

Africa's Climates, Customs, and Communities

Lesson Plan

Grade Level: 3-4

Curriculum Focus: Africa

Lesson Duration: Two class periods

Student Objectives

- When leaving the United States to visit another continent – such as Africa – travelers need to do research and to prepare themselves for differences, from climates to customs.
- All communities have distinctive features.

Materials

- Discovery School video on *unitedstreaming: Africa: People and Places*
Search for this video by using the video title (or a portion of it) as the keyword.

Selected clips that support this lesson plan:

- Africa's Geography: Great Rivers and Deserts
 - Africa's Geographic Boundaries: Seas and Oceans
 - The World's Largest Desert: The Sahara
 - Africa's Nile River, the Equator, and the Kalahari Desert
 - African Countries and Populations
- Flight over the Equator: The Land and Its Tribes
 - What Is the Earth's Equator?
 - Eastern Africa: Kenya and the Great Rift Valley
 - African Nomadic Tribes: The Samburu People and Their Traditions
 - Western Africa: The Country of Gabon
 - The Fang: Farmers, Dancers, Craftsmen
- People of the Nile: Life on the World's Longest River
 - The Path of the Nile
 - Sources of the Nile: Ethiopia and the Blue Nile
 - Sources of the Nile: Sudan, the White Nile, and the Nuer People

- Where the Blue and White Niles Meet: The Fertile Land of Egypt
 - Measuring the Nile: The Nilometer
 - Fruit Crops, Pottery, and Marriage on the Nile
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- Information about how to contact embassies and consulates of African nations
 - Print and online reference materials about different regions of Africa
 - Computer with Internet access

Procedures

1. Tell your students that your class is going to plan a pretend class trip to an area in Africa. Depending on how far you've gone in your study of the continent, give students the chance to vote, from among the following locales, on the one area in Africa they would most like to visit:
 - The banks of the Nile River, somewhere along its length from Lake Victoria to the Mediterranean Sea
 - The grasslands, inhabited by elephants, zebras, antelopes, lions, and cheetahs
 - Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania
 - The Sahara Desert
 - Areas of Kenya or Gabon on the equator
2. Ask the students to help you list all the kinds of arrangements that they must make before leaving home if they want to have a successful and satisfying trip to this one area of Africa. The goal is to encourage students to realize that they must consider at least the following issues:
 - Transportation
 - Accommodations
 - Itinerary and packing
 - Language and customs

Once the preceding – and possibly other – topics are listed, let students volunteer for or assign them to committees that will focus on each topic.

3. Each committee of students should then brainstorm specific questions needing answers before the trip begins. Each committee should select one or more students to do research on each question. Discuss with students what resources they can use to find answers: travel agents, books and magazines for tourists, Web sites, the embassy or consulate of the country or countries being visited. Here are sample questions each committee might decide to consider:

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

- How will the class travel from home to this part of Africa?
- How far away is this part of Africa, and how long will it take to get there?

- How will the class get around once in this part of Africa?
- How much will transportation cost?
- What documents will students need to leave the United States, enter an African country, and then return to the United States?

ACCOMMODATION COMMITTEE

- What kinds of accommodations are available – hotels? campgrounds? people's homes? youth hostels?
- How much will accommodations cost?
- How can the students make reservations?

ITINERARY AND PACKING COMMITTEE

- What sights do students want to see in this area?
- How many days or weeks will students need to see these sights?
- What kinds of clothes should students pack, given the African climate and what they plan to do there?
- Besides clothes, what else should students pack?

LANGUAGE AND CUSTOMS

- In order to be goodwill ambassadors for the United States, what should student visitors know about the African people they are going to visit? That is, do the people who live in this part of Africa have customs that visitors should know about in advance?
 - Do the students have any customs that might surprise or offend the Africans? What can the students do to make sure they don't upset or annoy their hosts?
 - What should students know about their hosts' languages, foods, and religions before traveling to this part of Africa?
4. The students on each committee should discuss among themselves what they learned from their research. The students should work together to plan a brief oral presentation of their findings and their recommendations. They should write up notes and select visual aids if possible. One student might act as spokesperson to present the notes and visual aids to the rest of the class. Make sure the spokesperson has an opportunity to practice by doing at least one dry run and getting feedback from the other students on the committee.
 5. Give each spokesperson a chance to make a brief oral presentation. The audience should have an opportunity to ask questions of the spokesperson and the other members of his or her committee.
 6. If possible, find someone in the school community who has actually traveled to the part of Africa under investigation. Invite him or her to share stories and photos or videos with your students after they have done their own research. Encourage the guest to share souvenirs and answer questions the students might have.

7. Each committee should write a group thank-you note to the guest after his or her visit to the class.

Discussion Questions

1. If you could visit a part of Africa, would you choose a river like the Nile River, a mountain like Mt. Kilimanjaro, or the grasslands where the large animals live? Have the class list the positive and negative reasons for visiting these areas. Divide the class into three groups and have each group take an area. Have a discussion allowing each group to convince the others to visit its area.
2. Imagine yourself in the middle of the Sahara Desert in the summer. Make webs of words describing sights (barren land, cloudless sky, scorching sun), feelings (thirsty, hot, tired, lonely), sounds (wind, night animals, shifting sand), fears (desperation, starvation, animals). Discuss what animals and products you would need to survive in the desert. What animals and weather conditions would be dangers to you?
3. Drums and string instruments are used in many cultures. Discuss the types of instruments used in your region of the country. Invite musicians from your community to share their talents in playing traditional music for your class.
4. Imagine yourself living a nomadic life. Discuss ways in which your life would change from what it is now. Make sure to include limited amount of material goods, schools, health care, neighbors, friends, transportation, jobs, etc.
5. Modern technology and the growth of cities have affected the life of many tribes in Africa. Explain how the tribes have been affected, what adaptations they are making, and how their lifestyle may be forced to change due to the increase in cities and decrease in open areas.
6. Pretend you are going to build your home along the Nile River. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of living there.
7. Debate whether or not the way the jobs are divided among the men and women of the Nile is fair.
8. Many people along the Nile live the same way their ancestors did. How would you go about modernizing this culture if the people were receptive to the idea?
9. Re-watch the video and make a list of all the support jobs needed to make this film in addition to the producer, writer, and camerapersons. Compare the jobs in your school to the jobs in making a film. Who has similar job responsibilities?
10. Discuss how the composer figures out the music to go with the film. Watch some other nature videos and listen to the background music that creates excitement, drama, and humor. Experiment with musical instruments for creating background music for animal movements.
11. The filmmaker, Hugo Van Lawick, stated that he hopes that people will learn to appreciate the nature of the Serengeti and work for conservation of that area. Discuss what kinds of population and pollution problems could be affecting this area. Discuss and research laws that are being passed to protect this refuge. Compare it to a wildlife area near your school or community that needs protection and preservation.

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- 3 points: Student presentation is clearly organized and includes substantive answers to committee's questions; includes well-explained visual aids.
- 2 points: Student presentation is adequately organized and provides substantive answers to committee's questions; visual aids not totally connected to oral presentation.
- 1 point: Student presentation is poorly organized and inarticulate, does not include complete answers to committee's questions; missing or poorly explained visual aids.

Vocabulary

cinematographer

Definition: A film photographer.

Context: Film cinematographer Hugo Van Lawick filmed a variety of animals in their natural habitats.

documentary

Definition: A drama showing news events, social conditions, etc., in nonfiction form.

Context: The Leopard Son was a documentary, a true story of a leopard's life in Africa.

footage

Definition: Documented events on film.

Context: Hugo would come in and we would go through the footage and he would describe what it was like to be there.

continent

Definition: Any of the main large land areas of the Earth.

Context: Africa is the world's second-largest continent.

equator

Definition: An imaginary circle around the Earth, equally distant from the North Pole and the South Pole.

Context: Africa is divided in half by the equator.

hieroglyphic

Definition: A system of writing in which pictorial symbols are used to represent meaning or sound, or a combination of the two.

Context: Ancient Egyptians drew hieroglyphics or pictures that became the first written language.

nomads

Definition: People with no permanent home, who move from place to place in search of food or pastures.

Context: The Samburu people are one of the several tribes of nomads.

papyrus

Definition: A tall, aquatic, Mediterranean sedge, the stems of which were used as material on which to write by ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans.

Context: Papyrus is a marshy plant that grows up to 15 feet high.

refuge

Definition: A shelter or protection from danger.

Context: Most of the filming took place in Serengeti National Park, a large wildlife refuge in northern Tanzania.

savannas

Definition: Vast grassland areas.

Context: Cattle-raising tribes tend their herds in southern Africa's savannas.

score

Definition: A copy of a musical composition showing all parts for instruments or voices.

Context: Composer Stewart Copeland was hired to write the score.

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit <http://www.mcrel.org/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Geography – The World in Spatial Terms: Knows the location of places, geographic features and patterns of the environment.
- Geography – Places and Regions: Understands the physical and human characteristics of place.
- Geography – Human Systems: Understands the nature and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics.
- History – K-4 History: Understands family life now and in the past, and family life in various places long ago.



- History – K-4 History: Understands selected attributes and historical developments of societies in Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe.

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Culture
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Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the Discoveryschool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>