



AFRICAN POPULATION

Objectives:

Students will explore:

- the five major regions of Africa;
- the population distribution patterns (human settlement) within these areas;
- how physical features influence these human settlement patterns.

Recommended Grades: 4-8

Materials (all included in the trunk):

- Laminated climate and vegetation maps
- Plastic, colored chips
- Country cards
- Colored plastic chains (5)
- Orange polyspot

Preparation: 15 minutes

Read over the activity and acquaint yourself with the locations you will be bringing students on the map.

Rules:



Shoes are not allowed on the map. Please have students remove shoes before walking on the map.



No writing utensils on the map.

Assign students to “Base Camps” (the colored circles in the corners of the map). For this activity you will need a fifth team as well. Use an orange colored polyspot disc found in the trunk and put it on the map for a team to use as its Base Camp.

Review the concept of **region** with students. A region is a place or area that shares common characteristics. Regions can be based on any criteria, such as culture, economy, physical characteristics, political identity, or religion.

To the side of the map, have students divide themselves into “regions” based on criteria that you choose. Some possible ways students could divide into regions could be eye color, hair color, shoe type, shirt color, etc.

Explain to students that each team will be responsible for a specific region of Africa. For the purposes of this activity they will be using the population regions as designated by the Population Reference Bureau.

Assign teams to regions as follows:

- Red Team • Western Africa
- Green Team • Northern Africa
- Yellow Team • Middle Africa
- Blue Team • Eastern Africa
- Orange Team • Southern Africa

Give each team a colored chain of the team's color and a map of Africa's regions. Explain that they are to take the chain and roughly outline the borders of their designated region.

After students have placed their chains around their regions tell them they are responsible for determining the population of their region. Give each team a set of the Country Cards (colorcoded) for their team and bingo chips. Explain that one chip will equal 1 million people. For example, if the card for Sudan indicates that the population of Sudan is 41,000,000, they will find Sudan on the map, place the card on the country, and place 41 chips on the country to represent the population. You may want to limit the number of team members on the map at a given time. Other team members may assist in locating countries from the map's border, and may count chips.

After each team has placed all the cards and chips on the map, direct them to sit in their region on the map. Have them discuss the following:

Where do people live? Why? Where do people not live? Why?

Deepen this discussion by directing them to look at both the Giant Map of Africa and the laminated copies of climate and vegetation maps to see how the geography of their region has influenced population patterns.

Introduce (or review) the following terms:

Biome: A community of plants and animals that have adapted to the specific conditions in that area. Examples include deserts, rain forests, and savannas.

Climate: Weather patterns that an area or region experiences over a long period of time.

Landforms: Features found on the Earth. Examples include mountains, rivers, plateaus, valleys, plains, etc...

Vegetation: The plants in an area.

Have students discuss why people live where they do in Africa, and choose one student to report back to the class. Possible answers may include:

Factors that influence population density and distribution	Places people tend to live	Places people tend not to live
Topography, landforms	Areas with flat land	Places too hot (deserts)
Soils	Near the coast, other bodies of water	Mountainous areas
Vegetation	Areas where food can be produced	Areas without access to water
Climate		
Resources		

TEACHER REFERENCE INFORMATION

Use this information either to help groups as they use the climate and vegetation maps or to facilitate discussion afterwards.

Northern Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, Western Sahara)

The majority of this region (over 90%) is desert with an arid or semiarid climate.

- Nile River valley and delta (in Egypt and Sudan);
- Valleys in the Atlas Mountains (Morocco, Northern Algeria, and Northern Tunisia);
- Mediterranean Coast.

These areas are inhabited because they include a water source for drinking and irrigation, fertile soils, and a climate that supports the growth of food crops.

Western Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo)

The country with the highest population in all of Africa is in this region—Nigeria, home to more than 135 million people. Nigeria contains many areas with moderate climates and soil suitable for agriculture. Additionally, Nigeria has good sea ports (unlike most of Africa) and a large amount of oil and gas. The largest countries of this region (by area) are Mauritania, Mali, and Niger. They have low populations because they are mainly located in the Sahara desert region.

Eastern Africa (Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe)

Both Ethiopia and Kenya have highland areas with mild temperatures and plenty of rain that allow a large population to live in this area. Population is also concentrated around Lake Victoria, the largest lake in Africa (this supports populations in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda).

Middle Africa (Angola, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Sao Tome and Principe)

The country with the highest population in this region is the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This is due to the fact that the Congo River System (also called the Zaire River) provides extensive food, water, and transportation for the area.

Southern Africa (Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, and Swaziland)

The country with the highest population in this region is South Africa, where there is a coastal plain that receives a moderate amount of rain allowing for agriculture.





NORTHERN AFRICA

WESTERN AFRICA

MIDDLE AFRICA

SOUTHERN AFRICA

EASTERN AFRICA