

LET'S EXPLORE AFRICA

RECOMMENDED GRADES: K-2



TIME NEEDED: 30-45 MINUTES

Description

Explore the basic features of the African continent, including mountains, lakes, rivers, deserts, and other features, in three different sessions. Learn how to read basic map symbols.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- be introduced to the size, prominent physical features, and diversity of the African continent
- use a map legend and understand its symbols

Materials

- Cones (48)
- Map Keys (4)
- Rope

Preparation

15 minutes

- Read over the activity and acquaint yourself with the locations on the map to which you will be bringing students.
- Choose the places and features you wish to emphasize. Add locations that relate to what the class is studying and your students' prior knowledge.

Tips/Modifications

Modification

- Have students walk in single file on the map if rope is not available, or walk in small groups with students as they explore Africa.

Rules



Have students remove shoes before walking on the map.

DIRECTIONS

PART ONE: EXPLORE AFRICA

1. Direct students to line up along the bottom border of the map so they are facing the continent of Africa from the south. Explain the following information to students:

- *This is one of the very largest maps of Africa.*
- *Africa is a continent, not a country. (Help define the terms.)*
- *Africa is one continent made up of 54 countries.*

Take students on a journey through Africa.

2. **Walk the Coast**

Have students hold the rope at equal distances from one another. Take one end of the rope and step onto the map with students following, crossing the Indian Ocean and heading toward Cape Town. Point out the Cape of Good Hope (near Cape Town). Walk the coast (define this term for the students). As you walk, point out:

Namibia: Home to cheetahs, the fastest land animal on Earth.

Atlantic Ocean: "Swim" in it, or dip your foot in and wave in the direction of North America.

Gabon: Point out how green the map is here. This is tropical Africa. There are large jungles here. The area is home to lowland gorillas.

Morocco: Desert country on the northern coast.

Algeria: The largest country in Africa.

Egypt: Home of the great pyramids and Cairo.

Nile River: The longest river in the world.

Kenya: Home to the Maasai people.

Tanzania: Home to zebras and the highest mountain in Africa, Mount Kilimanjaro. There is snow on it. Did you know that it could snow in Africa?

Horn of Africa: The easternmost mainland part of Africa, in the countries of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and of Somalia.

Madagascar: Each student will let go of their rope and jump onto Madagascar and back again, one by one. Lemurs live here, and only here—88 different species (or types)!

3. **Explore the Land**

Have students hold hands and form a circle around the Sahara. Notice there are hardly any lakes or rivers. Tell students that this is the largest hot desert in the world. The contiguous United States could fit inside this desert! Ask: *Can you find another desert on the map?*

4. Have students stand side by side on both sides of the Nile River. Have them trace the Blue and White Nile Rivers. Explain that the Nile is the longest river in Africa.

PART TWO: MAP SYMBOLS

1. Review the Walk the Coast activity with students by playing a game of Simon Says. Simon says, "Stand in an ocean. ... on a coast. ... on the Nile River. ... in a desert. ... on an island. ... on the Cape of Good Hope. ... in Madagascar. ... in a jungle. ... on Mount Kilimanjaro. ... on the Horn of Africa."
2. Divide the class so an even number of students are on each "Base Camp" (the colored circles in the corners of the map).
3. Use the Map Keys to introduce the symbol for town, and show students how to find one on the map. Have the students place a colored cone on a town and return to their Base Camp.
4. Ask: *Where are the towns located? Are they in the desert? What are they near?* [often near water: rivers, the coast, or lakes].
5. Have students pick up the cones. Introduce the term "capital," and explain how to find one using the symbol found on the key.
6. Ask students to find a lake or another river (not the Nile).
7. Show students the shaded relief used to illustrate elevation for mountains and ask them to find some mountains on the map.
8. Ask students to stand on a gray line. Introduce the idea that these lines are not seen from space like the deserts, water, and mountains. Explain that these are the border lines that divide countries.
9. Ask students to:
 - stand so they are in two countries at once.
 - find a country on the coast.
 - find a country with a river for a border.
 - find a country that does not touch the coast (define "landlocked").
 - find a country that is an island.

PART THREE: AFRICAN DIMENSIONS

Which Way Is Africa Bigger? Ask: *Is Africa bigger side to side (east to west), or up and down (north to south)?*

Have students guess, and count how many students guess each answer. Then, have some of the students lie down feet to head and see how many students Africa is wide at its widest point. Have another group lie down feet to head and see how many students Africa is tall, so they are making a huge plus sign (+) on the map. Compare.