

Countries Around the World™

Kenya

Program Summary

Meet 10-year-old Caroline. She and her family live in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. Join Caroline as she visits a train museum, where she reveals that modern-day Nairobi started as merely a waterhole along the railway! After a visit to the natural history exhibits at the National Museum, Caroline introduces us to some of the many ethnic groups and tribes in Kenya when she participates in a Kisii dance ceremony. Next, Caroline and her father head out to the Kenyan countryside for a safari. On the first leg of their trip, Caroline catches a glimpse of Africa's tallest mountain, Kilimanjaro, and visits a Maasai village, where she participates in a tribal dance. Discover some of Kenya's wildlife when Caroline and her father tour Amboseli National Park and see gazelles, elephants and zebras. Finally, Caroline returns to Nairobi for her aunt's wedding, and we get a chance to see some local customs and how important family is to Kenyans.

Country Information

- **location:** Eastern Africa, bordering the Indian Ocean; bordered by Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda
- **capital:** Nairobi
- **official languages:** English and Kiswahili
- **type of government:** republic
- **total area:** approximately 582,650 sq km
- **climate:** varies from tropical along the coast to arid in the interior
- **terrain:** low plains rise to central highlands that are bisected by the Great Rift Valley; fertile plateau in the West
- **major bodies of water:** Indian Ocean, Lake Victoria and Lake Turkana
- **natural resources:** includes limestone, soda ash, salt, gemstones, fluor spar, zinc, diatomite, gypsum, wildlife and hydropower
- **industries:** includes small-scale consumer goods (plastic, furniture, batteries, textiles, clothing, soap, cigarettes, flour), agricultural products, horticulture, oil refining, aluminum, steel, lead, cement, commercial ship repair and tourism
- **agricultural products:** includes tea, coffee, corn, wheat, sugarcane, fruit, vegetables, dairy products, beef, pork, poultry and eggs

Vocabulary

Kiswahili — Also “Swahili.” A Bantu language of the coast and islands of eastern Africa. Kiswahili is one of the official languages of Kenya.

Kikuyu — A Bantu-speaking people who, traditionally, live in the highland area of south-central Kenya, near Mount Kenya.

Mombasa — A coastal city in southeastern Kenya.

Great Rift Valley — A geologic depression of southwestern Asia and eastern Africa that extends from the Jordan River Valley to Mozambique. The region is marked by a series of faults caused by volcanic action.

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Kisii — Also “Gusii.” A Bantu-speaking people who, traditionally, live in the hills of western Kenya, near the Tanzanian border.

matatu — A form of public transportation in Kenya, *matatus* resemble large vans and are used as group taxis.

Kenyan shillings — The currency of Kenya.

Jua Kali — Kiswahili for “hot sun.” This term has many different interpretations, but is generally used to refer to Kenyan people who manufacture products on a small scale or provide a type of service, often outside in the “hot sun.”

Kilimanjaro — The highest mountain in Africa, it stands 5,985 meters (19,340 feet) high. Kilimanjaro is located in Tanzania, just across the Kenyan border.

nyama choma — Kiswahili for “grilled meat.”

Maasai — Also “Masai.” A mainly pastoral people of Kenya and parts of Tanzania.

manyatta — A circular cluster of huts as might be found in a Maasai village. A *manyatta* can also serve as a pen for livestock.

gazelle — Any of various small, swift antelopes of Africa and Asia that characteristically have a slender neck and horns with ringed segments.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- As a class, brainstorm a list of questions about Kenya. Prompt students by asking them to share what they already know about Kenya 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 Kenya were correct or not.
- Introduce the idea of different points of view by asking students what they think about a particular place in the United States. As a class, explore where students got their information by asking questions, such as: “Did you visit the place? Did you read about it? Do you know someone from there?” Discuss how point of view and perspective can affect descriptions of place and culture.
- Distribute outline maps of southeastern Africa to the students. Have them find and label Kenya and its capital in addition to neighboring countries and their capitals. Questions to ask include: Which countries border Kenya? Based on Kenya's location, what do you think the climate of the country is like? Do you think the people of Kenya have anything in common with the peoples in neighboring countries? If so, what?

Follow-up Activities

- With places such as the Amboseli National Park and all its wildlife and breathtaking scenery, it's no wonder that safaris are “wildly” popular with tourists! Students can pretend that they are Kenyan guides by making brochures about a safari through one of Kenya's many nature reserves and parks. For information on the different wildlife parks in Kenya, visit www.kws.org/. The brochures can include facts about the wildlife found in each park, pictures or illustrations and maps of the tours. An interactive tool for making brochures can be found at interactives.mped.org/ppress110.aspx. As an extension, students can write a series of journal entries as if they had guided safaris through the parks featured in their brochures.
- In the program, Caroline travels across Kenya, collecting tidbits for inclusion in a scrapbook about her country. Invite students to work together and create their own classroom scrapbook about Kenya by collecting facts, maps, pictures and illustrations, in addition to any other interesting miscellany they might discover. Instruct students to write captions that provide further information about each of their additions to the scrapbook.

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- Using clay, salt dough or another medium, create raised relief maps of Kenya. Advise students to sketch the country on sturdy pieces of cardboard first. When molding the clay, be sure to clearly depict the different landforms and bodies of water of Kenya, like Mount Kenya, the Great Rift Valley and Lake Victoria. When the models dry, use paint or other craft materials to provide a greater level of detail for the maps. Mark and label the major cities in addition to the different topographic regions.
- Read Tololwa Molle's retelling of an ages-old Maasai folktale, *The Orphan Boy* (Sagebrush Education Resources, 1995), to the class. Then, have students recreate this story in the classroom by acting it out. This can be done as a puppet show, a mime skit, a student play, etc. Divide the students into small groups and have each one prepare its own production by choosing a format and thinking about the story's elements of character, setting and plot. After each group performs, conduct a question and answer session in which the students talk about why they chose to retell the story in the ways they did. Discuss the idea that adapting and changing a story by retelling it is part of the oral tradition — the way several cultures, including the Maasai, pass down their values and traditions through stories. As an extension, students can read folktales from other cultures with similar themes and devices, such as Odds Bodkin's *Crane Wife* (Harcourt Children's Books, 1998) and Susan Cooper's *Selkie Girl* (Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 1986). Invite students to write and illustrate their own tales modeled on these stories.
- Many of you may have heard words and phrases like Kwanzaa and "hakuna matata," but did you know that they come from Kiswahili? Students can have fun learning more words and phrases in Kiswahili by visiting www.africa.uga.edu/Kiswahili/doe/unitSelect.html for an interactive guide that includes video and audio clips in addition to translations and cultural information. Since this site has specific sections dealing with topics such as greetings, family relationships and buying and selling goods, students can choose a topic and write and perform short skits in Kiswahili. After each performance, students can translate their skits into English. As an extension, have students write letters to the host of the program using Kiswahili words and phrases.
- With groups such as the Maasai, Kisii and Kikuyu, Kenya boasts a population with varied beliefs, customs and histories. Engage students in a study of the different tribes in Kenya. Divide the class into small groups and assign each one a tribe. Each group can build a classroom display devoted to its assigned Kenyan tribe that features fact posters, pictures and illustrations, maps, time lines and artifacts.
- The history of Kenya stretches as far back as 6 million years ago! Students can discover some of the main points in Kenyan history by visiting www.timeforkids.com/TFK/hh/goplaces/article/0,20343,644019,00.html. Then, using the information they find, have students break into small groups to produce sections for a classroom time line about the history of Kenya, from the first humanoids in prehistoric times to modern-day events. Each group can include facts, pictures and illustrations and even maps to accompany its section. When each group has finished, students can work together to post the Kenyan time line in the classroom. As an extension, each group can plan and give a short presentation about their period of Kenyan history.
- With 54 countries and several islands associated with it, the vast continent of Africa is a land of varied peoples, geographic regions and cultures. Students can discover the similarities and differences among the countries of Africa by finding facts about them. Begin by having students choose four African countries to compare with Kenya. Then, students can decide on an area of focus for their comparison (e.g., language, food, geography, climate, belief system, etc.). Students can arrange their findings in Venn diagrams. Consider watching the programs on Madagascar, Algeria, South Africa and Mali in this series.
- Mount Kilimanjaro, located just across Kenya's border in Tanzania, may be the tallest mountain in all of Africa, but how does it compare with other mountains around the world? Have students find out which are the tallest mountains on the other continents and create charts comparing them to Mount Kilimanjaro. Be sure to include Kenya's tallest mountain, Mount Kenya, on this chart. Students can use this data to express greater than/less than relationships and convert one unit of measurement to another (feet-to-meters, meters-to-kilometers, etc.). As an extension, have students find the height of mountains on other planets, like Mars and Venus, and compare them with the mountains on Earth.

Suggested Internet Resources

- www.timeforkids.com/TFK/specials/goplaces/0,12405,182117,00.html
Discover Kenya and what it is like to live there! This web site by Time Inc. presents information about Kenya's famous sites, history, animals and language. Also includes a quiz.
- www.cia.gov
The CIA World Factbook web site presents detailed and up-to-date information on Kenya 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

- Broberg, Catherine. *Kenya in Pictures*. Lerner Publications, Minneapolis, MN; 2002.
- Chamberlin, Mary and Rich. *Mama Panya's Pancakes: A Village Tale From Kenya*. Barefoot Books, Cambridge, MA; 2006.
- Giles, Bridget. *National Geographic Countries of the World: Kenya*. National Geographic Children's Books, Washington, D.C.; 2006.
- Mansure, Lynne and Sylvia McNair. *Kenya*. Children's Press, Danbury, CT; 2001.
- Talbott, Hudson. *Safari Journal: The Adventures in Africa of Carey Monroe*. Silver Whistle Books, San Diego, CA; 2003. An overview of Kenyan geography, wildlife and Maasai culture in a fictional narrative.

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