

The Great Mosque at Djenne

1. After watching the video, explain why the mosque is valuable to the citizens of Djenne.

According to tradition, the Great Mosque at Djenne was first constructed in 1240. The current mosque was built in 1907. The mosque, and the entire city, are built of mud because the material is inexpensive and other materials are scarce.

This kind of architecture is very useful—houses are cheap to build and remain cool on hot days. But it also causes problems. When rain falls, the mud slowly disintegrates. Many of Djenne's houses are falling into disrepair. Nevertheless, Djenne's residents have agreed to keep the mud architecture throughout the city as a way to connect to their glorious past. The city also does not have electricity or paved roads.

The city's "Festival of Plastering," which takes place every May, allows the community to come together to make sure that the Great Mosque remains strong. About eighty senior leaders lead the weeks of preparations. On the day of the actual festival, residents work and play to the sound of beating drums.

But many young residents of Djenne resist participating in the festival. They know that they can make money working as tour guides instead. Others want to leave Djenne completely, so that they can move to a larger city where they can own televisions and computers.

2. You are a young resident of Djenne with very close ties to your family and community, and a strong curiosity to see the outside world. Circle the option below that you would choose. Then explain your choice on the following lines.

a. Help your community with the festival every year.

b. Stay in Djenne, but do not help with the festival.

c. Move away from Djenne.

3. With your group, explain the strongest reasons that would support choosing each of the three choices above.

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4. Which of the following is a more important goal for you when you become an adult: 1) the personal freedom to spend all of your time in ways that you want; or 2) the responsibility to continue the traditions and roles of your community that might die out if you don't actively continue them? Write a paragraph with strong reasons to support your opinion.
