Chapter 24
Regional Atlas: Introduction to Africa

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As the climate became drier, people migrated into lands north and south of the Sahara and into the Nile River valley.

- Great empires flourished in northern Africa, the Sahel region, and southern Africa, and the cultures of the Bantus and Muslims spread across parts of Africa.
- After 1500, Europeans traded with Africans along the coast for gold, ivory, and slaves.
- In the 1800s, European colonialism carved up the continent without regard for existing political or cultural divisions, but also brought advantages.
- By the 1960s, most African countries were independent, but remained poor and suffered under civil wars.
Africa’s highest mountains rise along its northern and eastern edges.

- Most of the continent consists of plateaus, or elevated blocks of land with flat or gently rolling surfaces.
- Southern Africa and the Sahara desert form two plateaus.
- Basins of rivers form low-lying areas on these plateaus.
- The Great Rift Valley in eastern Africa is marked by volcanoes, lakes, and hot springs.
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Climates
Physical characteristics and location affect Africa’s climate.

- Arid and Semiarid extend over much of northern, eastern, and southern Africa.
- Tropical wet covers parts of central and western Africa.
- Tropical wet and dry stretches over large parts of Madagascar and western and central Africa.
- Mediterranean lies on coastal parts of northern and South Africa.
Ecosystems
Africa supports a broad range of ecosystems.

- Tropical grassland covers most of western, eastern, and southern Africa.
- Desert and desert scrub extends across northern and parts of southern Africa.
- Tropical rain forest lies in central Africa and parts of western Africa.
- Chaparral and temperate grassland stretch across parts of northern and southern Africa.
Africa is home to a wide range of peoples, languages, and cultures.

• Africa’s population is concentrated in the Nile Valley, Nigeria, the East African highlands, and some coastal areas.
• Colonialism introduced many elements of European culture to African nations
• Africa’s peoples maintain traditions of storytelling and oral history, or history passed down by word of mouth.
Africa’s diverse environment supports a wide range of economic activities.

- Subsistence farming is practiced through much of Africa.
- Agriculture faces many challenges, such as leaching and land degradation.
- Manufacturing and trade are important in the largest metropolitan areas.
- Africa is rich in mineral resources, such as petroleum and uranium.
• Egypt’s Nile River valley has a high population density, with more than 3,000 people per square mile, and severe overcrowding poses the risk of food and water shortages.

• High population density and rapid population growth are causing Nigerian cities such as Lagos to grow rapidly, but most Nigerians still live in rural areas.

• With almost two thirds of the population living in rural areas, Mozambique has a low population density and deaths from the AIDS epidemic slow the population growth.

• South Africa is highly economically developed and urbanized, and has a lower birthrate, but AIDS is also a very serious problem there.