



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Center for Middle Eastern Studies

Examining Modern Morocco through Murals and Migration

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Introduction: Context and Rationale

For one month, sixteen teachers were selected to travel across the Kingdom of Morocco and create curriculum projects to present at the local, national and international levels. As one of these teachers, I was able to conduct my own personal passion research on street art, while simultaneously learning about the history and modern expansion of the country. During my field experience in Morocco, similar sentiments echoed across conversations, lectures and observations: Morocco is a country of tradition and respect; Morocco is modern; Morocco is a country of diversity; Morocco is a gateway country; Morocco is a country dealing with the realities of human movement. This is why it has been a celebrated colonial stronghold, an ally to the European Union and a Kingdom filled with historical, geographic and cultural wealth. The Kingdom of Morocco is a place that is a gateway and by that benefit it is also afforded a rich and long-standing cultural diversity that gains depth and nuance from that same flux of humanity.

The first half of the unit, *Examining Modern Morocco through Murals*, uses current mural art installations from Rabat and Casablanca to encourage students' literacy of non-traditional text forms while learning about Moroccan culture and history. Students will analyze the artworks to formulate theses about traditional culture in Morocco. The second half of this unit, *Examining Morocco through Migration*, draws in the use of both non-fictional and fictional texts on migration to further enable students to craft their understanding of the modern nation. The two parts bring together elements of contemporary artistic expression and current trans-national issues in an inquiry-based approach to educate students about the emerging modern nation of Morocco.

This unit was designed as a result of participation in the Fulbright-Hays Group Project Abroad: "Morocco: Bridging Cultures and Continents" and support from the University of Arizona. Without the generous support of these grants and institutions, this project would not be possible.

Part One: Examining Modern Morocco Through Murals

1) Anticipatory Set: KWL (Know, Wonder, Learned) + Video Notes on Murals

To begin, students will create a three-column chart. The columns will be labeled Know, Wonder, Learned. For the first two or three minutes of the period, students should fill in the know and wonder about Morocco. After the time is up, students will share their response with a peer or the whole class. As the unit continues, student should consult and add to this chart.

Teacher will cue up the “Why Murals?” PBS video (available via YouTube) for the class to view (I recommend beginning the clip near 3:30). Students should take notes on the importance of murals, street art and public expression as discussed. If further scaffolding is needed, the instructor can provide a klose note (fill-in-the blank style) worksheet. *(If applicable, prepare for this lesson by taking pictures of murals around your city and town. Share these with students and have them piece together what they say about the place where they live.)*

2) Guided and Collaborative Practice

After viewing the clip and discussing, as a class, students will construct meaning of the first Kalamour mural (provided in supplementary slideshow: “Examining Modern Morocco through Murals”).

Discuss the significance of placement, colors, objects. Also connect and note the pertinence of the title. Have the students construct the narrative the first Kalamour mural “Handle with Care” is telling the viewer about Morocco in connection to the larger world. For additional scaffolding, students can be provided with a question set or chart to fill out for each of the installations they will view next. In small groups students will look at four more murals and complete an analysis with their peers. Students should complete their observational notes about the mural photos in the slideshow provided by the end of the class period.

Discussion/Observation Questions

- i. What is the significance of the colors being used?
- ii. What is the significance of any figures or objects depicted?
- iii. Is there action present or a statement being made?
- iv. What is at the center of the mural? On the outside? Repeated?
- v. How does the title connect to the artwork?
- vi. What story does this mural tell about Moroccan culture?

Mural Interpretation Teacher Cheat Sheet

Practice Example: Kalamour - “Handle with Care”

Colors: Blue as a color of royalty, also as water, the source of life. Gold is a symbol of royalty, as well as wealth, esteem and rarity. These two prominent colors are given further weight set among the stark black and white of the rest of the mural.

Notice: The tree sprouts from the man who cradles the globe, symbolizing interconnectedness. The medina (traditional city center) sits atop the globe, which is turned with Africa in the centered prominence. The male, in a reversal of the mothering role of cradling something, sets aside his masculinity to adore that which he is intimately connected. Spend time looking in the robe - notice animals, children playing (handling each other with care?), traditional patterns and masques. Man wears traditional Islamic robe and head covering.

Title: What is the artist suggesting is delicate? What should be handled with care? How does this connect to our understanding of Morocco? How does this connect Morocco to the larger world?

INTI - “Exodus”

Colors: The pale lamb in contrast to the dark skin of the boy. The mélange of colors the boy is wearing are mutable, with the exception of the dash of red, a symbolic color in Islam.

Notice: The symbolism of lamb - as innocent, as a sacrifice, as a baby. The rose in the lamb’s mouth. The knife of the boys back - examine potentiality there. The significance of having a masked face. The posture of the boy. The centering of the image on a white background to draw attention.

Title: In a social media post about this work, INTI notes “Morocco - Bridge to the European dream. The land with a passage to a better future for sub-Saharan immigrants, and a final destination for the vast majority” (Levy). It is clear that the Exodus INTI refers to is directly connected to the current migration crisis.

Simo - “Two Generations”

Colors: Simplicity of black and white. Why are only the circles connecting the two heads in color? What does that symbolize?

Notice: Connection of two figures. What is around old man? Why? It is suggesting he’s stagnant in some way, as a bird is nesting on his head, however, there is action present. Zoom in: what are the small objects?

Title: The generations are obviously shown as the central focus of this mural, however there is much more than can be surmised about the connective activity between the two as well as this larger connection to the mores and norms of Moroccan social structures (patriarchal and tribal previously).

Case Ma’Claim - “Moroccan Weaver of Rugs”

Colors: Red, the color of blood, of life, sometimes of power. Red is also one of the colors of Islamic state flags. The white strands are transformed. The brown hands, pointedly African.

Notice: The beginning of the traditional Berber (indigenous) symbols in the bottom of the rug. The delicate interplay of the figures in the weaving, reaching forward, picking their way through. How can this be symbolic of Morocco? Rug weaving is a centuries old tradition in North African, passed down through generations. How are women being idolized here? Examine the way in which women are uplifted in art? What is the purpose? Why is this significant in a traditional male dominated society?

Title: Self-explanatory. Focus on why this would be so simply stated? What does that express?

Kalamour - “Between Tradition and Modernity”

Colors: Red, the color of blood, of life, sometimes of power. Red is also one of the colors of Islamic state flags. The prominence of the red circle is given further weight set among the stark black and white of the rest of the mural.

Notice: The young man is in traditional Islamic wear, but riding a skateboard. Circle is centered around boy’s head. Face in left corner. Traditional symbols, animals. Phases of the moon in center semi-circle. Moon cycles are important in Islam. Repetition of pattern or symbols?

Title: How is the young man torn between old and new? What show the disjuncture?

Majid “Majic” El Bahar - “Facing Forward”

Colors: Purple signifies royalty. Bright neon colors draw attention and bring energy into the work. The artist highlights in black and white or full color elements the viewer should notice.

Notice: The faces of women are prominent, making a statement about the theme. Woman wear traditional muzon head covering is featured, putting the old ways on display, juxtaposed with modern uncovered faces. The woman in the center has a traditional Berber (indigenous people) tattoo, as well.

Title: Who is facing forward? What is this artist saying about women in Morocco? What is in the future?

To conclude Part One of the unit, students will have a final class period to draft an in-class five-paragraph essay responding to the prompt:

What conclusions can be drawn about Moroccan culture from your reading of the murals presented? Provide at least three examples from at least three different murals.

Again, if necessary, more or less scaffolding can be provided in the writing process per student needs. Prescribed outlines, graphic organizers, sentence stems and so on can be used if teacher deems necessary. The focus of this assignment is to gauge student understanding of context of Morocco and Islamic society, as well as test the ability to write with evidence and explanation.

Part Two: Examining Modern Morocco Through Migration

1) Anticipatory Set: KWL Update + Human Flow Trailer Preview

To begin the period, students should update their KWL chart from the beginning of the unit. They may have more questions, but certainly they should have more information to write in the know column. Preview the trailer for Ai Weiwei's film Human Flow, about the global migration crisis with students (available via YouTube). As student watch, have them record three things that surprised them and two questions they have about the trailer. Solicit initial reactions and questions after viewing. Then, using Google Maps, look at the location of Morocco in relation to Europe, Africa and the Middle East. In small groups, have students reflect on possible implications for Morocco based on their global position.

2) Collaborative Practice: Migration in Morocco Informational Text Jigsaw

Split students into four groups. Each group will be assigned an article on some element of migration and Morocco. Student groups will read their articles and prepare brief presentations for their classmates about their topics. If additional scaffolding is needed, teacher may provide chart for creation of presentation or graphic organizer for notetaking during presentations.

Suggested Articles for Informational Text Jigsaw

- i. [Morocco Unleashes a Harsh Crackdown on Sub-Saharan Migrants](#)
- ii. [Determined to Reach Europe, Migrants Defy Morocco's Crackdown](#)
- ii. [Spain will give Morocco €30 million to Curb Irregular Immigration](#)
- iv. [Morocco, the EU, and the Migration Dilemma](#)

3) Guided Practice: Fictional Text Introduction - Before Reading

Before reading "The Trip" by Laila Lalami, students should preview in-text vocabulary and relevant Arabic words (list provided below). Briefly introduce author, who is Moroccan-American and share the general premise of the text. Laila Lalami's website, lailalalami.com, is an easy resource for this information.

In-Text Vocabulary

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. asphyxiation | 4. charismatic |
| 2. asylum | 5. exudes |
| 3. beret | 6. frigid |
| | 7. hobbles |
| | 8. hysteria |

9. inky
10. motley
11. prospects
12. regale
13. repertoire
14. toppled
15. unalterable

1. baraka - stop in Darija; also, can communicate sufficiency
2. dirhams - Moroccan currency
3. harraga - slang for North African illegal migrants
4. hijab - Islamic head covering for women
5. Moors - northwestern African people, mix of Berber and Arab descent
6. Qu'ran - Islamic Holy Book
7. spagnol - Spaniard

Arabic Vocabulary

4) Independent Practice: During and After Reading Activities

While reading students will complete Character Chart (provided in supplementary materials). If students are unfamiliar with direct/indirect characterization, a basic review lesson may be necessary prior to completing the Character Chart during reading.

Upon completion of reading, students will complete after reading activities and discussion questions in preparation for a Socratic seminar discussion the following class period.

After Reading Activities

- i. *They're on a Boat*: Draw a diagram of the boat as described in the text. Label each person and list pertinent information in bullet points.
- ii. *Different Strokes*: Retell the story of the boat and the aftermath from the viewpoint of Faten. Your response should be creative but also informed by the text with detail.

Discussion Questions

- i. How does the setting influence the mood at both the beginning and end of the story?
- ii. Provide three specific instances of rich imagery provided by the author, from the beginning, middle and end of the story. Explain the effect this imagery has on the story.
- iii. Examine three different character interactions. What makes their interaction significant? Explain with specific evidence.
- iv. Select two character and analyze the ways in which hope is present in their behavior while in the boat.
- v. To what extent does this narrative connect to or amplify other information you have learned about modern Morocco?

5) Collaborative Practice: After Reading

Students will participate in a Socratic seminar discussion in which they connect and examine "The Trip" in context of the informational texts presented in prior jigsaw. Students should be aware that this discussion is also the brainstorming session for their final essay. For the last ten minutes of class, preview the essay prompt (see below) with students and allow them to brainstorm possible sources to use.

6) Independent Practice: Part Two Summative

To conclude Part Two of the unit, students will have a final class period to draft an in-class five-paragraph essay responding to the prompt:

Drawing from each of the three source types provided, explain your understanding of Morocco as a contemporary nation.

Again, if necessary, more or less scaffolding can be provided in the writing process per student needs. Prescribed outlines, graphic organizers, sentence stems and so on can be used if teacher deems necessary. The focus of this assignment is to gauge student understanding of the contemporary nation of Morocco, as well as test the ability to write with evidence and explanation.

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