in the year 870 A.D.



The  
Normans  
arriving in  
Malta

The Arabs spent about 400 years in Malta, till after King Roger II came to Malta in the year 1127. The Arabs, like the Catholics, believe in one God, but they consider Mohammed the greatest prophet. At that time different races lived in Malta. The Jews, Catholics and Muslims were allowed to practise their religions, though some historians say that during that time, there were hardly any people who still believed in Christ in Malta.

It was the Arabs who gave us the numeric system as we know it today. The Arabs were the ones who improved agriculture and imported new trees into the islands, amongst which the carob tree, the fig and the almond, along with the growing of cotton. It was the Arabs who changed the names of our islands into

Malta, Gozo and Comino. (N.B. We used to believe that the Arabs reduced the size of the old city and reinforced Mdina giving it its present form. However, it is most likely the Byzantines who did this, not the Arabs.)

There are many legends and myths about the Arabs which, although beautiful, should no longer be believed. It was said that Count Roger gave us the colours of our flag. However, today we know that national flags started being used many years after his visit to Malta in the year 1091.

Neither is it true that Count Roger sent the Arabs away from Malta. This is proven by Majmuna's Stone which is now found in the Archaeological Museum in the Citadel in Gozo. Majmuna's Stone is a marble tombstone which was on the grave of a girl named Majmuna. It was found about 300 years ago in a field between Xewkija and Sannat, two Gozitian villages. The stone bears Arabic writings which tell us that the young Majmuna died on Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> March 1174. The tombstone also contains a lovely poem in which Majmuna asks what will become of her once she meets her Creator.



**The Arabs in Malta - A scene outside the old city of Mdina**