

SHANTY-TOWN KID BY AZOUZ BEGAG

General background:

After the two World Wars in Europe, there was a shortage of manual labor in the European countries. During the 1940's, many poor, uneducated Algerian laborers migrated to France, providing a ready supply of unskilled workers to the French economy. Many of them ended up in large cities, where workers were needed.

In 1947, the author's father (Bouزيد) came to France as a construction worker. In 1954, he was joined by his wife (Messaouda) and their 4 children. They settled in Lyon, France, and eventually had 3 more children. **Our author, Azouz Begag, was born there in 1957.**

Of course, they were too poor to live in "normal" housing (as was the fate of many other families from countries in North Africa, which had been French colonies), and, therefore, they lived in impoverished conditions which are referred to as "**shanty-towns**" (*bidonvilles*).

Our book:

The author begins his autobiography when he was a student in French elementary school (from about **1963/4** and ends about **4** years later).

In the book, the author describes to us his family life and friends in his "shanty-town" and his experiences as a "foreign" (*i.e., not a traditional French student/ citizen*) in French society

We chose this book because it chronicles a few years in the life of a young "newcomer" in a country steeped in very "traditional" ways. Such experiences are still being experienced in France today. The experiences of Azouz and his family are still being "lived" by many people today, in many countries, including of course, our own. Something to think about as you read along!

By the way:

The author, Azouz Begag, did incredibly well in his schooling – against all odds – and has been a most successful French writer and a citizen of great influence in the French government.

FORMAT OF THE TEST:

There will be 24 questions on the test. You will be required to answer 20 of them, each with a value of 5 points. Short, specific explanations will be required. Vague generalizations will not count for much.

WHAT YOU SHOULD GATHER FROM YOUR READING OF THE BOOK:

- The background of the author's parents.
- A description of Azouz' "shantytown" neighborhood.
- A few activities of Azouz and his buddies in their neighborhood.; and his relationship with his neighborhood friends as fellow students.
- A few experiences Azouz had during his school years, particularly with his teachers.
- According to Azouz, a few "pros" and "cons" with regards to his necessary circumcision.
- The reaction of Azouz and his family members when they were able to move to better housing.
- Azouz' classroom interactions and relationship with his 7th grade teacher, Émile Loubon.
- Think about the relationship of Azouz with his mother.
- Brief descriptions of Azouz' father and his sister, Zohra.
- Give some thought of how you might have handled life if you had been in Azouz' shoes.

