

A Celebration of Africa

Grade level: 4

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Length of Unit: Eleven lessons

I. ABSTRACT

Today every child is taught about the great civilizations of Greece and Rome, but how many children learn about Africa? Throughout this unit, students study the geography of Africa, the early African Kingdoms of Kush and Axum, the Medieval Kingdoms of Sudan (Mali, Songhay, and Ghana), as well as the Kings of Mali and Egypt. The students also explore African culture through the use of hands-on activities, such as making Kufi hats, Kente cloth, musical instruments, Adrinka symbols, pottery, and African masks. They also learn songs from each region as well as African children's games. The unit is culminated with a progressive feast, a stage production, and a tour of the museum where students' work is displayed.

II. OVERVIEW

A. Objectives

1. To familiarize students with the geographical features of Africa
2. To familiarize students with the African Kingdoms:
Axum, Kush, Mali, Songhay, and Ghana
3. To familiarize students with African music, literature, and songs
4. To make students aware of the types of foods grown and eaten in Africa
5. To identify animals in the different regions of Africa
6. To examine African artifacts

B. Core Knowledge Sequence

1. Geography of Africa
2. Early African Kingdoms of Kush and Axum
3. Medieval Kingdoms of the Sudan: Mali, Ghana, and Songhay

C. Skills Taught

1. Map and globe
2. Note taking
3. Researching
4. Creative writing
5. Listening and speaking skills

III. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

A. Teacher Resources

1. Hirsch, E.D. Jr. *What Your 4th Grader Needs to Know*. New York: Dell Publishing, 1991. ISBN 0-385-31026-9
2. Global Studies Series. *Focus on Africa*. New Jersey: Globe Fearson Educational Publisher, 1997. ISBN 0-835-91944-7
3. Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia, Version 7.04. Grolier Electronic Publishing, 1995.
4. Beers, Burton. *World History: Patterns of Civilization*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991. ISBN 0-13-968645-2
5. Leinwand, Gerald. *The Pageant of World History*. New Jersey:

- Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1991. ISBN 013-647975-8
6. Reich, Jerome et al. *World History*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1990. ISBN 0-03-028898-3
 7. Wallbank, Walter et al. *History and Life*. Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1990. ISBN 0-673-35086-X

B. Student Prior Knowledge

1. Geography of Early Africa (grade 1)
2. Art of Ancient Egypt (grade 1)

IV. RESOURCES

A. Teacher Books:

1. Global Studies Series. *Focus on Africa*. New Jersey: Globe Fearson Educational Publisher, 1997. ISBN 0-835-91944-7
2. Henrich, Steve. *The Big Book of Ancient African Activities*. Henrich Enterprises, 1997.
3. Koslow, Phillip. *Ancient Ghana: The Land of Gold*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1995.
4. Koslow, Phillip. *Mali: Crossroads of Africa*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1995.
5. Koslow, Phillip. *Songhay: The Empire Builders*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1995.
6. Musgrove, Margaret. *Ashanti to Zulu*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1997.
7. Terzian, Alexandra. *The Kids Multicultural Art Book*. Williamson Publishing Company, 1993.
8. World Atlases (Whatever your school supplies)
9. Encyclopedias (Whatever your school supplies)

B. Charts/Maps

1. Physical map of Africa
2. World globe or world map
3. Atlases

V. LESSONS

A. Lesson One: Appreciation of Other Cultures

1. Objectives/Goals
 - a. Knowledge of cultures other than their own
 - b. Appreciation of cultural diversity
 - c. Knowledge of and appreciation for students' individual culture and heritage
2. Materials
 - a. K-W-L Chart
 - b. "American Casserole" worksheet (See Appendix A)
(taken from: Abegglen, Sue. *Exploring My Country: A Whole Language Activity Book*. Mark Twain Publishers, Inc., 1994. ISBN 442224438)
3. Key Vocabulary
 - a. Nationalities
 - b. Culture
4. Procedures/Activities
 - a. Create a knowledge chart listing what students already know about

4. Procedures/Activities
 - a. Remind students that a continent is a large land mass.
 - b. Go over the definitions of bodies of water, ocean, land, city, country, continent, and civilization. Tell the students that these are words necessary to know in order to work with the map of Africa.
 - c. Define civilization as a group of people living, working, and sharing with each other for the good of the group. Explain that evidence of the earliest man was found in Africa.
 - d. Give each student a pre-cut shape of Africa (8 2 x 11 on blue paper) and a pre-cut shape of Africa (9 x 12 on brown paper).
 - e. Point out to students the importance of the colors used and why popcorn or beans were selected. Brown represents the land of the continent. Blue represents the water, lakes, and oceans. The beans represent staples and people of the continent.
 - f. Have students compare the shape of Africa that is printed on blue paper and paste it on brown paper.
 - g. Have students outline the shape of Africa with popcorn kernels or beans. Glue the kernels or beans onto the construction paper.
 - h. Distribute a blank, outline map of Africa. An excellent resource is: *Exploring Social Studies: Units from the Intermediate Mailbox Magazine*, 1994.
 - I. Using maps and atlases, have the children locate the following on their map:
 1. Atlantic Ocean
 2. Indian Ocean
 3. Mediterranean Sea
 4. Red Sea
 5. Suez Canal
 6. Sahara Desert
 7. Mount Kilimanjaro
 8. Nile River
 9. Zambezi River
 10. Congo River
 11. Niger River
 12. Egypt
 13. Morocco
 14. Zaire
 15. South Africa
 16. Ethiopia
 17. Nigeria
 5. Evaluation/Assessment
 - a. Completed map
 - b. Observation of students using atlases to locate information
- C. Lesson Three: African Countries**
1. Objectives/Goals
 - a. Locate the countries of Africa on the map.
 - b. Color a map of Africa showing 54 countries.

- c. Name at least three countries on the African continent.
 - d. Identify Africa as having 54 countries.
2. Materials
- a. World map
 - b. Map of Africa
 - c. Atlases
 - d. Crayons or colored pencils
 - e. Construction paper
 - f. Black marker
 - g. 54 cut out shapes of leaves
 - h. Bulletin board with a tree on it
 - I. Encyclopedia set
3. Key Vocabulary
- a. Countries of Africa
 - b. Capitals of countries
4. Procedure/Activities
- a. Distribute three leaves to each student. Then, give each student the names of three African countries on a sheet of paper. The countries should be in alphabetical order (i.e. Algeria, Angola, Benin, etc).
 - b. Have the students write the three names of their African countries on the three leaves with a black marker. Have them learn the name and pronunciation of their countries.
 - c. After each leaf is labeled, have students guess how many countries are in the continent of Africa.
 - d. Walk around the room and count each leaf. Have each student start counting (ex. student #1 will say 1,2,3; student #2 will say 4,5,6; and so on) until they have counted each leaf or country. Note: Some students may get more/less than three leaves depending on your class size.
 - e. Using the encyclopedias have the students research one of the three countries and write three facts on a notecard to share with the class.
 - f. Next, have students come to the bulletin board where the tree is located and staple their leaves to the "Tree of Africa."
 - g. Distribute a political map of Africa with the countries labeled to each student.
 - h. Tell students to find their three countries on the map and color them. Encourage them to remember the names of their countries.
5. Evaluation/Assessment
- a. Evaluate students ability to accurately find their three countries on the map.
 - b. Student recognition of 54 countries
 - c. Students' written facts about their countries

D. Lesson Four: African History on the Map

- 1. Objectives/Goals
 - a. Learn about Africa's rich history and be able to locate areas of

development on the map.

- b. Construct a map key to represent important areas of early African civilization.
2. Materials
 - a. Physical map of Africa
 - b. Atlas
 - c. Colored pencils
3. Key Vocabulary
 - a. Ghana
 - b. Mali
 - c. Songhay
4. Procedures/Activities
 - a. Pass out a physical map of Africa and atlases.
Ask students to leave them face down on their desks for the moment.
 - b. Tell the students: African history is very old and important in the study of humankind. Leading scientists have found evidence that strongly suggests that the earliest known civilization was found in the continent of Africa. The oldest human bones ever found in the world were discovered in Kenya. The bones were about three million years old. Also, in ancient Africa, giant trading empires were built. There were large cities which were centers for art and learning.
 - c. Tell the students: Today we are going to locate where some of these important events occurred in Africa. We will use a physical map of Africa to make a key and then place symbols on the map to indicate where these events took place. Have the students turn over the physical map and open the atlas which is on their desks.
 - d. Tell the students that a key on a map is located at the bottom of the page. As you can see, there is no key on your physical map. On a historical map, the key shows a particular color for each section of Africa. For instance, East Africa may be colored blue in the key and the East Africa section of your map is also blue.
 - e. The key you will be making today for your physical map will have symbols that represent places and events. You will draw a symbol at the bottom of the page and then draw it again at the appropriate location on the map of Africa.
 1. Tell the students: We will do the first symbol together. Kenya, in East Africa, is known as the "Birthplace of Man" because the oldest human remains have been found there. What symbol could we use to represent this event on the map? (suggestions might include a skull, skeleton, bones, etc).
 2. The students may choose any one of the suggestions. Instruct them to make a very small drawing of their symbol at the bottom of the page below the map of Africa.
 3. Read aloud: After you have drawn your symbol, locate Kenya in your atlas. Since there wasn't a country named

Kenya 600,000 years ago, the physical map doesn't have any boundaries marked for countries. Using the atlas, locate the area now named Kenya on the physical map. Put the symbol representing the oldest human remains on your physical map in the area that is now Kenya. Make your symbol very small in case you need to put another symbol near that area.

4. Read aloud: The Nile River in Africa is 4,000 miles long and it flows from south to north. Locate the Nile River on your physical map. It is the longest river drawn on the map. The Nile River is important to the history of Africa because it was used for travel and because the African people found that the soil at the end of the River was very rich and fertile for growing crops. Many Africans settled in this area that is now called Egypt.

5. Make a symbol in the key to represent people traveling on the Nile River. You may use colored pencils to color symbols as well as the Nile River on your map.

6. Read aloud: The Africans who settled in the area at the end of the Nile River created the Egyptian civilization. It is referred to as the " birthplace of civilization." Around 18,000 years ago, women of the Nile Valley went from food gathering to gardening. Between 11,000 and 7,000 years ago, Africans built granaries to store the harvest. Domesticating animals, or using animals for work, led to expanded trade with other villages. The ancient Egyptians lived colorful, eventful lives. Egyptian farmers planted crops on the rich soil left from the flooding of the Nile River. Many Egyptians were artists, explorers, and soldiers. They were some of the first

people of the world to try to find answers to the questions about nature and God. These people were some of the first astronomers and philosophers. Monuments, temples, and pyramids were built in Egypt to glorify kings 4,000 years ago.

7. Make one or two symbols in your key to represent the people of Egypt and their accomplishments. Refer to your atlas for approximate location. The nation of Egypt included what is present day Egypt, as well as the area well down the Nile River.

8. Read aloud: In West Africa, there was a great trading empire called Ghana. It began about 1,700 years ago and lasted more than 1,000 years. Ghana was extremely rich in gold, and traders from North Africa brought salt and dried fruits to trade for Ghana's gold. Huge caravans of camels were used to carry the goods across the desert.

9. The empire of Ghana lay in what is now southeastern Mauritania and western Mali. Lightly shade this area on your physical map. Use your atlas for location.

10. In your key, make a symbol to help remember what was important in the Empire of Ghana and put the symbol on the physical map.
11. Read aloud: Another important empire developed in West Africa between 300 and 700 years ago was named the Songhay Empire. Timbuktu, which is located on your atlas, was a city of the Songhay Empire of more than 200,000 people.
12. Timbuktu was a center for study and it had universities. Students came from all over to study law, medicine, history, and art. Make a symbol to put by Timbuktu on your physical map to symbolize the learning that took place there hundreds of years ago.
13. Read aloud: Another important empire developed in West Africa was named the Mali Empire. Mali has a rich cultural heritage. The Mali Empire flourished from about 1240 to 1500. In the 1300's, it ranked as the wealthiest and most powerful state in western Africa. **Mansa Musa**, its king from 1312 to 1337, brought Muslim scholars to the empire, and the city of Timbuktu started to become a center of Muslim learning.
14. Make one or two symbols to represent what was important about the Mali Empire and put the symbol on the physical map.

5. Evaluation/Assessment

- a. Accurate use and placement of symbols on maps
- b. Formal test at the end of unit

E. Lesson Five: African Story Time

1. Objectives/Goals
 - a. Learn about Africa's varied cultures
 - b. Experience African folk tales and legends
2. Materials
 - a. *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale*, John Steptoe
 - b. *Ashanti to Zulu: African Traditions*, Margaret Musgrove
3. Key Vocabulary
 - a. Flora
 - b. Fauna
3. Procedures/Activities
 - a. Invite the students to sit in a circle to set a mood modeling African children listening to a grandmother telling a story.
 - b. Read the story *Ashanti to Zulu: African Traditions* by Margaret Musgrove. In the book, each letter of the alphabet is used to describe the ceremonies, celebrations, and day-to-day customs of a specific African ethnic group.
 - c. Read the story *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale*, by John Steptoe. The story retells a folktale of Africa. Ask the students to pay close attention to the illustrations in the story. Inform them that the setting of the story is the ancient city of Great Zimbabwe and that the plant and animal life depicted are

- indigenous to this region of Africa.
- d. Following the reading of the story, have the students list and identify the flora and fauna depicted in the story.
- e. Have the children work individually or in pairs to create their own African alphabet books. Assign each student a letter of the alphabet and have them research a topic that begins with that letter. Remember the topic must relate to Africa.
- f. Students will write a paragraph about their topic and draw an illustration. Compile the pages in alphabetical order to make a class book.
- 4. Evaluation/Assessment
 - a. Completion of African alphabet book
 - b. Students will be assessed by their overall listening during the stories.

F. Lesson Six: Early African Kingdoms: Kush & Axum

- 1. Objectives/Goals
 - a. Recognize Kush and Axum as African Kingdoms
 - b. Recognize that Kush is located in a region, that was once ruled by Egypt
 - c. Recognize that Axum was a trading kingdom in what is now Ethiopia
- 2. Materials
 - a. "Early African Kingdoms," Reich, Jerome. *World History*. Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1990.
 - b. Highlighter
- 3. Procedures/Activities
 - a. Give each child a copy of "Early African Kingdoms," (Chapter 46) from the book, *World History*.
 - b. Read Chapter 46 with the children highlighting and outlining important information.
- 4. Evaluation/Assessment
 - a. Debrief the lesson by assigning the comprehension question found at the end of the reading. Tell the students to be prepared to share their responses with the entire group.
 - b. Have the students take out their map of Africa that was used in the lesson on geography, and label Kush and Axum on their map.

G. Lesson Seven: Egypt: An Advanced Civilization

- 1. Objectives/Goals
 - a. Recognize the many contributions that Egypt gave to the world.
 - b. Recognize the Nile Valley of Egypt as one of the world's most ancient civilizations.
 - c. Identify the Egyptians as the people who contributed to the development of writing.
 - d. Match hieroglyphic pictures with correct words.
 - e. Locate Egypt on a map of Africa.
- 2. Materials
 - a. Yarn

- b. Yardstick
Egyptian word and alphabet sheet for each child (This can be downloaded from the Internet or viewed in traditional resource books obtained at the library.
<http://www1.usa1.com/~madartis/EGYPT/alphabet.html> or <http://www1.usa1.com/~madartis/EGYPT/EGYPT.html>)
 - c. Pictures of papyrus making and pyramids
(Parsons, Alexandra. *Ancient Egypt: The Hands on Approach to History*. Scholastic Inc., 1995. ISBN 0-590-14962-8)
3. Procedure/Activity (Part 1)
- a. Tell the children that today we are going to discuss ancient Egypt. Ask them if they know that Egypt had an advanced civilization 5000 years ago. Tell them that 5000 years is hard to understand, so that you are going to "act it out."
 - b. Call six children up in front of the class. Have the first child stand at the far end of the room holding the end piece of yarn on a ball.
 - c. Tell the children that this represents the year 3000 B.C. which was 5000 years ago. Measure off one yardstick length of yarn and have the next child stand there representing 2000 B.C.
 - d. Continue with remaining four children until 2000 A.D. is represented by the last child in this yarn "time line."
 - e. Place a marker on the yarn to show approximately 200 years to indicate the age of the USA and compare with Egypt which is 5000 years old. Have the six volunteers return to their seats.
4. Procedure/Activity (Part 2)
- a. Point to Egypt on the world map.
 - b. Explain that Egypt was a very advanced civilization and that ancient Egyptians were architects, engineers, scientists, and artists. Egypt was also called Kemet.
 - c. Briefly discuss the pyramids with regard to their size and precision of construction (math and engineering feats). Show pictures of pyramids to class.
 - d. Briefly discuss mummification and knowledge of techniques for preserving the human body. Show picture to class (*Ancient Egypt: The Hands-on Approach to Learning*).
 - e. Explain that Egyptians were also the first people who contributed to the development of writing. Explain that Egyptians invented the first "paper." Write "PAPYRUS" on the board and explain the process of making paper. Show pictures to class from the book *Ancient Egypt: The Hands-on Approach to Learning*.
 - f. Explain that Egyptians first used picture symbols and then used pictures to represent sounds similar to our alphabet. This is called "hieroglyphics" (write on board).
 - g. Pass out a hieroglyphics alphabet sheet to each child and go over the symbols and pictures with the class.
 - h. Have the children create their own story using the hieroglyphic alphabet or have the students write their names using Egyptian hieroglyphics.

5. Evaluation/Assessment
 - a. Information included in the students' stories can be used as assessment, or the teacher might want to use a rubric with the following criteria: content, illustration, neatness, clarity of sentences.
 - b. Hang the hieroglyphics around the room and ask students to decipher them, trying to discover whose name each might be.

H. Lesson Eight: People of Africa

1. Objectives/Goals
 - a. Gain an understanding of the many different people of Africa
 - b. Learn about the Kings of Mali (Sundiata Keita and Mansa Musa) and Ibn Batuta, a world traveler and geographer

2. Materials

- a. Encyclopedias
- b. Various books on Africa

3. Procedures/Activities

- a. Read the paragraph below to the children about the People of Africa adapted from World Book Encyclopedia, 1994.

Africa is considered the place where the first humans lived and learned to use tools. Today, hundreds of thousands of people live there. It is a continent of differences and change. The people of Africa belong to many different ethnic groups. Each group has its own beliefs and customs. Some groups are as large as a country. Others are as small as a few villages. They speak different languages. Over 800 languages are spoken in Africa. Many people speak a European language such as English or French, as well as their native language. They live in different places. They live in deserts, rain forests, grasslands, and along The coasts. Some live in great cities, others in small towns, and others in tiny villages.

While most people still live in the country, ways of life are changing. Occupations are changing as people have begun to move from being hunters and farmers to builders of industry. Whole countries are changing as people strive for independence for their particular ethnic group. It is a land where many people have serious problems (war, drought, disease) to solve and a land of great possibilities.

- b. Place the children in small groups of four and assign them either Sundiata Keita, Mansa Musa, Ibn Batuta or one of the following groups of people: Masai, Egyptian, Nigerian, Dinka, Arab, Bushman, Yoruba, or Ibo.
- c. Have the children research the following information for the kings of Mali:
 - 1 How did they become a ruler?
 2. What role did religion play in their life?
 3. What are some of their achievements?
- d. Have the children research the following information for the groups of people:
 1. Where does this group live? Describe the environment.
 2. What are their homes like?

3. What do they do to earn a living? (Farm, mine, build, etc.)
 4. Describe some of their customs.
4. Evaluation/Assessment
 - a. The children can write the answers to these questions on a piece of paper and draw a picture to show a family and their home. Afterwards, they can share it with the class.
 - b. Oral presentation of research
 - c. Written answers to questions
 - d. Illustrations of family and family life

I. Lesson Nine: Animals of Africa

1. Objectives/Goals
 - a. Students will become familiar with the different animals of Africa
 - b. Design African animal print art design
2. Materials
 - a. Colored pencils
 - b. Crowell, Thomas. *A Look At Animals in Africa: African Images*.
3. Procedures/Activities:
 - a. Read to the children the book entitled, *A Look at Animals in Africa: African Images*.
 - b. Give each student a tagboard circle.
 - c. Have the students choose one of animals from the list below and illustrate it on one side of the wheel.
 - d. On the other side of the wheel, have the students list facts to share with the class about his/her animal.
 - e. Have students share their wheel with the class. Punch a hole in the top of each wheel and hang on the bulletin board.
4. Evaluation/Assessment
 - a. Completed wildlife wheels
 - b. Oral presentation

J. Lesson Ten: African Cultural Arts Day (Plan to devote the entire day)

1. Objectives/Goals
 - a. Create an African Kente cloth wall hanging
 - b. Create an African mask
 - c. Create a musical instrument
 - d. Create an African board game
 - e. Create a mural using Adrinka symbols
 - f. Create Woodabe mirror pouches
 - g. Create pottery
2. Materials
 - a. Suggested book for excellent art activities are: Terzian, Alexandra. *The Kids Multicultural Art Book*. Williamson Publishing Company, 1993.
3. Procedures/Activities
 - a. Students will rotate from room to room as a class. They will take part in an activity in each room. The groups of students will rotate every 30 minutes.

- b. Each cultural activity will be conducted by teachers and parent volunteers. All preparations will need to be made in advance. It is suggested to send a letter at the beginning of the unit stating your plans and requesting volunteers. Seven possible art activities have been developed.
- 4. Evaluation/Assessment
 - a. Reflect and share with the children about their day. Ask them what they enjoyed most about the day.
 - b. Have students reflect in their daily journals about what they learned from doing each activity.

K. Lesson Eleven: Just So Stories

- 1. Objectives/Goals:
 - a. Analyze Just So Stories.
 - b. Write a Just So Story using illustrations.
 - c. Understand the complex nature of a given culture through literature.
- 2. Materials
 - a. You will need a Just So Story to read aloud to the class. Choose from *How the Leopard Got Its Spots*, *Why Mosquito's Buzz in People's Ear*, and *How The Camel Got His Hump*. You should be able to find Just So Stories and anthologies in your school library, local library, or children's bookstore.
 - b. Story organizer (Appendix C)
- 3. Procedures/Activities
 - a. Tell the students to listen as you read aloud a few Just So Stories.
 - b. Have the students prepare their own Just So Story by completing a story organizer first. (Appendix C)
 - c. After completing the final draft, have the students illustrate the story.
 - d. Compile the students' Just So Stories into a class book.
- 4. Evaluation/Assessment
 - a. Completed Just So Story
 - b. Students will share completed story with class.

VI. EVALUATION

- A. The students will be assessed throughout the unit. The teacher will observe the children, formally and informally, to evaluate knowledge learned. The teacher can observe behavior such as: self-expression, motivation, level of participation, and general understanding of concepts. Grades will be taken from projects, worksheets, and overall classroom participation. The final assessment will be an end-of-unit written test (Appendix D). Skills tested will include the varied geography of present-day Africa and the Ancient Kingdoms of Africa. This will include geographic location of kingdoms, names of kingdoms, features, times of existence, and influence on those particular regions.

VII. CULMINATING ACTIVITY

- A. Stage Production: Plan an on-stage performance for family and fellow students. It should include African songs, dances, written essays, and musical

- interpretations as developed in Music and Language Arts classes.
- B. African Feast: Each room will prepare an African staple to share with the entire fourth grade. A short activity will also be done in conjunction with the feast. The children will move from room-to-room on a 30-minute rotation. They will sample food, participate in a craft activity, listen to music, and enjoy the creativity of their fellow students.
- C. Museum: Bring together all fourth grade students' projects into an African artifact museum. Invite parents, other grade levels, and/or administrators to tour the museum. Student work is on display and their new knowledge is shared.

VIII. HANDOUTS/WORKSHEETS

See Appendices

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