

E3. Sub-Saharan Africans Crossing Morocco En Route to Europe, Today

In the past three decades, Morocco has become a land of transit for migrants traveling from sub-Saharan Africa to Western Europe. Many Africans have left their homes fleeing conflict or poverty, hoping to make a better life for themselves and their families in Europe. Frequently, unaccompanied teenagers are among the migrants, hoping for more opportunities and a more stable life in the West. The European Union (EU) feels unable to absorb so many immigrants and has enlisted Moroccan help in patrolling the Mediterranean Sea lanes between Morocco and Spain to prevent migrants from arriving in Europe. Strict border controls are in place in Ceuta and Melilla, two cities in North Africa (in the midst of Morocco) that are officially part of Spain. In addition, the EU has provided some funding to Morocco to help the country resettle some of the migrants.

The result is that many people wait in Morocco for months, years, or even decades along the borders of the Spanish enclaves in North Africa or in areas along the Mediterranean Sea. During this time of waiting, migrants are also living their lives: sometimes studying, marrying and having children, working/contributing to Morocco's economy.

There are many challenges faced by migrants. Language is one barrier since few of the migrants speak darija (Moroccan Arabic) or Amazikh (Berber), the two most widely spoken home languages of Morocco. Those from Francophone (French-speaking) parts of Africa have an easier time than those in which English is the second language as French is the widely-spoken second (or third) language of Moroccans. Teenage migrants and the children of migrants often pick up Morocco's languages quickly, especially as they attend school, while adults struggle to learn the local languages. Religion can be a unifying force or a barrier. Muslim migrants are more easily integrated into society: able to intermarry with locals, fit in more easily at school (where the Muslim religion is one of the subjects studied), etc. Non-Muslims are free to practice their religion but are usually not considered 'Moroccan.' Finding employment can also be difficult, and many migrants find themselves working at manual labor. Women, who often flee their home countries because of abusive relationships or violence, are usually unable to get proper health care for resulting physical and psychological problems. Luckily, race doesn't seem to be as much of an issue as it is in the Western world.

The immigration crisis in North Africa is difficult for migrants and Moroccan natives. However, although Morocco is not a wealthy country, it is playing an important role in world affairs as a host nation for people fleeing war, poverty, or abuse.

Assignment: Imagine you are a person from Senegal in West Africa who came to northern Morocco hoping to immigrate to Europe. You speak French (also the second language in Morocco) but are Christian. Write 2 diary entries, each at least one double-spaced page long. Choose names for your characters that are authentic. Also, include at

least 5 facts or factual details drawn from the history/ geography of the area. (Be sure to look up additional information in addition to the information found in this reading.) Underline the pieces of information you include in each of your diary entries.

-- Write one diary entry describing your life while you are waiting in Tetouan, not far from Ceuta. (Look up these places to see what Tetouan is like and what the significance of Ceuta is.) What are the challenges of living and going to school in Morocco? What are the positive aspects of your life?

--In another diary entry, describe what kind of life you hope to make in Europe. Where do you think you would go and why? How/where would you cross from Morocco to the European continent? What are the risks and possible benefits?