

Waking Up in a Faraway Land

Today, Malcolm woke up naturally to the soft sound of forks and spoons chiming together in a sink. He rested comfortably in his bed as he slowly awoke, and he listened for additional signs to remind him he was far from home. He detected the faint, soothing sound of water filling a bucket. In the distance, he heard small motorcycles humming—first softly, then loudly, then softly again.

Before opening the thick, brown curtains to his inexpensive but charming hotel room, Malcolm anticipated the busy portrait of aged cars and swift motorcycles kicking up dust from the dirt road outside. As he opened the curtains, the sun shot into his room like a stage light summoning the performers. Adjusting his eyes to the contrast from inside to out, he viewed the sincere, simple beauty of exactly what he suspected and hoped for. It was a hot, humid morning; dust seemed to boil in the air. As he observed, Malcolm carefully watched the lively people in this small, Central American beach town. They worked, headed to work, went about their daily errands, or simply walked purposelessly toward the beach. Malcolm smiled to himself. He knew he had escaped the busy routines of his everyday life. He was finally traveling.

Peru

Peru is a democratic country in western South America. Peruvian citizens aged eighteen to seventy are *required* to vote for their government officials.

About 500 years ago, Peru was taken over by the Spanish. The country did not become independent until 1821 and most of the people in Peru still speak Spanish.

Peru borders the Pacific Ocean and is the home of the Andes Mountains. The Andes Mountains are very tall and covered in snow. They serve as the source for most of the rivers in Peru. Some of these rivers flow to the west toward the Pacific Ocean. Others flow to the east toward the tropical rain forests and the Amazon River. Peru has the fourth-largest area of tropical forest in the world.

Peruvian culture is mostly a mixture of Amerindian and Spanish, but it is also influenced by other cultures. For example, the food in Peru is a mixture of Amerindian, Spanish, African, Italian, French, and Japanese flavors. The mixture of many cultural influences is also found in Peruvian art, literature, and music. The diverse geography and culture in Peru helps to make this country a very beautiful and interesting place to live or visit.

Ida B. Wells (1862 – 1931)

As a journalist and civil rights activist, Ida B. Wells fought for justice and equality for African Americans. Wells was born in Mississippi during the Civil War. Both of Wells' parents worked as slaves, though historians describe them as outspoken. It is believed that Wells learned this strong characteristic from her parents.

Early in her career, Wells worked as a school teacher in Tennessee. At the age of 21, Wells experienced something that greatly influenced her life's work. Having purchased a first-class railroad ticket, Wells took her seat in the ladies' coach of the railroad car. However, the train conductor demanded she move to a segregated section. Wells refused, the conductor attempted to force her off the train, and Wells responded by biting his hand. Ultimately Wells was forced from her seat, but she later sued the company for this mistreatment.

Wells first won the lawsuit against the railroad company, but the decision was later overturned. This further fueled Wells' pursuit of justice and equality. Through journalism and activism, Wells later went on to improve civil rights for African-Americans. She was a founder of the NAACP, and at the age of 67, she was one of the first black women to run for public office.

Morocco

Morocco is a country in North Africa. It is similar to the size of California and it borders both the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Morocco is a country with diverse geography. There are beaches in the northwest, mountains in the northeast and central regions, and there are deserts in the southwest.

Morocco is a very old country. There have been people called Berbers living there since 8000 BCE. Even though the area was taken over by the Romans, Greeks, Arabs, and the French, the people with Berber ancestry still live there.

Today, most Moroccans practice Islam and many speak both Arabic and French. Arabic is the official language of Morocco, but French is often used for business, government, and education. Some Moroccans also speak Spanish or English.

Morocco did not gain its independence from France until 1956, but Morocco was the first country to recognize the United States as an independent country. Morocco protected American ships during the American Revolution and in 1777 a peace agreement was made between the United States and Morocco. This peace agreement has been in place longer than any other peace agreement the United States has made.

First Anglo-Chinese War: The Beginning of the Opium Wars

The First Anglo-Chinese War began in 1839 and is considered one of the most important historical events in the history of China. At that time, Britain wanted to acquire Chinese products such as silk and porcelain. However, China's trading laws made it impossible for foreign countries to get Chinese materials at low prices. Thus, Britain developed a plan to turn the situation around. They decided to trade opium with China.

Opium in small doses was, at that time, helpful as one ingredient in medicine. But in large doses opium was a highly addictive and harmful drug. By trading opium with China, this drug soon became the product that China bought most from Britain. As a result, Britain was now able to get the products they wanted from China.

When the leaders of China realized that many people in their country were addicted and very harmed by this drug, the leaders stopped exchanging things with Britain. After numerous legal issues and continuing conflicts, a war finally broke out between Britain and China. This incident in history illustrates just one of several examples where the strong desire for money and resources can harm a large number of people.

Ruben Dario (1867 - 1916)

Ruben Dario was a poet from the Central American country of Nicaragua. Dario was probably best known for his early influence of a movement known as modernism. Put most simply, modernism encouraged individuals to think differently from traditions, norms, and commonly held beliefs. Modernism supported different ways of thinking so that human beings could make progress and live better lives. To encourage new and different ways of thinking, Dario used artistic expression through poetry.

Dario learned how to read when he was three years old and began to write shortly after. Dario even published his first writing in a newspaper when he was only thirteen years old. This earned him the nickname of "child poet" by writers in his country.

Throughout his career as a poet, Dario traveled to many countries and was admired by many, including artists and politicians. Because Dario's poems often challenged traditional beliefs, some politicians did not like his way of thinking. However, Dario's poems ultimately helped people to challenge norms and feel proud for doing so. Today in Nicaragua, many streets and buildings are named in honor of Dario and his many accomplishments.