

# ALL ABOUT AFRICA



**GRADE 5-6**

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# Classroom Procedure:

1. Introduce the lesson by asking students to describe Africa. Write their comments on an anchor chart. Correct any misconceptions students may have about Africa and the people from there. Then, explain to students that they will be learning about Africa.
2. Distribute the *All about Africa* Content Pages. Read and review with the students. The content is designed to be a brief overview of the continent. You are encouraged to supplement the information with additional materials.
3. Distribute the Activity Page. Students can complete the map in groups. Use the answer key to check student answers, and add other sites students are interested in, such as the Nile River or Victoria Falls.
4. Distribute the Practice Page. In this map exercise, students will identify the eight physical geographic regions described in the Content Pages.
5. Distribute the Homework Page. The Homework Page allows students to explore a country in Africa. The objective is to provide students with more information about the specific countries in Africa. Teachers may want to assign countries so they have a representative sample of the entire continent.
6. In closing, ask students these questions: What new information did you learn about Africa that you didn't already know? Do you think Africa will be a global political and economic power in the future? How does having most of the world's precious minerals as a natural resource help Africa develop economically?

**Lesson Title:** All about Africa

**Subject:** Social Studies

**Approximate Grade Level:** 5 – 6

**Objectives:** Students will learn about the location, history, and culture of Africa. They will discover specific facts about the continent's geography, government, and economy. Students will also have the opportunity to research one of the 54 African countries.

**State Educational Standards\*:**

NCSS.D2.HIS.3.3–5, NCSS.D2.GEO.2.3–5, NCSS.D2.ECON.2.3–5

**Class Sessions (45 minutes):**

2 to 3 class sessions

**Teaching Materials/Worksheets:**

Content Pages (4), Activity Pages (3), Practice Pages (2), Homework Pages (2)

**Student Supplies:**

Pens, pencils, highlighters, colored pencils or markers, access to maps or the internet

**Prepare Ahead of Time:**

Copies of worksheets

**Options for Lesson:** National Geographic (NAT GEO) has excellent resources to show students stunning photos of Africa. Gather images from NAT GEO or similar magazines to display. Find someone who has lived in Africa at some point (missionaries or humanitarian workers, for example). Have your students interview them. Be sure to visit the Learn Bright channel on YouTube to find the video that matches this lesson and show it to students.

\*Lessons are aligned to meet the education objectives and goals of most states. For more information on your state objectives, contact your local Board of Education or Department of Education in your state.

# Teacher Notes

*All about Africa* is not intended to be an all-encompassing lesson about Africa. The continent's history alone can cover several weeks of instruction! Instead, the lesson aims to give students an overview and basic knowledge of one of the world's continents from a historical, economic, and geographic perspective. In addition, students will learn about the geography and economy of the continent, as well as some of the significant contributions of African culture to the world.

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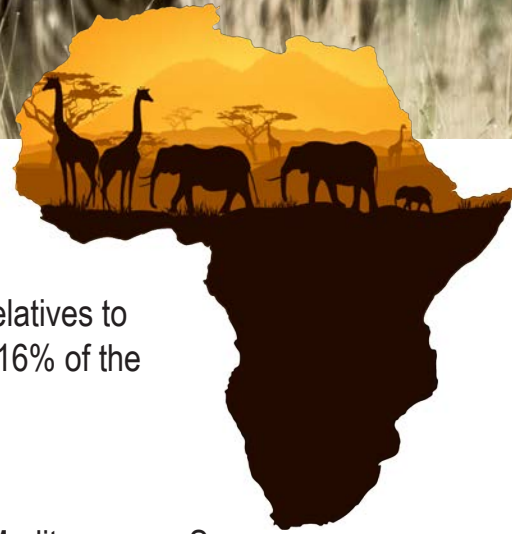
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# All about Africa



Africa is a **continent**, *not* a country. The African Union and the United Nations recognize 54 countries on the continent. Each country has a flag that represents an independent nation. Africa is called the "Cradle of Humankind." This is because fossil evidence indicates that the closest relatives to human beings, and human beings themselves, evolved from Africa. About 16% of the world's population (over 1.2 billion) live in Africa.



## Geography

Africa is the second largest continent in the world. It is surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Atlantic Ocean. Africa is divided almost equally by the equator.

### GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS

- Sahara
- Sahel
- Ethiopian Highlands
  - Savanna
- Swahili Coast
- Rainforests
- African Great Lakes
- Southern Africa

The equator divides the earth into the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. Africa is roughly 11,724,000 square miles (30,365,000 square kilometers), which is nearly 5,000 miles north to south and 4,700 miles east to west.

There are eight major physical geographical regions. Each has unique characteristics that distinguish it from the others.

The Sahara is the first region. It is the largest hot, dry desert in the world and covers about 25% of the African continent. As you might imagine, geographical areas don't begin and end precisely in one location. Geographical regions have **transition** areas between them. A narrow strip of land occupies the space between the Sahara and savannas. It is a semi-arid land known as the Sahel, the second region.

Next is the region of the Ethiopian Highlands. More than 75 million years old, the Ethiopian Highlands include 80% of the tallest mountains in Africa. Surrounding the highland areas is the Savanna region. The savannas are the grasslands of Africa. They cover about half of Africa and are where several species of animals live that you may be familiar with.

The Serengeti is the best-known savanna. Here, you could find lions, giraffes, and elephants, and wildebeests grazing on the grass. Along the Indian Ocean from Somalia to Mozambique is region called the Swahili Coast. It is about 1,000 miles long and contains several coral reefs and barrier islands.



Rainforests make up 80% of central Africa. Unfortunately, this sensitive area of enormous **ecological** value is threatened and shrinking. The rainforests contain the most diverse plant and animal life on the planet. Although more than 8,000 species of plants have been identified, scientists believe that they only represent 10% of the plant life species in the African rainforests.



Africa is home to some of the world's largest and deepest lakes. The African Great Lakes region has seven significant lakes. The largest of these and the second-largest freshwater lake worldwide, Lake Victoria, feeds the Nile River, the longest river in the world. You would also find the world's longest waterfall in this area—Victoria Falls.

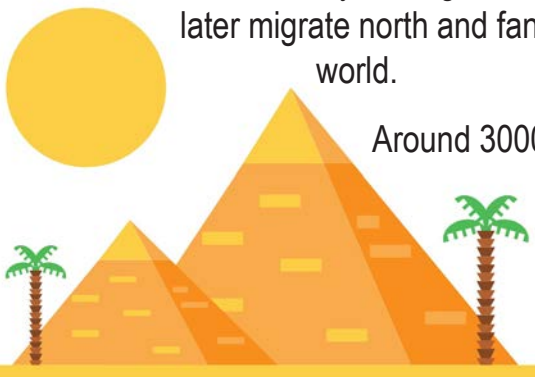


Southern Africa is the last region. It is a mix of mountains and **plateaus**. The Kaapvaal Craton, a shelf of bedrock over 2.6 billion years old, forms the base of Southern Africa. The area is home to a diverse mix of animal and plant species. South Africa's national flower (king protea) is found in the Cape Floral Region of Southern Africa.

## History

It would take several volumes to record the history of an entire continent! Let's sum it up. Some scientists believe **hominids** occupied Africa 4 million or more years ago. Hominids are the earliest-known ancestors of humans. Humans appeared about 100,000 years ago in the eastern region of sub-Saharan Africa. They would later migrate north and fan out across the Middle East, then to the rest of the world.

Around 3000 BCE, one of the greatest kingdoms in history, Egypt, appeared along the Nile River Valley. Other significant cultures include the Phoenicians, who



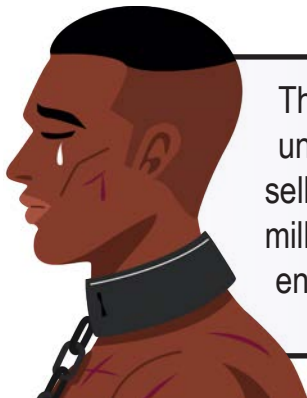


established several flourishing cities in what is now present-day Tunisia, and Carthage, a town on the Mediterranean. The Phoenicians were renowned sailors and are said to have sailed around Africa and visited Asia.



The Romans dominated northern Africa for several centuries after a civil war with the Ptolemies and Cleopatra's death. Egypt was annexed by the Roman Empire in 30 BCE and remained a province until about 641 CE.

Ghana was the first known empire in western Africa (in power from 5th to 11th century CE). Several territories came under Muslim rule. Mali and Songhai were two powerful West African states under Muslim influence. Both were known for their aggressive trade practices and dominance over the trade routes in Africa.



The Transatlantic Slave Trade began in 1526 and remained operational until 1867. Several European countries participated in capturing, selling, enslaving, and forcing labor on more than an estimated 12.5 million people. Historians estimate that more than 10 million enslaved people were sent to the Caribbean and North and South Americas.



During the late 19th century, Europe began to **colonize** Africa and exploit the rich natural resources in the continent. By 1920, much of Africa was under colony rule. Colony rule or **colonialism** is political control over another country and the economic exploitation of it.

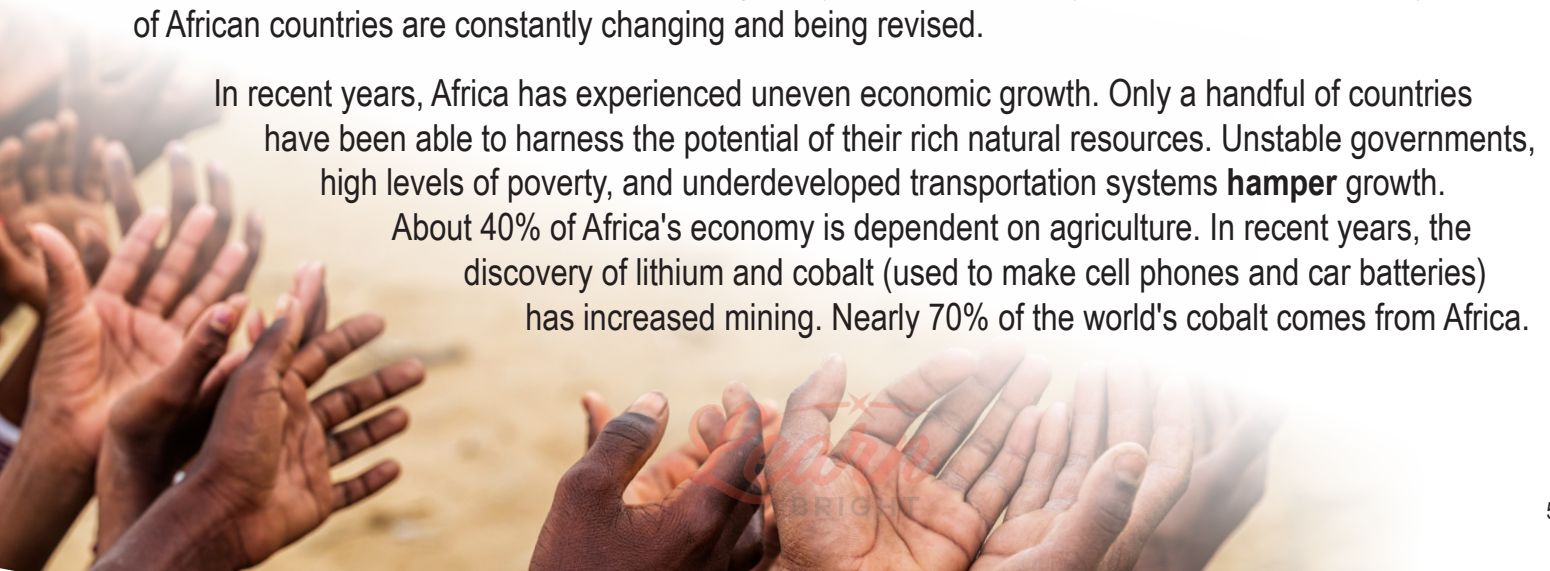
By the 1950s, African nations wanted independence and began a decolonization movement. In 1990, Namibia was the last colony in Africa to achieve independence. Although colonialism ended in 1990, many African nations maintain trade and other relationships with former colonizing countries today.

## Government and Economy

Africa has no single governing authority for the entire continent of 54 independent countries. Political turmoil encompasses much of the continent. Most governments are the same as or a variation of those under colonial rule. They are parliamentary democracies. Although most African countries claim to be democratic, political power is often split among many interests or led by dictators. The political systems of African countries are constantly changing and being revised.

In recent years, Africa has experienced uneven economic growth. Only a handful of countries have been able to harness the potential of their rich natural resources. Unstable governments, high levels of poverty, and underdeveloped transportation systems **hamper** growth.

About 40% of Africa's economy is dependent on agriculture. In recent years, the discovery of lithium and cobalt (used to make cell phones and car batteries) has increased mining. Nearly 70% of the world's cobalt comes from Africa.



## Culture

The culture of Africa is extraordinarily diverse. There are over 3,000 ethnic groups or tribes, and more than 1,500 known languages (possibly over 3,000 by some estimations) are spoken on the continent. Islam in the north and Christianity in the south are the most prevalent religions. Interspersed throughout the continent are tribal faiths and spirituality.

Africa has a very young population, with 40% of the country being under 15 years of age. While most of the population is rural, there are several large cities, and the population in them continues to expand.

There is a long history and tradition of the arts. Fashion and music from Africa have had a worldwide influence for centuries. And written language and mathematics originated in Africa. The cultural influences of the continent cannot be understated.



## Modern Africa

Due to its resources and youthful population, Africa may quickly become one of the most important global trading partners. The African continent holds 40% of the world's gold reserves and 30% of reserves of essential minerals (iron, copper, aluminum, platinum, chromium, lithium, and other rare metals).

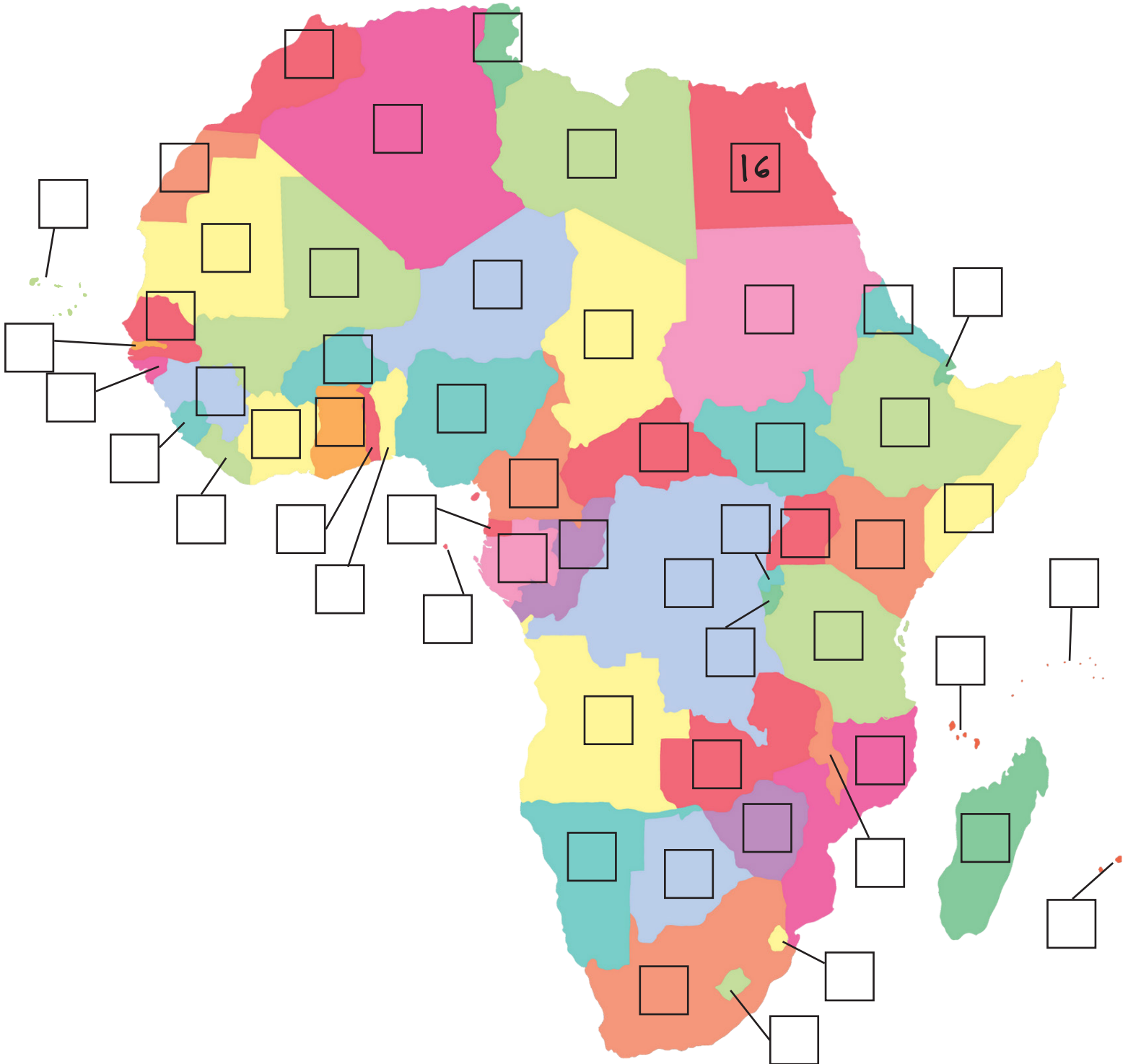
Modern cities dot the new Africa. There is an increased interest by Asian, European, and American companies looking to expand their businesses in Africa. Despite lagging behind other continents in the past, the future of the African continent looks increasingly optimistic.





## WHICH COUNTRY'S WHICH?

**Instructions:** Write the number from the country list that corresponds to each country on the map below. The first one is done for you.








## COUNTRY LIST

 1. Algeria	 19. Eswatini	 37. Namibia
 2. Angola	 20. Ethiopia	 38. Niger
 3. Benin	 21. Gabon	 39. Nigeria
 4. Botswana	 22. The Gambia	 40. Rwanda
 5. Burkina Faso	 23. Ghana	 41. São Tomé and Príncipe
 6. Burundi	 24. Guinea	 42. Senegal
 7. Cabo Verde	 25. Guinea-Bissau	 43. Seychelles
 8. Cameroon	 26. Kenya	 44. Sierra Leone
 9. Central African Republic	 27. Lesotho	 45. Somalia
 10. Chad	 28. Liberia	 46. South Africa
 11. Comoros	 29. Libya	 47. South Sudan
 12. Democratic Republic of the Congo	 30. Madagascar	 48. Sudan
 13. Republic of the Congo	 31. Malawi	 49. Tanzania
 14. Côte d'Ivoire	 32. Mali	 50. Togo
 15. Djibouti	 33. Mauritania	 51. Tunisia
 16. Egypt	 34. Mauritius	 52. Uganda
 17. Equatorial Guinea	 35. Morocco	 53. Zambia
 18. Eritrea	 36. Mozambique	 54. Zimbabwe

 \*BONUS (B): Western Sahara

\*Western Sahara is not a country. Morocco has claimed authority over the territory since 1975, but the United Nations (UN) does not recognize Moroccan control and considers it a non-self-governing territory.



# Practice

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** On the map, draw and label each physical geographic region of Africa. Color each region a different color. Then complete the prompts at the bottom of the page.



1. Draw a line that shows the equator.
2. Circle the Horn of Africa.
3. Draw an arrow that points to the Cape of Good Hope.



# Homework

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



**Instructions:** Choose one of the 54 countries in Africa. Complete the prompts according to your country.

Name of the country: \_\_\_\_\_

Geography: \_\_\_\_\_

History: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Government: \_\_\_\_\_

Economy: \_\_\_\_\_

Culture: \_\_\_\_\_



Show on the map above where the country is located. (If you chose an island country, draw it on the map.)

Draw a picture of the country's flag in the box below.



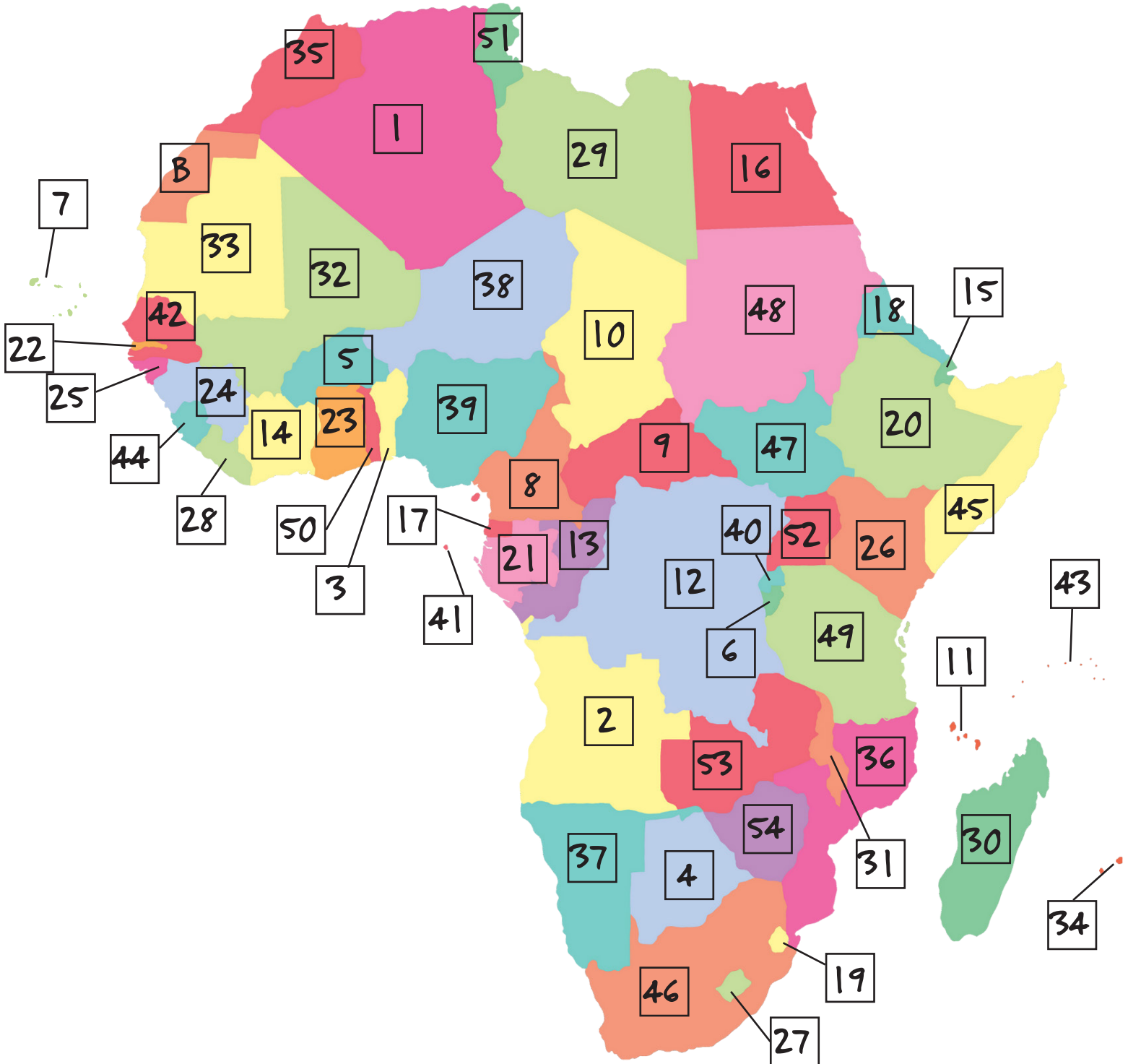
What else do you want people to know about the country?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



### WHICH COUNTRY'S WHICH?

**Instructions:** Write the number from the country list that corresponds to each country on the map below. The first one is done for you.

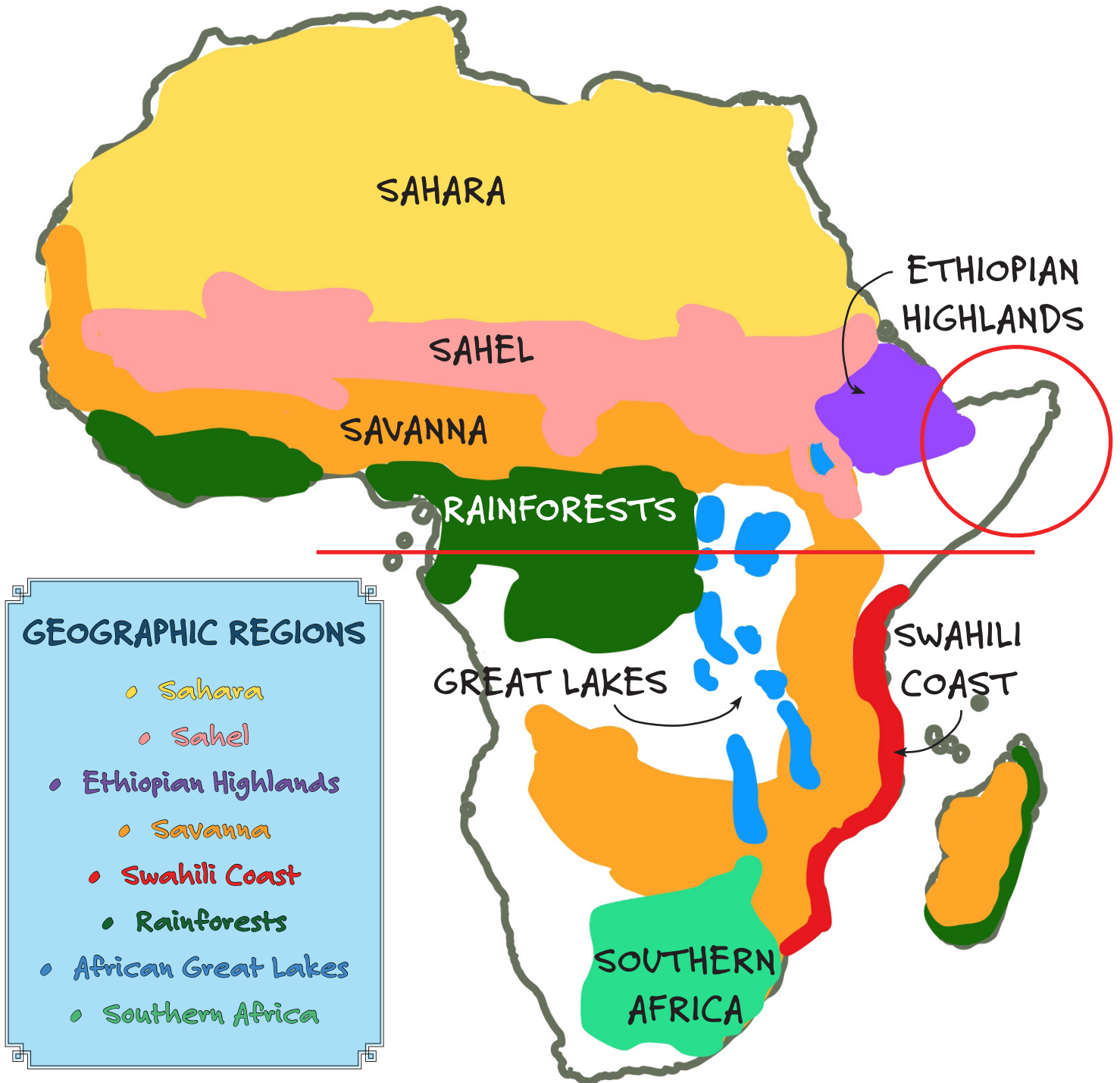




# Practice

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Answer Key \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** On the map, draw and label each physical geographic region of Africa. (Use the internet if you need help.) Color each region a different color. Then complete the prompts at the bottom of the page.



1. Draw a line that shows the equator.
2. Circle the Horn of Africa.
3. Draw an arrow that points to the Cape of Good Hope.

**NOTE:** Answers will vary. Some maps present the regions differently. This is one general representation.



# Homework

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



**Instructions:** Choose one of the 54 countries in Africa. Complete the prompts according to your country.  
Answers will vary. Sample response.

Name of the country: Angola

Geography: Savanna in the far east and south; rainforest in the north; dry coastal strip on west coast

History: The country had been under Portuguese rule from 1575 to 1975, so the people speak Portuguese. Even though they gained independence in 1975, a civil war went on for 27 years that left the country in ruins. It didn't end until 2002. But the people had more hope for a peaceful future at the end of that war than they had had the last quarter century.

Type of Government: The government is a republic.

Economy: They have a lot of natural resources, such as diamonds, petroleum, iron, and uranium. Their industries include petroleum drilling/refining, sugar, textiles, and ship repair.

Culture: The official language is Portuguese, but indigenous languages are still used in daily life in some areas. The country is mostly Christian. Almost 80% are either Roman Catholic or Protestant. The music of Angola was instrumental in creating/reinforcing "angolanidade," the Angolan national identity.



Show on the map above where the country is located. (If you chose an island country, draw it on the map.)

Draw a picture of the country's flag in the box below.



What else do you want people to know about the country?

Because of the mix of Portuguese and African culture, urban Angola often seems more like a Latin American country than an African country, especially the Luanda region.