

Countries Around the World™

Algeria

Program Summary

Meet 10-year-old Kenza. She and her family live in Algiers, the capital of Algeria. Join Kenza as she leaves her apartment and heads down to a wharf to reveal the importance of the Mediterranean Sea to Algeria's economy when she observes the large commercial and fishing vessels pulling into port. Next, Kenza and her friend Nawel stroll through the Kasbah — the "old town" section of Algeria — where they observe donkeys transporting goods through the narrow, winding streets and stop to ask for directions in a mixture of Arabic and French. Kenza then heads to the University of Algiers and meets up with her sister. Experience the Islamic traditions and heritage of Algeria when Kenza and her family attend a prayer service at a mosque before heading over to a mausoleum to pay their respects to the patron saint of Algiers. Students will discover the geography of Algeria when Kenza heads to the countryside to pick fruit at an orchard before flying south to the town of Ghardaia, which is located by an oasis in the Sahara Desert. Finally, Kenza accepts an invitation to drink mint tea with some nomads in their tent.

Country Information

- **location:** North Africa, bordering the Mediterranean Sea; bordered by Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Western Sahara and Tunisia
- **capital:** Algiers
- **official language:** Arabic
- **type of government:** republic
- **total area:** approximately 2,381,740 sq km
- **climate:** arid to semiarid; mild, wet winters with hot, dry summers along the coast; drier with cold winters and hot summers on the high plateau; sirocco is a hot, dust/sand-laden wind especially common in summer
- **terrain:** mostly high plateau and desert with some mountains and a narrow, discontinuous coastal plain
- **natural resources:** includes petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, phosphates, uranium, lead and zinc
- **industries:** includes petroleum, natural gas, light industries, mining, electrical, petrochemical and food processing
- **agricultural products:** includes wheat, barley, oats, grapes, olives, citrus, fruits, sheep and cattle

Vocabulary

Maghreb — A geographic region of northwest Africa that includes the Atlas Mountains and the coastal plain of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. The country of Mauritania is, politically, considered part of the Maghreb.

quay — A wharf or reinforced bank where ships are loaded or unloaded.

Algerian dinar — The currency of Algeria.

Kasbah — Also "Casbah." The older section of a city in northern Africa or the Middle East.

minaret — A tall, thin tower connected to a mosque from which people of the Islamic faith are called to prayer.

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muezzin — The official who calls Muslims to daily prayer.

mausoleum — A large, stately tomb or a building housing such a tomb or several tombs.

clementine — A small, sweet variety of tangerine with orange-red skin.

oasis — A small, fertile or green area in a desert region that usually has a spring or well.

Mozabites — Also "M'zabite." Members of a sect of Islam who live in southern Algeria.

souk — A traditional market found in many cities of the Arab world. It is usually an outdoor marketplace that features many separate shops that sell a wide variety of products.

dromedary — A single-humped camel of Arabia and northern Africa that is often used in the transport of people and goods.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- As a class, brainstorm a list of questions about Algeria. Prompt students by asking them to share what they already know about Algeria and what they would like to find out about the country. Students can make predictions about what they think they will see in the program. As they watch, have students keep track of how many of their questions were answered and if their preconceptions of Algeria were correct or not.
- Lead a discussion about how climate affects where and how people live. Begin by having students talk about how the weather in their area affects their lives. Expand the conversation with questions, like: How would you have to adapt your lifestyle if you lived in a place that was really hot? What if there was little or no rainfall in your area? How would you adapt to a limited supply of water? How do people who live in such extreme conditions adapt to the climate? As they prepare to watch the program, instruct students to watch for references to how climate affects people living in Algeria.
- Distribute outline maps of northern Africa to students. Have them find and label Algeria and its capital in addition to the other countries of the Maghreb and their capitals. Questions to ask include: How many countries border Algeria? How many of the countries bordering Algeria are part of the Maghreb? Based on Algeria's location, what do you think its climate is like? What do you think its people are like?

Follow-up Activities

- Hello from Algeria! Postcards are a fun way show people the different places you've visited. Using information from the program, have students design and write a postcard as if they had visited Algeria and wanted to tell their friends back home all about it. Students can visit www.readwrite-think.org/materials/postcard/ to create postcards online. For added authenticity, students can use French and Arabic words, like "bonjour" and "marhaba," in their postcards.
- The Tuareg are a nomadic people who brave the harsh conditions and make their home in the Sahara Desert. Have students pretend they are members of a Tuareg clan crossing one of the vast swaths of the desert and write a series of journal entries from that perspective. Students can write about life as a nomad, the landscape of the Sahara, various customs and traditions and everyday challenges and amusements. For information about the Tuareg way of life, visit calacademy.org/exhibits/africa/exhibit/sahara/tuareg/index.html.
- Algeria is part of the Maghreb, a region of North Africa that includes Morocco, Libya, Mauritania and Tunisia. Have students find facts about these countries and compare and contrast them using Venn diagrams. Students can focus on areas such as language, food, clothing, climate and wildlife.

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- Read Rukhsana Khan's *Muslim Child: Understanding Islam through Stories and Poems* (Albert Whitman, 2002) to the class. It tells the stories of Muslim children in different countries around the world and how Islam is a part of their lives. After reading, discuss how the children's stories in the text compared with the daily life of the host in the program. Which aspects of their days were similar? Which were different? How do the lives of the host and the children in the text compare with your lives? Have any of you ever had experiences similar to those of the children in the stories? In the book, how did the children deal with misunderstandings, and how were they resolved? Then, have students write their own short stories about a day in their own lives and encourage them to share with the class.
- Found in many cities throughout the Middle East and northern Africa, *souks* are lively places where people go to shop and meet others. Working in groups, students can pretend that they are merchants planning to set up a stand at a *souk* in Algeria. Based on information from the program and other sources, have students determine what types of things are sold at an Algerian *souk*. Students should come up with a name and slogan for their businesses, what they will sell and a price list featuring prices in both Algerian dinars and U.S. dollars. Then, using various props, have students set up their stands and perform skits about shopping in a *souk*. Students can take turns role playing as vendors and customers.
- The transformation of arable land to desert, known as desertification, is a serious problem facing countries like Algeria. Conduct an experiment that shows how harsh and inhospitable the desert is to agriculture by building a desert biome in the classroom. Visit pbskids.org/zoom/activities/sci/biomeinabaggie.html for instructions on how to create a "mini-biome." Then, have the students build one biome with potting soil and one with sand. Plant seeds in each biome and have students observe how the plants grow in their respective soils. Students can record the data and create charts comparing the plants' growth. As an extension, discuss the challenges people living in the Sahara Desert face from desertification. How do they find water? What could they do to stop desertification? Are there ways to change desert back into land suited for growing food?
- Students will have fun creating their own "Traveling Across Algeria" board game. Divide students into small groups and, using a piece of cardboard and various craft materials, have them design and fashion their game boards while inventing the rules for their games. The games can include facts about Algeria's geography, people, cities, climate, currency and food, among other things. Once they have finished making their games, students can take turns playing each others' games.
- Share in the customs of Algeria by preparing and serving some mint tea to the students. A recipe can be found at: www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/ontheline/explore/journey/algeria/recipe1.htm. Then, have students find facts about the history of tea in addition to how other cultures around the world use tea. Students might enjoy reading Carrie Gleason's *Biography of Tea* (Crabtree, 2007). Using this information, students can create time lines, flip books and fact posters about tea to share with the class.

Suggested Internet Resources

- news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/country_profiles/790556.stm
This web site by the BBC provides up-to-date information about the history, culture, people and politics of Algeria.
- www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/ontheline/explore/journey/algeria/alindex.htm
Discover Algeria and learn what it is like to live there! This comprehensive, child-friendly site provides basic information about Algeria's culture.
- www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/Homework/religion/Islam.htm
The students of Woodlands Junior School in England present basic information about Islam.
- www.cia.gov
The CIA World Factbook web site presents detailed and up-to-date information on Algeria and many other countries. Topics include geography, people, government, economy, transportation and communication. On the main page of the CIA site, click on the "World Factbook" link.

Suggested Print Resources

- Amer, Fatmah. *Islam*. QEB Publishing, Irving Hills, CA; 2006.
- Hintz, Martin. *Algeria*. Children's Press, Danbury, CT; 2006.
- Weintraub, Aileen. *Sabara Desert: The Biggest Desert*. Rosen Publishing Group, New York, NY; 2003.

Teacher's Guide written by Brian Wales, Curriculum Specialist, Schlessinger Media

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