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Directions:

1. Read the following passage
2. Highlight key words/phrases and define any terms you do not know
3. Then, on a separate sheet of notebook paper, answer the following questions *in complete sentences and in your own words:*
    a. What are the push and pull factors for migrant laborers to the Middle East?
    b. What are the consequences of Teresa and Luis's decision to leave their children back in the Philippines?
    c. What is the purpose of this source/reading? --What is the author's intent in writing this article?
4. Be prepared to share questions/comments and be ready to discuss the reading in class.

Far From Home

By Cynthia Gorney

Noon in the United Arab Emirates is four in the afternoon in the Philippines, which means that Teresa Cruz's two older children are supposed to be home from school and back inside the apartment of their aunt, who is raising them. Teresa lives in Dubai, the U.A.E.'s most populous city, 4,300 miles from the Philippines. She's a 39-year-old sales clerk at a clothing store in one wing of a shining multistory Dubai mall. Her job requires her to straighten clothes, ring up transactions, keep track of receipts, and smile whenever a customer walks in. She's on her feet six days a week, Fridays off.

So Friday midday is a scheduled time for Teresa to see her 11-year-old daughter and 8-year-old son, and because she's an overseas worker—one of many millions of adults who have traveled thousands of miles from home to take jobs that allow them to send money back to their families—she does this in the overseas worker's modern way: She pulls a low, plastic stool up to a computer set into a particleboard desk inside the bedroom she shares with four other people. She logs on to Facebook. She clicks a video-chat button, leans in close, and waits.

The first time I waited with her, Teresa was still in her pajamas and fuzzy-eared slippers at midday. She lives in the bedroom with her husband, Luis, who like Teresa left the Philippines years ago; their two youngest children, a baby and a three-year-old; and whomever the couple

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has persuaded to babysit while Teresa and Luis are at work. (Names have been changed to shield the family from potential repercussions.) This month it was a young Filipina who had run away from her job as an Emirati family's ill-treated maid and was now illicitly residing in a metal bunk wedged between the Cruz family mattress and the bedroom door. The baby was teething and cranky, and Teresa shushed him as she clasped him to one hip, her eyes fixed on the computer.

Finally a face materialized on the screen. But it was her sister, the children's aunt. The kids weren't home yet, she said. She didn't know where they were. "Call after dinner," she said in Tagalog, and signed off.

Teresa's shoulders sagged. She switched to her daughter's Facebook page, where she was startled to read, "In a relationship." She stared at the screen. "Maybe she doesn't mean it," Teresa said. Justin Bieber was on her daughter's likes list, as was the television show *Glee*. As was a Facebook page with many followers who have one attribute in common: Someone in the family has decided that the only way to accomplish the things a responsible parent is supposed to—pay for schoolbooks, make sure the grandparents have enough to eat, prepare the children for college someday—is to leave family behind and find work a very long way away.

During the weeks I came to know her in Dubai, I saw Teresa lose her composure only once. She was talking about an evening in the Philippines more than a decade ago, when she stood outside her family's home and saw that every house on the street had Christmas lights, every single one except hers. "For us," she said, "nothing." Her face suddenly crumpled, and she began to cry.

"I had heard a lot about 'Abroad,' " Teresa told me. "I had heard that when you were in Abroad, you can buy anything." Abroad was like a country of its own, the place from which impressive things emanated: gold bracelets, Colgate toothpaste, corned beef in cans. In the municipality where Teresa and her ten siblings grew up, an hour from Manila, houses of stone were made

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with Abroad money. “Our house was wood and very old,” Teresa said. One monsoon season, in the room where Teresa and her sister slept, a sodden wall collapsed. “Then when it’s Christmastime,” she said, “I was in front of my house. And I said, ‘The first salary, I will buy a Christmas light.’ ”

The first salary was from a local job selling sporty shoes. Teresa, just out of high school, could not afford to replace the house’s wooden walls with sturdier stone. But she could buy a string of colored lights. She nailed them up on her house in the shape of a Christmas tree. “I did it myself,” she said. “And I went out in front, and the light was there, and I said, I can do this.”

That was the night that Teresa decided she was tough enough for Abroad.

Migration for better opportunity is as old as human history, but today it’s likely that more people are living outside their countries of birth than ever before. At every hour of every day masses of people and money are in motion, a global flux as complex and shifting as weather, with nations of fewer resources off-loading their ambitious working poor and relying on the money that comes back in their place. “Remittances” is what economists call these person-to-family transfers, whisked home by electronic banking services or hand-delivered by couriers. Tiny in individual increments, aggregate remittances now constitute massive flows of capital into the world’s developing countries. Of the many places from which this money is sent—the richest countries, where employers are willing to put needy foreigners to work—the United States tops the list.

No other city on Earth, though, packs 21st-century international workers into one showy space quite like Dubai. Arrive in the standard manner, disembarking into the sprawling international airport, and you will pass a hundred remittance workers like Teresa and Luis before you reach the curbside cabstand. The young woman pouring Starbucks espressos is from the Philippines, or maybe Nigeria. The restroom cleaner is from Nepal, or maybe Sudan. The cabdriver, gunning

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it up the freeway toward downtown Dubai, is from northern Pakistan or Sri Lanka or the southern Indian state of Kerala.

And the mad-looking, postmodernist skyscrapers outside the taxi windows? This building, the one like a massive hatchet blade, or the one that resembles a giant golf ball atop a 20-story pancake stack? All built by foreign laborers—South Asian men primarily, from India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. If it's daylight, empty buses will be parked in the shade beneath the skeletons of the skyscrapers still under construction. They're waiting to carry men back at dusk to group-housing units, crowded as prison barracks, where most of them are required to live.

Difficult living conditions for foreign workers can be found everywhere in the world. But everything about Dubai is exaggerated. The city's modern history starts just over a half century ago, with the discovery of oil in nearby Abu Dhabi, then a separate and independent sheikhdom. The United Arab Emirates was founded in 1971 as a national federation encompassing six of these sheikhdoms—the seventh joined the following year—and since Dubai had comparatively little oil, the city's royal family used its portion of the country's new riches to transform the small trading city into a commercial capital to dazzle the world. The famous indoor ski slope is only one wing of a Dubai shopping mall, which is not even the biggest of the city's many malls; that one contains a three-story aquarium and a full-size ice hockey rink. The tallest building on the planet is in Dubai; Tom Cruise was seen rappelling down its outer wall in one of the *Mission: Impossible* movies. Nearly everywhere the visitor looks, things are extravagant and new.

And because the men who conceived contemporary Dubai decided that their spectacular city would be assembled and serviced by workers from other countries—there were too few Emiratis to do it, and why would a newly wealthy nation expect its adults to wait tables or pour cement in 120-degree-Fahrenheit heat when it could afford to invite outsiders to perform these tasks?—they ended up doing this in exaggerated fashion too. Of the 2.1 million people in Dubai,

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only about one in ten is Emirati. The rest are the global economy's loaners, working on temporary contracts with the understanding that they will never be offered Emirati citizenship.

The society they live in, like most of the gulf countries now relying on foreign workers, is as rigidly layered as was 19th-century industrial America, and in many of the same ways: by race, gender, class, country of origin, English-language fluency. In Dubai the professionals and managers are largely Europeans, Americans, Australians, New Zealanders, and Canadians—white people who mostly make too much money to be thought of as remittance workers. Their salaries let them bring over their families, drive Range Rovers, and move into elegant high-rises or landscaped villas. It is remittance workers who cook for them too and look after their children, who clean the streets, staff the shopping malls, fill out the pharmacy prescriptions, run the hockey rink Zambonis, and build the skyscrapers in the scorching sun outside—who make Dubai function, in other words, while sending their wages a long way home.

At its heart, however, this isn't a story about work and wages and GDP. It's a love story: about family bonds, colliding duties and loyalties, and the immense barriers to providing for loved ones' material and emotional needs in a global economy that sometimes seems perfectly structured to pull families apart. Most overseas workers are caught up in love stories of one kind or another, and in Dubai, which has one of the world's highest concentrations of foreign workers, the Cruzes appreciate the aspect of their daily lives that renders them unusually lucky: They are able to live together, husband and wife, in the same physical place. For a time they were together with all their children, a rare blessing for remittance workers. But the arrival of the fourth baby—the Cruzes are observant Roman Catholics—was more than they could manage. It was Luis, who had been married before and already had one child in the Philippines, who took the older children home. Whenever I asked Teresa about losing physical contact with her

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daughter and her oldest son, she went expressionless and still. “Very difficult,” she said. And: “I think they have a good family with my sister.” And: “There they will learn to be Filipino.”