



**#3622**

# **KENYA: THE MASAI HOMELAND**

Grade Levels: 6-10

30 minutes

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## **DESCRIPTION**

Presents an overview of Kenya's main tribal and ethnic groups, focusing on their lives and traditions. Includes the legend of Kenya's beginning, its huge national parks, its animal life, and some tourist attractions. Focuses on the Masai and Turkana tribes.

## **ACADEMIC STANDARDS**

### **Subject Area: World History**

- ◆ Standard: Understands the development of agricultural societies and new states in tropical Africa and Oceania
  - Benchmark: Understands settlement patterns in different regions of Africa
  - Benchmark: Understands influences on state-building in Africa
- ◆ Standard: Understands selected attributes and historical developments of societies in Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe
  - Benchmark: Knows about the migrations of large groups in the past and recently
  - Benchmark: Knows significant historical achievements of various cultures of the world

### **Subject Area: Geography**

- ◆ Standard: Understands the nature and complexity of earth's cultural mosaics
  - Benchmark: Knows the role culture plays in incidents of cooperation and conflict in the present-day world
- ◆ Standard: Understands the concept of regions
  - Benchmark: Understands how changing conditions can result in the redefinition of a region

## **INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS**

1. To introduce the topography, people, and customs of Kenya, Africa.
2. To present an overview of the Masai as one of the best-known races in Kenya.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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The Masai (also spelled Maasai) are a warrior tribe from Kenya and Tanzania, near the equator. They are typically pictured wearing a red cloth and holding a spear. They live in villages called kraals consisting of 8 to 15 huts.

The women are responsible for the seven-month task of building a hut. The frame is built of branches and then plaster mixture of twigs, grass, and cow dung is applied to the frame. When the plaster dries, it is as strong as cement. The only openings are the doorway and a small hole in the roof or wall to allow the smoke from a fire to escape. They use dried cow dung for fuel to keep the fire going to cook and keep them warm during the rainy season. The only furnishings inside are beds of woven branches cushioned with dry grasses and animal skins to sleep on.



The men use branches with thorns as sharp as barbed wire to build thornbush fences as an added protection against the wild animals of the area. The grassland climate is home to many animals including elephants, lions, rhinos, and cheetahs. At night their cows, goats, and other domestic animals are brought inside the fence for protection as well.

Other chores for the women and girls include milking cows and fetching water. They also spend much time doing beadwork. They decorate animal hides, gourds and make arm and leg bracelets. They also pick calabashes (gourds), which are cleaned and then decorated with leather and beads. They use the gourds to store milk, water, honey and cornmeal, which are used for food. They do not kill animals for food but will eat them if they die naturally.

The men's primary job is to care for the cattle, which they believe God has entrusted to them. Their wealth is therefore measured by the number of cattle they own.

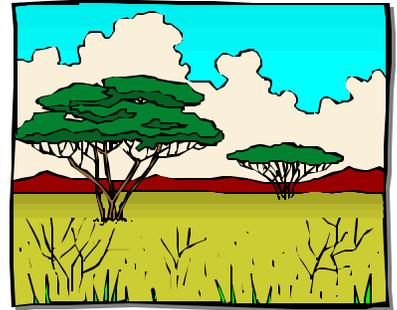
As young Masai boys reach the age of 15, they participate in coming-of-age ceremonies, which include many rites and rituals (headdress, circumcision, body painting, etc.). Originally these youth would then be sent into the wild to hunt a lion with only a spear as their weapon. The national governments have since outlawed this practice.

Several Masai warriors will live together in one kraal until they have passed on to manhood (five to seven years' time). Then they will marry and bring their wives and raise their families in the same kraal. Generally people of the same age live in the same kraal. The elderly will all live together but will come to teach traditions and skills to the youth, as well as to lead celebrations and ceremonies.

## VOCABULARY

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|----------------|--------------------|
| 1. safari      | 8. metropolis      |
| 2. polygamist  | 9. sedentary       |
| 3. inhabitants | 10. dung           |
| 4. clan        | 11. sacrifice      |
| 5. traditions  | 12. rites          |
| 6. fissure     | 13. Masai people   |
| 7. nomadic     | 14. Turkana tribes |



## BEFORE SHOWING

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1. Locate Kenya on a map. Point out that it is located in the continent of Africa and that the capital is Nairobi. Discuss the low plateaus and plains of Kenya, having students contrast and compare the two different areas.
2. Begin by asking students what they know about Africa and if they've ever heard of the Masai people. Ask what they think of when they hear the word "Africa." Note any stereotypical responses and be prepared to dispel those throughout the course of the lesson. (All African people live in huts or the jungle. They all wear exotic costumes. All people are the same in Africa.) Refer to BACKGROUND INFORMATION given concerning the Masai people.

## AFTER SHOWING

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### Applications and Activities

1. Research and write a report on the customs and traditions of the Masai people.
2. Construct a small model of a Masai village and a Turkana's village. Compare and contrast the two villages. Explain the differences and/or similarities in the structures. Research the customs and traditions of both tribes. Identify the different family living quarters of the mother, father, children, animals, chief/leader of the tribes, and others.
3. Research and write a report on the deaf people of Kenya.
4. Plan a imaginary trip to Kenya and review the need for a visa, passport, money, and other items. (See RELATED RESOURCES.) Give a brief overview of the topography so that students will know items they need.
5. Discuss the following:
  - a. Why would the head of a family not know how many children he has?
  - b. How do the Masai compare to other indigenous populations such as Native Americans?
  - c. Which is preferable—traditional or modern Masai life?
6. Visit the Web site "The African Newswire Network" (see RELATED RESOURCES) and read an article or news story about Kenya. Report to the class.

## RELATED RESOURCES



### Captioned Media Program

- Africa: The Emodia Family #2590
- Africa: An Introduction (Revised) #2034
- Assignment: Africa—Part 2: Tanzania and Kenya #8033
- The Kenyan Way of Life #3366

### World Wide Web



The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid-safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **DEAF KENYA WEB**

<http://dww.deafworldweb.org/int/ke/>

Provides statistical information related to Kenya's deaf population.

**Kenya National Association of the Deaf**  
**P.O. Box 33445**  
**Nairobi**  
**Email: [bmznyuko@bigfoot.com](mailto:bmznyuko@bigfoot.com)**

- **JAMBO KENYA**

<http://www.jambokenya.com/home.html>

Jambo Kenya Network features information on safari, travel tours of Kenya. It also highlights Kenya's people, government, economy, wildlife, animals, and plants.

- **KENYA WEB**

<http://www.kenyaweb.com>

Information on Kenya, including sections on economy, travel, education, land history, people, sports, and government.

- **THE AFRICAN NEWSWIRE NETWORK**

<http://www.africannewswire.com>

News from each country in Africa.

- **KENYA TOURISM BUREAU**

<http://www.kenyatourism.org>

Official site of the Kenya Tourism Bureau, offering tips on what to see and do, entry requirements, and links.