

# World Geography

---

Geography is not just about learning the names of cities, rivers, and mountain ranges. The study of geography involves understanding the interactions between people and their environment. From a more prosaic standpoint, it's also about acquiring information from disparate sources, like maps, statistics, news reports, and literary accounts, and integrating it into a comprehensive understanding. People define regions to interpret the Earth's complexity, and their actions not only modify the surface of the Earth itself but also inform the region's culture and inhabitants over time. Culture and experience influence people's perception of places and regions, so the relationship between people and place can be very complex and rewarding for a researcher.

The textbook, Glencoe's *World Geography*, is written especially for high school students, and was prepared in collaboration with the National Geographic Society. National Geographic is famous for its maps and photographs, and this textbook has plenty of both. It also makes valuable connections to history, technology, and the arts, all of which have profound effects on the cultural geography of the world's regions. The projects and assignments in this course will exercise students' imagination, creativity, analytical mind, and critical faculties.

The following books are required for this course:

- The Oak Meadow World Geography Syllabus
- Glencoe *World Geography*, by Richard G. Boehm, McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2005

## **Outline of the World Geography Syllabus:**

**Lesson 1:** Geography Skills Handbook

**Unit 1: The World**

**Lesson 2:** How Geographers Look at the World

**Lesson 3:** The Earth

**Lesson 4:** Climates of the Earth

**Lesson 5:** The Human World

**Unit 2: The United States and Canada**

**Lesson 6:** The Physical Geography of the United States and Canada

**Lesson 7:** The Cultural Geography of the United States and Canada

**Lesson 8:** The United States and Canada Today

**Unit 3: Latin America**

**Lesson 9:** The Physical Geography of Latin America

**Lesson 10:** The Cultural Geography of Latin America

**Lesson 11:** Latin America Today

**Unit 4: Europe**

**Lesson 12:** The Physical Geography of Europe

**Lesson 13:** The Cultural Geography of Europe

**Lesson 14:** Europe Today

**Unit 5: Russia**

**Lesson 15:** The Physical Geography of Russia

**Lesson 16:** The Cultural Geography of Russia

**Lesson 17:** Russia Today

**Unit 6: North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia**

**Lesson 18:** The Physical Geography of North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia

**Midterm Lab Project**

**Lesson 19:** The Cultural Geography of North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia

**Lesson 20:** North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia Today

**Unit 7: Africa South of the Sahara**

**Lesson 21:** The Physical Geography of Africa South of the Sahara

**Lesson 22:** The Cultural Geography of Africa South of the Sahara

**Lesson 23:** Africa South of the Sahara Today

**Unit 8: South Asia**

**Lesson 24:** The Physical Geography of South Asia

**Lesson 25:** The Cultural Geography of South Asia

**Lesson 26:** South Asia Today

**Unit 9: East Asia**

**Lesson 27:** The Physical Geography of East Asia

**Lesson 28:** The Cultural Geography of East Asia

**Lesson 29:** East Asia Today

**Unit 10: Southeast Asia**

**Lesson 30:** The Physical Geography of Southeast Asia

**Lesson 31:** The Cultural Geography of Southeast Asia

**Lesson 32:** Southeast Asia Today

**Unit 11: Australia, Oceania, and Antarctica**

**Lesson 33:** The Physical Geography of Australia, Oceania, and Antarctica

**Lesson 34:** The Cultural Geography of Australia, Oceania, and Antarctica

**Lesson 35:** Australia, Oceania, and Antarctica Today

**Lesson 36: Final Lab Project**

## Lesson 21: Chapter 20

---

This week you will begin studying Unit 7, “Africa South of the Sahara.” The first two chapters of this unit survey the physical and cultural geography of Africa south of the Sahara, and the third chapter provides insights about life in the region today. Although many countries comprise Africa south of the Sahara, most share the following features:

- a tropical location and climate
- plentiful natural resources, including minerals and wildlife
- many ethnic groups with their own languages, religions, and ways of life
- a colonial history in the 19th and 20th centuries

Africa south of the Sahara is roughly three times the size of the continental United States. The northern edge of the region borders the massive Sahara. The Atlantic and Indian Oceans surround the rest of the continent. The annual rainfall rate for this region varies from more than 60 inches in the tropical rainforests near the Equator to less than 4 inches in the semiarid steppe climate.

**The Land:** Africa south of the Sahara is dominated by a large inland plateau. Africa’s overall elevation is higher than that of any other continent. High plateaus cover the continent, rising in elevation from the coast inland and from west to east. In many parts of the region, this high, flat land falls in dramatic cliffs to narrow, unbroken coastlines having few inlets, large bays, gulfs or natural harbors. Volcanic mountains, such as Kilimanjaro, are located in the Eastern Highlands.



Amboseli National Park, in Kenya, with Mount Kilimanjaro in the background  
photo ©2002 M. Disdero

Shifting tectonic plates formed the Great Rift Valley, a long, narrow break in the Earth’s surface which runs from Syria to Mozambique. Formed by the folding and fracturing of Earth’s crust over the last 60 million years, the valley area holds chains of sparkling lakes, such as Lake Victoria, Africa’s largest lake. The valley’s rich volcanic soil creates some of Africa’s best farmland. East of the valley, rising above plateau areas, are lofty, snow-capped mountains. One of the most impressive of these is Kilimanjaro — Africa’s tallest mountain, with a height of 19,340 feet (5,895 m).

Extensive river systems such as the Congo, the Niger, and the Zambezi wind through Africa south of the Sahara. The Congo, Africa’s second-longest river, and its tributaries traverse the vast rainforests of the Congo Basin, eventually draining into the South Atlantic Ocean. Sharp escarpments and steep cataracts on some rivers have posed obstacles to travel over the centuries. Limited river travel and few natural harbors isolated early African civilizations and made foreign invasions difficult in some areas.

Rivers, however, have long been an important means of local transportation for people in the region, especially in areas where dense rainforest prevails. Because of irregular and unpredictable rainfall, irrigation and harnessing hydroelectric power are difficult.

Africa south of the Sahara is rich in natural resources, including oil, gold, uranium, and diamonds. The region also has an abundance of plant and animal species. The preservation of these diverse biological resources has become a global concern. Countries in the region, meanwhile, are working hard to achieve a balance between conserving habitats and meeting economic needs.

**Climate and Vegetation:** Africa's major climate and vegetation areas can be roughly identified by the amount of rainfall each area receives. Early civilizations developed where rainfall was plentiful, or near lakes or along rivers. Near the Equator, orchids and ferns grow amid the canopy of trees that tower up to 150 feet above the floor of the tropical rainforests — so thick that sunlight cannot reach the forest floor. Drier tropical grasslands, known as *savanna*, cover nearly half of the continent. Tornadoes sometimes occur there when northeastern winds, called *harmattans*, collide with humid air blown in from monsoons. Further north and south of the savannas are drier steppe climates with low-growing grasses and acacia trees. Grasses and trees can even be found in isolated deserts, such as the Kalahari in southern Africa, where little rain falls. In southern Africa deserts give way to a cool fertile highland rimmed by coastal plains having a Mediterranean-type climate.

**Section 1** surveys the landforms, water systems, and most important natural resources of Africa south of the Sahara.

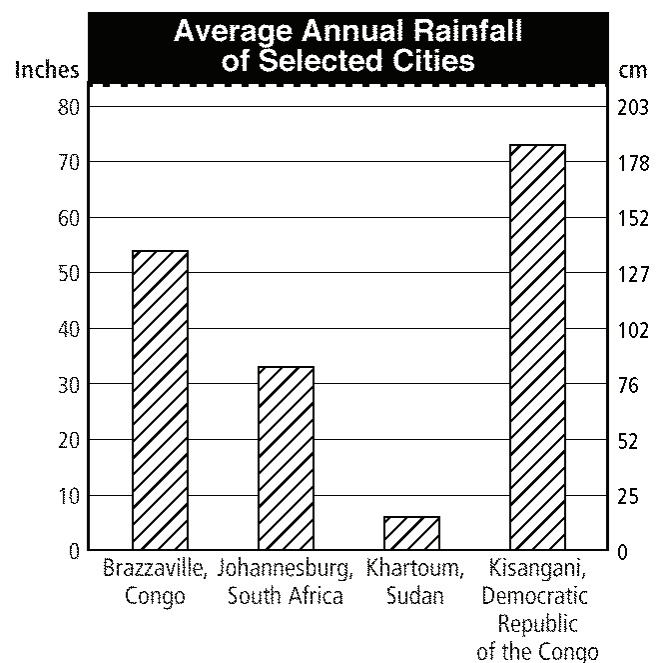
**Section 2** describes the kinds of climate and vegetation found in Africa south of the Sahara.

**Read Chapter 20, “The Physical Geography of Africa South of the Sahara,” including the Unit 7 Regional Atlas (pages 480-509)**

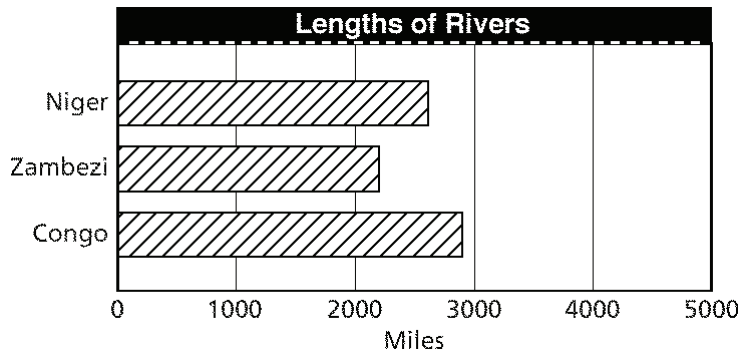
**Answer the following questions:**

Use the bar graph at right to answer questions 1-3.

- Which of these four cities is likely to be located in a steppe or desert climate? Explain your answer.
- Are any of these four cities likely to be located in a tropical rainforest climate? Explain your answer.
- Which city receives more than twice as much rain as Johannesburg?



Use the bar graph below to answer questions 4-6.



4. Which of these three rivers is the longest? What is its length?
5. Which river is longer, the Niger or the Zambezi? About how much longer is it?
6. What is the difference in length between the Congo River and the Zambezi River?
7. Describe the process of desertification of the Sahel.
8. What general statements could you make about water resources in Africa south of the Sahara? Include rainfall, rivers, lakes, and oceans.
9. Describe the geologic events that formed the Great Rift Valley.
10. What general statement can you make about elevation and the physical geography of Africa south of the Sahara?
11. What are the four main climate zones in Africa south of the Sahara? Compare their characteristics and locations.

**Choose *one* of the following projects to complete:**

- a) Imagine that at the end of the unit you will participate in a mock regional conference of countries in Africa south of the Sahara. Choose a country in this region to represent at the conference. Gather information about the physical features, ethnic groups, history, and government of your country, in order to make a brief presentation at the conference. Your presentation should include a profile of your country and a discussion of the challenges facing this region as a whole, and how your country could contribute possible solutions.
- b) Select two or three cities shown on the Population Density map on page 488. Consult an almanac or other up-to-date resource to find population figures for different years for each city. Then, design and draw bar graphs showing your results. By how much have city populations increased? Why do you think these populations are growing? How will countries' rural-urban population distribution be affected? What factors might slow — or advance — future population growth?

- c) Research the flag of a country in this region that interests you. Find out when the flag was adopted, and the meanings of the symbols and colors used on it. Make a replica of the flag on posterboard with markers, paint, or construction paper. Record the name of the country, the date of the flag's adoption, and an interpretation of the flag on the reverse.
- d) Find and listen to selections from various recordings of jazz music. Works by Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, and John Coltrane are good introductions to jazz music. How would you describe jazz music? In your essay, discuss the sounds of jazz and the subjects of jazz lyrics. Try to identify African elements in the music, such as strong rhythms, different beats on top of each other, call-and-response patterns, sliding-pitch tones, and improvisation. What kinds of music today do you think compare to jazz? If you like, include a CD of the jazz you listened to.
- e) Design a postage stamp for one of the countries of Africa south of the Sahara. Your stamp should show a physical feature of the country you have chosen. To draw the feature, you may work from a photo or other illustration, or from your own ideas about what the physical feature looks like.