

RESOURCE LIBRARY
LESSON

Lost Boys: Migration & Cultural Interaction

Students watch excerpts from the film *God Grew Tired of Us* to learn about the Lost Boys of Sudan and the refugee experience, map the Lost Boys' migration journey, and discuss the challenges the Lost Boys faced while adapting to life in the United States and trying to maintain their cultural identities as Dinka.

GRADES

6 - 12+

SUBJECTS*Geography, Human Geography, Physical Geography, Social Studies, World History***CONTENTS**

3 Activities

ACTIVITY 1: THE LOST BOYS OF SUDAN | 45 MINS

DIRECTIONS

1. Pre-teach the vocabulary.

Pre-teach relevant vocabulary, including human migration, immigrant, emigrant, refugee, and resettlement.

2. Build background.

Ask students if they're familiar with Peter Pan's Lost Boys—characters in the J.M. Barrie novel *Peter Pan* who formed a family and took care of each other in Never-Never Land. Explain that there is a group of over 25,000 young Dinka men who ran away from a civil war. These young men trekked across sub-Saharan Africa in search of safety, and eventually found homes in the

United States. Relief workers called them the “Lost Boys” after the characters in the J.M. Barrie novel, and the media picked up on this; the group is now known collectively as “The Lost Boys of Sudan.” Review the vocabulary in this new context.

3. Have students locate Sudan on the map.

Ask students to locate Sudan on a wall map of the world. Point out northern and southern Sudan. Point out the homeland of the Dinka—in southern Sudan along the White Nile. Ask: *What physical aspects of Sudan contribute to civil unrest? What cultural aspects of Sudan contribute to civil unrest?* Explain to students that Sudan’s second civil war was caused by conflicts between northern and southern Sudan over oil and religion. Go to National Geographic’s Sudan Facts page and invite volunteers to take turns reading aloud the information. Then discuss the historical, cultural, and geographic factors that contributed to Sudan’s civil war and some of the consequences the civil war—which lasted over twenty years—had on Sudan and its peoples, including orphaned children, violence, famine, and disease.

4. Introduce the film *God Grew Tired of Us* and the excerpt students will watch.

Explain to students that the film documents the story of the Lost Boys of Sudan as they fled civil war, spent a decade growing up in a Kenyan refugee camp, and were eventually resettled in the United States. Tell students that they will see an excerpt, called “From Sudan to the United States.” The excerpt includes stories from the Kakuma refugee camp. If possible, show students the full film, *God Grew Tired of Us*, during class time. If you do not have enough time, encourage students to watch the film at home on their own.

5. Have students watch the excerpt and write about it.

Show students the excerpt and have them list their questions about the video and its content as they watch. Then ask students to write a brief summary describing who the Lost Boys are and what they experienced. Students’ summaries should include:

- why the Lost Boys had to flee Sudan
- reasons they could not stay in Ethiopia
- what life was like in the refugee camp
- what new things the Lost Boys experienced on the journey from Kenya to the U.S.

OBJECTIVES

Subjects & Disciplines

Geography

- Human Geography
- Physical Geography

Social Studies

- World History

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- define vocabulary terms
- explain who the Lost Boys of Sudan are and how they got that name
- locate northern Sudan, southern Sudan, and the Dinka homeland on a world map
- describe the experiences of the Lost Boys in Sudan and after they fled Sudan

Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

Teaching Methods

- Discussions
- Hands-on learning
- Visual instruction
- Writing

Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- Critical Thinking Skills
 - Analyzing
 - Understanding
- Geographic Skills
 - Acquiring Geographic Information

- [Asking Geographic Questions](#)

National Standards, Principles, and Practices

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM STANDARDS

- [Theme 1:](#)

Culture

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS

- [Standard 13:](#)

How the forces of cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of Earth's surface

- [Standard 9:](#)

The characteristics, distribution, and migration of human populations on Earth's surface

Preparation

BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

Background Information

The Lost Boys of Sudan are a group of Dinka youth who fled civil war in their native country, spent a decade growing up in a Kenyan refugee camp, and were eventually resettled in the United States. The Dinka are the largest ethnic group in southern Sudan.

Prior Knowledge

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Recommended Prior Activities

- [Cultural Identity of the Lost Boys](#)
- [Mapping the Migration of the Lost Boys](#)

Vocabulary

| Term | Part of Speech | Definition |
|-----------------|----------------|---|
| civil war | noun | conflict between groups in the same country or nation. |
| emigrant | noun | person who moves from their existing country or region to a new country or region. |
| human migration | noun | the movement of people from one place to another. |
| immigrant | noun | person who moves to a new country or region. |
| refugee | noun | person who flees their home, usually due to natural disaster or political upheaval. |
| resettlement | noun | transportation of people to a new residential area, usually following a natural or man-made disaster. |

ACTIVITY 2: MAPPING THE MIGRATION OF THE LOST BOYS | 45 MINS

DIRECTIONS

1. Divide students into small groups and have them mark the migration journey of the Lost Boys. Make sure each group has one set of outline maps of Sudan, Africa, the world, and the United States. Ask groups to mark the routes the Lost Boys took. List each route on the board:

- Dinka homelands in southern Sudan to refugee camps in western Ethiopia
- refugee camps in western Ethiopia, across the border into Sudan, and to Kakuma refugee camp in northwestern Kenya
- Kakuma, Kenya to Nairobi, Kenya
- Nairobi, Kenya to Brussels, Belgium
- Brussels, Belgium to New York City

2. Introduce the vocabulary word diaspora and have students add routes to their maps.

Explain to students that the vocabulary word *diaspora* refers to the migration of a people away from an established homeland, or the displacement of a people. Tell students that the Lost Boys have settled in eighteen states in the United States, including: Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Washington. Have students add routes from New York City to those states.

3. In small groups, have students use the MapMaker Interactive to create geo-tours of the Lost Boys' journey.

Have small groups load the MapMaker Interactive. First, have students save a map for their group to work on. Then, ask students to construct a geo-tour of the different segments of the Lost Boys' journey using bookmarks, labels, drawing tools, and markers.

4. Discuss the hazards and physical challenges of the routes.

Have a whole-class discussion about the hazards and physical challenges of the routes, including drought, wildlife, and food sources.

5. Have students make predications about the challenges of displacement.

Discuss the challenges of displacement, including retaining culture, traditions, language, and other factors that are tied to a people's homeland.

Extending the Learning

Find out if there are any Lost Boys in your community or region. If there are, ask if any would be willing to visit your school and speak with students. If not, contact one of the Lost Boys' groups with active websites and establish a pen-pal correspondence between them and your students.

OBJECTIVES

Subjects & Disciplines

Geography

- [Human Geography](#)
- [Physical Geography](#)

Social Studies

- World History

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- map the routes the Lost Boys took on their migration journey from Sudan to the United States
- map the routes the Lost Boys took within the United States
- define the vocabulary term diaspora
- describe the challenges of displaced peoples

Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

Teaching Methods

- Discussions
- Hands-on learning

Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- Critical Thinking Skills
 - Analyzing
 - Understanding
- Geographic Skills
 - Acquiring Geographic Information
 - Analyzing Geographic Information
 - Organizing Geographic Information

National Standards, Principles, and Practices

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM
STANDARDS

- Theme 1:

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS

- **Standard 1:**

How to use maps and other geographic representations, geospatial technologies, and spatial thinking to understand and communicate information

- **Standard 9:**

The characteristics, distribution, and migration of human populations on Earth's surface

Preparation

BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

Background Information

The Lost Boys of Sudan are a group of youth who fled civil war in their native Sudan, spent a decade growing up in a Kenyan refugee camp, and were eventually resettled in the United States.

Prior Knowledge

["The Lost Boys of Sudan"]

Recommended Prior Activities

- [Cultural Identity of the Lost Boys](#)
- [The Lost Boys of Sudan](#)

Vocabulary

| Term | Part of Speech | Definition |
|-----------------|----------------|--|
| diaspora | <i>noun</i> | community of people scattered from their homeland. |
| displace | <i>verb</i> | to remove or force to evacuate. |
| human migration | <i>noun</i> | the movement of people from one place to another. |

ACTIVITY 3: CULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE LOST BOYS | 50 MINS

DIRECTIONS

1. Preteach or review vocabulary.

Preteach or review relevant vocabulary, including:

- culture
- cultural identity
- cultural landscape
- cultural marker
- assimilation
- acculturation

Have students make connections to their own lives to make sure they understand each concept. Ask: *What words would you use to describe American culture?* Students may respond with examples of cultural markers, such as music, food, fashion, language, or slang. Or, they may respond with examples of values, such as individualism, personal rights, innovation, or democracy.

2. Introduce and watch three excerpts from *God Grew Tired of Us*.

Tell students that they will watch three excerpts from *God Grew Tired of Us*. Show them the excerpts "Sense of Place and Community," "Cultural Differences," and "Responsibility and Leadership."

3. Distribute the worksheet and have students complete it.

Distribute copies of the worksheet *The Lost Boys' Cultural Identity*. Have students complete it independently. Then use the provided answer key to discuss students' answers.

4. Have a whole-class discussion to have students make media-to-self connections.

Ask:

- *What markers are representative of American culture?*
- *How do the values of the Lost Boys compare to your own?*
- *What questions and fears would you have if you were moving to a new place?*
- *What differences do you see between Dinka culture and American culture?*
- *How do you think you would adapt to life in a new country? Why?*
- *What can you do to make a difference in your community the way the Lost Boys have made a difference in their communities?*

5. Have students brainstorm service-learning projects for your community.

If possible, have students brainstorm possible service-learning projects for your community. Have a whole-class discussion about the needs of your community and what type of service would be most beneficial.

Extending the Learning

Listen to Sudanese music on the National Geographic World Music website. If possible, find other examples of Sudanese and Dinka cultural markers to share with students.

OBJECTIVES

Subjects & Disciplines

Geography

- [Human Geography](#)

Social Studies

- World History

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- describe American culture in their own words
- answer questions about the Lost Boys and cultural identity after watching videos
- make media-to-self connections

Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

Teaching Methods

- Discussions
- Hands-on learning
- Visual instruction

Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- Critical Thinking Skills
 - Analyzing
 - Understanding
- Geographic Skills
 - Acquiring Geographic Information
 - Analyzing Geographic Information

National Standards, Principles, and Practices

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM STANDARDS

- Theme 1:

Culture

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS

- Standard 10:

The characteristics, distribution, and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics

- Standard 9:

The characteristics, distribution, and migration of human populations on Earth's surface

Preparation

BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

Background Information

The Lost Boys of Sudan are a group of youth who fled civil war in their native Sudan, spent a decade growing up in a Kenyan refugee camp, and were eventually resettled in the United States. In the United States, the Lost Boys faced many challenges while adapting to their new

lives and trying to maintain their cultural identities as Dinka.

Prior Knowledge

["The Lost Boys of Sudan"]

Recommended Prior Activities

- [Mapping the Migration of the Lost Boys](#)
- [The Lost Boys of Sudan](#)

Vocabulary

| Term | Part of Speech | Definition |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| acculturation | <i>noun</i> | the process of adopting the traits of a cultural group. |
| assimilation | <i>noun</i> | process by which people acquire the culture and habits of the dominant group. |
| cultural identity | <i>noun</i> | the way a person views themselves in relation to the learned characteristics and behaviors of a group or community. |
| cultural landscape | <i>noun</i> | human imprint on the physical environment. |
| cultural marker | <i>noun</i> | unique characteristic of a community. |
| culture | <i>noun</i> | learned behavior of people, including their languages, belief systems, social structures, institutions, and material goods. |

