**Kenya**

**Setting**

Located on Africa's east coast, with the equator running through the middle of its territory, Kenya has been described as the "cradle of humanity" because its **Great Rift Valley** contains some of the earliest evidence of human existence. The country lies southwest of Somalia, north of Tanzania, and east of Uganda, and shares its northern border with Sudan and Ethiopia. Along the coast and in the Great Rift Valley, the climate is **hot** and **humid**, while the northeastern desert region is hot and dry, and the central plateau has a **temperate climate**.

**Economy**

Kenya has a **free-market economy** with **free trade**, and although the 2008 violence delivered a serious financial blow, the country has largely recovered and is emerging as one of Africa's most healthy economies. In 2014, the rate of economic growth was expected to hit 5.7%, led by growth **in construction, manufacturing, and mining**. Kenya also owes much of its economic gain to the emerging business of mobile phone money transfers. Kenya typically depends on a steady stream of **tourists** to its beaches and its well-known big-game reserves. However, attacks by Islamist militants has had a negative impact the tourism industry. Despite its economic gains, an estimated **45% of the country's citizens live in** **poverty**. As of 2012, **61%** of its labor force worked in **farming**, with **32% in the services**. The **United Kingdom, India, China, Netherlands, Uganda, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)** are some of Kenya's primary **trade partners**.

**Society**

The largest **ethnic group** among the population of more than 45 million is the **Kikuyu**—peasant farmers, historically—followed by the Luhya and Luo. Other African ethnic groups make up the remainder of the population, along with a tiny minority of **Arabs, Asians, and Europeans**. While **Swahili and English** are the nation's official languages, Luo, Kikuyu, and other indigenous languages are widely used. Many **religions** are practiced in Kenya; some **82.5%** identify themselves as **Christian**, **11% as** **Muslim**, while slightly more than **1% practice traditional indigenous faiths**. The capital city is **Nairobi**, a major travel hub which is widely recognized as one of Africa's most cosmopolitan cities.

**Politics**

Kenya's ethnic diversity has produced a vibrant culture, but it also has been a source of conflict. For nearly half a century after the country gained **independence** from the United Kingdom, Kenyan government was controlled by two men: the Jomo Kenyatta, who led from independence in 1963 until his death in 1978; and Daniel arap Moi, who took power in 1978 and held it for 24 years. Both men were members of the Kenya African National Union (KANU) party, which dominated for more than 30 years. **The only major opposition party, the Kenya People's Union, was banned in 1969.** Moi used harsh tactics to silence critics. He was pressured by western democracies, including the United States, to permit opposition parties and elections. With the election of President Mwai Kibaki, he introduced several anticorruption measures, cutting several top government offices, bringing bribery and fraud charges against judges, and returning land illegally taken by supporters of the former government.

*What type of government has a special group in power? Which government allows elections and makes all people of authority follow the law?*

Reading adapted from "Kenya." *World Geography: Understanding a Changing World*. ABC-CLIO.

**Democratic Republic of the Congo**

**Setting**

After Algeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is **Africa's second-largest** country. Located along the equator in Central Africa, the DRC shares its borders with the Congo Republic, Central African Republic, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Zambia, and Angola. The **Congo River** basin, made up mostly of **rain forests**, covers more than half its territory, and the river itself—one of the largest in the world—is navigable for almost 1,000 miles, providing a popular form of travel in the country. The **tropical climate** is high in humidity, with an **average annual rainfall of 60 to 95 inches**. Temperatures vary little and **average about 80°F**.

**Economy**

Despite vast **mineral wealth, agricultural resources, and energy potential**, the DRC is one of the poorest countries in Africa; an estimated **71% of the population lives in poverty**. Crippled by years of corruption, mismanagement, and war, its economy has almost collapsed. In 2001, the United Nations blamed the various groups that fought a brutal five-year war in the DRC for purposely extending the conflict in order to rob the country of its extensive supplies of **gold, diamonds, and timber** and columbite-tantalite (a metallic ore used in circuit boards in cellphones, laptops, and other electronic devices.). Other mineral resources include **copper**, cobalt, zinc, and **diamonds** and key crops include **coffee, cocoa, sugar, tea, palm oil, cotton, and rubber**. The DRC owes an estimated $6 billion in **foreign debt**. The DRC's main **trading partners include Belgium, South Africa, and the United States**.

**Society**

The DRC has slightly more than **71 million inhabitants** (2011) comprising more than **200 different ethnic groups**; the main four being the **Kongo, Mongo, Luba, and the Hamitic**. Many of these groups have their own languages (an estimated **700 languages or dialects** are said to exist) but **French** is the official language. Indigenous (native) Bantu languages, particularly Lingala and Swahili, are also widely used. Close to **75%** of the population is **Christian**, the majority of them Roman Catholic, while about **10% are Muslim** and another 1**0% follow traditional beliefs.**

**Politics**

The DRC is a **republic with a strong presidential system**. President Mobutu Sese Seko first seized power in a military coup in 1965, five years after independence, and governed the country for the next 25 years. Mobutu was ousted in May 1997 at the end of a seven-month civil war, the first of the so-called Congo Wars, and rebel leader Laurent Kabila declared himself president and renamed the country "Democratic Republic of Congo." Kabila's political ruthlessness led to the outbreak of new fighting in 1998, which surrounded the entire region in an "African World War" that claimed some 6 million lives, through fighting, starvation and disease.

While the war itself is over, fighting once again threatens the country's stability. The DRC government and the United Nations continue efforts to stop attacks against civilians in the eastern region conducted by a rebel group made up of former Rwandan fighters. UN officials have stated that stopping those attacks is crucial to stabilizing a government and country still recovering from the devastating war.

Reading adapted from "Democratic Republic of Congo." *World Geography: Understanding a Changing World*. ABC-CLIO.

**Nigeria**

**Setting**

The **most populous nation in Africa**, Nigeria is located in the continent's western region and shares borders with Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and Benin. It has a long southern coastline along the oil-rich Gulf of Guinea. The climate varies from **hot, humid, and rainy** in the equatorial south to more **tropical** in the central section and **arid** in the semi-desert northern region.

**Economy**

Nigeria is a **mixed economy** and growing market, with expanding **financial, service, communications, and technology and entertainment** sectors. It is the **largest economy** in Africa; its re-emergent, though currently underperforming, manufacturing sector is the third-largest on the continent, and produces a large proportion of goods and services for the West African sub-region. In addition to **oil**, Nigeria's **natural resources** include large, relatively untapped reserves of **natural gas, tin, coal, iron ore, and uranium**. Cash crops include **cocoa, palm oil, and rubber; fishing, timber, and livestock** are also important. Nigeria **imports a large amount of its food products** and among the nation's primary **trade partners** are the **United States, India, and the United Kingdom**.

**Society**

Of the more than **250 ethnic groups** making up Nigeria's population of about **177 million** (2014 estimate), the largest are the northern Hausa and Fulani, the southwestern Yoruba, and the southeastern Ibo. **English** is the official language, but indigenous (native) languages are widely used. About **half** the population, mainly in the north, follows **Islam**, while some **40%,** mainly in the oil-producing southern regions, practice **Christianity**, and **10**% hold **animist beliefs**, meaning they believe that humans as well as animals and objects such as mountains, rivers and plants have spirits. Tensions between Muslims, who have traditionally supported and dominated the country's military, and Christians sometimes erupt into violence, particularly in the north. The introduction of sharia (Islamic law) in several northern states in 1999 and 2000 increased incidents of violence.

**Politics**

In 1999, President Olusegun Obasanjo ushered in a **democratically elected government**. Previously, Nigeria had been mostly led since 1966 by a series of **military governments**. Obasanjo, a Christian from the south, attempted to settle the nation's ethnic and religious differences. He won a second term in April 2003, but religious disputes continued. In April 2007, Obasanjo's hand-picked successor Umaru Yar'Adua, a northern Muslim, was elected president.

Violence increased when a group called **Boko Haram** launched attacks in 2009 to create an Islamic state in Nigeria, starting in the northeast. Since 2011, attacks by Boko Haram have claimed thousands of lives and forced millions of people to flee their homes. The terrorist group drew international attention in April 2014 when it kidnapped an estimated 200 girls and young women from a school in Chibok in the northern part of the country.

Reading adapted from "Nigeria." *World Geography: Understanding a Changing World*. ABC-CLIO and “Nigeria: Africa’s New Number One.” *The Economist*.

**South Africa**

**Setting**

A land of great beauty and deep social divisions, South Africa lies at the **southernmost tip** of the African continent and is **surrounded by oceans** **on three sides**. Its terrain is dominated by a **large central plateau** area and the **Drakensberg mountain range** to the south and west. The climate, although generally **warm** and **temperate**, varies from region to region, with temperatures along the southwestern coast near Cape Town ranging from 45°F to 79°F.

**Economy**

The backbone of South Africa's market economy has been the country's **vast mineral wealth**. The country leads the world in **gold, platinum, and chromium** output and is also a top producer of manganese, vermiculite, and vanadium. South Africa is a popular **tourist destination** and the industry accounts for a substantial amount of the country's profit. Years of political upheaval and continuing racial discrimination have taken their toll, however, leaving the government with serious challenges in trying to meet the expectations of poor black citizens during decades of political repression. National unemployment has stubbornly held at about one-quarter of the population, and as many as **50% of all South Africans live below the poverty line**. The agricultural sector is very small, employing only about 9% of the labor force. **Maize, sugar, fruit, and wool** are all exports. The Mbeki administration was criticized for failing to address the nation's growing HIV/AIDS crisis, which has killed millions in South Africa, weakening and depleting the workforce and contributing to the nation's economic troubles. South Africa's major **trade partners** include the **United Kingdom, the United States, and Germany**.

**Society**

The most industrially developed nation in Africa, South Africa has a population of about **48.8 million** (2012 estimate). **Black South Africans make up about 75% of the population**, while **whites, individuals of mixed race, and Indians make up the rest**. Reflecting the diversity of its inhabitants, the country has **11 official languages**: nine African languages, English, and Afrikaans. A majority of South Africans are associated with various **Christian** religions, but the nation's Asian inhabitants adhere mainly to **Hinduism** or **Islam**. South Africa has **three capitals:** Pretoria (administrative), Cape Town (legislative), and Bloemfontein (judicial).

**Politics**

Established as an independent state within the **British Commonwealth** in 1934, South Africa became a **republic** in 1961. From 1948 until the early 1990s, the nation was governed according to the **segregationist system of apartheid**, under which the nation's **nonwhite populations had few if any political rights**. In 1990, after years of increasing international criticism of apartheid as well as economic and other sanctions (penalties) the system was dismantled. Negotiations for a new political system began in 1991, resulting in April 1994 democratic elections and the May inauguration of South Africa's first black president, Nelson Mandela.

In the post-apartheid years, South Africa has made great strides in overcoming institutional **prejudice** and **racism**, passing some of the world's most progressive **equal protection** and **antidiscrimination laws**. However, high crime rates, poverty, corruption, and a continuing lack of job opportunities, particularly for poor blacks, has led to increasing unhappiness with the government among some South Africans.

Reading adapted from "South Africa." *World Geography: Understanding a Changing World*. ABC-CLIO.