

Countries Around the World™

Madagascar

Program Summary

Meet 11-year-old Ouniassine. He and his family live in Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar. Join Ouniassine as he meets his mother at an outdoor market where he introduces students to aspects of Madagascar's heritage, geography and currency when he meets various people while browsing among the fruits, vegetables and medicines made from tropical plants. Then, Ouniassine joins his friends for an impromptu game of soccer, and since it is the rainy season, they narrowly avoid getting caught in a thunderstorm. After Ouniassine's family attends church, they explore the palace and fortifications at the hill of Ambohimanga — a sacred place once reserved for Malagasy kings. Next, travel with Ouniassine's family to the mountains to witness Malagasy artisans forging metal items, all by hand! Discover different Malagasy crafts when Ouniassine returns to the capital to shop for items made from ebony, rosewood, emeralds and garnet, among others. Finally, Ouniassine gives students a glimpse of one of Madagascar's most well-known and rambunctious denizens when he visits Lemurs' Park, a reserve dedicated to the study and preservation of the endangered primates.

Country Information

- **location:** island in the Indian Ocean, off the coast of southeastern Africa, east of Mozambique
- **capital:** Antananarivo
- **official languages:** French and Malagasy
- **type of government:** republic
- **total area:** approximately 587,040 sq km
- **climate:** tropical along coast, temperate inland and arid in the South
- **terrain:** narrow coastal plain, high plateau and mountains in center
- **natural resources:** includes graphite, coal, bauxite, salt, quartz, semi-precious stones, mica, fish and hydropower
- **industries:** includes meat processing, seafood, soap, breweries, tanneries, sugar, textiles, glassware, cement, paper, petroleum and tourism
- **agricultural products:** includes coffee, vanilla, sugarcane, cloves, cocoa, rice, cassava (tapioca), beans, bananas, peanuts and livestock products

Vocabulary

Malagasy — Also “Madagascan.” Referring to a person or thing from Madagascar, in addition to the language spoken.

Antananarivo — Also “Tanananarive” or “Tana.” The capital of Madagascar.

achards — Fruits or vegetables marinated in lemon vinegar.

ariary — The currency of Madagascar.

ravenala — Also called the “traveler’s tree.” A type of tree, related to the banana, which, when pierced, will yield drinkable water.

lemur — Any of several small, arboreal, mostly nocturnal primates having large eyes, a slim muzzle and a long tail. Lemurs are found primarily on Madagascar and its adjacent islands. *(Continued)*

Ambohimanga — An archeological site located in Madagascar that contains a ruined city, burial sites and assorted sacred places.

rice paddy — An irrigated or flooded field where rice is grown.

laterite — A reddish soil formed in tropical regions by the decomposition of the underlying rocks.

garnet — A deep-red gemstone.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- Lead a discussion on what makes places different from each other. Begin by having students brainstorm a list of things that they think make places unique. Follow up with questions such as: How is climate a factor in defining an area? How are land formations or bodies of water factors? Are people a part of making a place unique? How? How would you characterize the place where you live? What makes it unique?
- Locate Madagascar on a map. Using the map and other geographical information, have students make inferences about the country's landscape, climate and people. After viewing the program, return to the list and determine how many of their predictions were accurate. Which inferences were confirmed? Which inferences weren't? If an inference is incorrect, does that make it any less valid than one that turns out to be true? Why did you make the predictions you did? Did anything in the program surprise you?
- Engage students in a discussion about the diversity that exists in their communities, the country and the world. How are things such as culture, race, religion and gender a part of diversity? What are some other things that contribute to diversity? Then, discuss how people's points of view and opinions are also a form of diversity. As students prepare to watch the program, instruct them to be on the lookout for examples of diversity and multiculturalism in Madagascar.
- Ask students what their favorite animals are. Are their favorite animals indigenous to the region? Or are they inhabitants of a region far away? If they were given the opportunity to study their favorite animals up close, what questions would they seek to answer?

Follow-up Activities

- As a center of trade for centuries and a former French colony, Madagascar boasts a culture that is an amalgam of several influences. Students will have fun discovering the different cultural influences in their communities. Begin by having students generate a list of things that make up culture. Then, students can investigate where the foods, music, religions and languages spoken in their communities come from and create an informational booklet based on their findings. Students can share their booklets with the class.
- Get the dirt! Madagascar is nicknamed “the Great Red Island” because of the types of minerals in its soil. Have students gather soil samples from different places and compare them. As a class, generate a list of criteria by which the soil will be compared (color, consistency, ability to hold moisture, etc.) and have students differentiate among the types of soils. After comparing the soils, students can express the data in the form of Venn diagrams.
- Due to the high demand of wood products, Madagascar is suffering from deforestation, which continues to threaten several endemic species of plants and animals with extinction. Conduct a discussion dealing with the problem of deforestation and possible ways to prevent it from happening by asking questions, such as: Why do people cut down trees? What happens to the plants and animals when their habitat is gone? What products that we use come from trees? How can we reduce our dependence on these products? Then, have students collect facts and pictures of the plants and animals found in Madagascar's forests to create a classroom collage dedicated to the biodiversity and preservation of the Malagasy forest ecosystem.

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- The Royal Hill of Ambohimanga was reserved exclusively for the kings and queens of Madagascar, who made their homes in the palaces that are still there today. Invite students to investigate other places around the world where royalty reside. Whether a modern structure like Buckingham Palace in England or an ancient one like the ruins of the Palace of Knossos in Crete, students will be amazed to discover the variety of structures used by monarchs over the centuries. Once students have selected a royal residence, instruct them to draw a picture and write a fact sheet about it that includes the name of the residence, when it was built and who lived there, in addition to any other interesting information about it. Encourage students to share with the class.
- Some common foods, like vanilla and rice, come from Madagascar, but where do the foods you like come from? Students will have fun investigating where their favorite foods come from. Students can make a "food map" using different colors and symbols to mark the places that produce their favorite foods. As an extension, have students create a "food time line" that shows how long it takes for the ingredients of their foods to go from being grown or harvested to their tables.
- One of the things Madagascar is known for is its mining operations that supply the world with gemstones. Using craft supplies, students can design and create their own pieces of jewelry, based on the types of semiprecious stones and gems found in Madagascar.
- Divide the class into small groups, provide them with outline maps of Madagascar and have them label the capital and other major cities. Then have each group choose another characteristic of the country, such as climate zones, terrain regions or population density, and use different colors and symbols to mark their maps. Each group can make a puzzle out of their map and exchange it with another group, to see who can put the puzzles together the quickest. After each group reassembles their puzzle, students can teach the rest of the class about the specifics of their maps.
- In Madagascar, rice is a staple food, making up a large part of the Malagasy diet. Have students explore different aspects of rice, such as how it is grown, its nutritional value and the different varieties. Students can investigate how the climate of Madagascar is conducive to growing rice and the different types of Malagasy dishes that use rice. Younger students may enjoy reading Norah Dooley's *Everybody Cooks Rice* (Lerner, 1992) and discovering that rice is an ingredient in the traditional dishes of many cultures. As an extension, hold a cultural potluck in which rice is the key ingredient. The dishes students bring in can be a part of their cultural heritage or simply a favorite household dish.
- As an island and self-contained ecosystem, Madagascar is home to many types of animals not found anywhere else in the world. Create a brochure as if you were an eco-tour guide looking to entice people to come see Madagascar's wildlife. Brochures can include pictures and information about the different plants and animals in addition to maps that show the different habitats and climate regions. For information about Madagascar's wildlife, visit www.wildmadagascar.org/wildlife/.

Suggested Internet Resources

- www.kidcyber.com.au/topics/afriomadagascar.htm
This child-friendly site features basic facts about Madagascar's people, food, plants and animals.
- www.lemurs.us/madagascar.html
Learn more about Madagascar's lemurs at this site, which includes basic facts and photos.
- library.thinkquest.org/CR0212302/madagascar.html
Learn about the culture and customs of Madagascar from the perspective of a child who lives there! The students of Roosevelt School in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin present this award-winning site to teach people about different cultures.
- www.cia.gov
The CIA World Factbook web site presents detailed and up-to-date information on Madagascar 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

- Blauer, Ettagale and Jason Laure. *Madagascar*. Children's Press, Danbury, CT; 2000.
- Dennard, Deborah. *Lemur Landing: A Story of a Madagascan Dry Tropical Forest*. Soundprints, Norwalk, CT; 2001.

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