

**GIRAFFE**

**ALCOHOL**

**COFFEE**

**COTTON**

**MAGAZINE**

**LEMON**

**al-kuhl**

**qahwah**

**laymūn, līm**

**qutn / qutun**

**zarāfa**

**makhzan**

## ALCOHOL

*al-kuhl*

### EXPLANATION

*Alcohol* is from *al-kuhl*, which referred to a powdered antimony used as an eye paint. In fact, when *alcohol* first appeared in English, it was used to describe powders such as kohl, and did not take on its current meaning until the 18th century.

## COFFEE

*qahwah*

### EXPLANATION

There are several stories about how coffee, another drink, was discovered. The most famous is that coffee beans were discovered in the Oromo area of Ethiopia. However, another country, Yemen, was the first to export the drink widely. The Arabic language is widely spoken in Yemen. The Arabic word for coffee was *qahwah*, which originally meant "wine."

## LEMON

*laymūn, līm*

### EXPLANATION

Both of the fruits *lemon* and *lime* come from Arabic; the former is descended from the word *laymūn* and the latter from *līm* (there is another *lime*, which refers to a sticky substance formerly used to trap birds, which comes from Latin). Of the two fruits, only *lemon* has been lucky enough to pick up a range of disagreeable figurative meanings.

## COTTON

قطن *qutn / qutun*

### EXPLANATION

*qutn / qutun*, cotton. This was the usual word for cotton in medieval Arabic. The word entered the Romance languages in the mid-12th century and English a century later. Cotton fabric was known to the ancient Romans as an import but cotton was rare in the Romance-speaking lands until imports from the Arabic-speaking lands in the later medieval era at transformatively lower prices.

## GIRAFFE

*zarāfa*

### EXPLANATION

*zarāfa*, giraffe. The giraffe and its distinctiveness was discussed by medieval Arabic writers including Al-Jahiz (died 868) and Al-Masudi (died 956). The earliest records of the transfer of the Arabic word to the West are in Italian in the second half of the 13th century,<sup>[7]</sup> a time at which a few giraffes were brought to the Kingdom of Sicily and Naples from a zoo in Cairo, Egypt.

## MAGAZINE

from *makhzan*

### EXPLANATION

It may seem confusing to some that the English word for a glossy, bound bunch of pages should have come from the Arabic word for a storehouse (*makhzan*), but it actually makes quite a bit of sense.

*Magazine* had a number of meanings before it was used to refer to *Elle*, *Rolling Stone*, and *Vogue*; the earliest use of the word had the definition "a place where goods or supplies are stored." See French: *le magasin* = the shop.

Following this warehouse sense, *magazine* took on additional meanings such as "a place where ammunition is stored," "a city viewed as a marketing center," and "a stock of provisions or goods."