

Countries Around the World™

Malta

Program Summary

Meet 12-year-old Anthony. He and his family live in Valetta, the capital of Malta. Join Anthony as he climbs aboard his uncle's boat and cruises around the main island, revealing aspects of Malta's economy and history when they pass a boat full of tourists who marvel at the stone fortifications built hundreds of years ago by the Knights of the Order of Malta — a league of warriors charged with protecting Malta from pirates. Next, Anthony wanders the streets of Valetta and introduces students to features of Malta's government, religion and cultural diversity with stops at the parliament building, a store selling religious artifacts and a street performance featuring Arabic music and dancing. Delve deeper into Malta's past with Anthony when he attends a parade honoring a historic battle known as the "Great Siege," wherein the Knights of Malta fought off a horde of foreign invaders. Finally, after a visit to an old film set, take a ferry with Anthony to the island of Gozo to experience its beautiful beaches, scenic views and tranquil, secluded grottos.

Country Information

- **location:** Southern Europe; among the islands in the Mediterranean Sea, south of Sicily (Italy)
- **capital:** Valletta
- **official languages:** Maltese and English
- **type of government:** republic
- **total area:** approximately 316 sq km
- **climate:** Mediterranean, with mild, rainy winters and hot, dry summers
- **terrain:** mostly low, rocky plains, and many coastal cliffs
- **natural resources:** includes limestone, salt and arable land
- **industries:** includes tourism, electronics, ship building and repair, construction, food and beverages, pharmaceuticals, footwear and clothing
- **agricultural products:** includes potatoes, cauliflower, grapes, wheat, barley, tomatoes, citrus, cut flowers, green peppers, pork, milk, poultry and eggs

Vocabulary

rampart — A structure, such as an earthen mound or stone wall, used as a defensive fortification.

Vatican — The official residence of the pope. It also refers to the papal government.

Maltese lira — The currency of Malta.

Turk — A person from the country of Turkey.

Gozo — An island in the Maltese island chain, northwest of the main island of Malta and the smaller island of Comino.

Comino — An island in the Maltese island chain, northwest of the main island of Malta and southeast of the island of Gozo.

grotto — A small cave or cavern.

inlet — A narrow passage of water, as between two islands.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- Lead a discussion about culture, and more specifically, how cultures form and change. What is culture? Why is it important? What are the different things that make up culture? Are cultures always the same or can they change? Why do they change? In your experience, what are some examples of cultures changing and adapting? Have students watch for examples of cultural diffusion and assimilation in the program on Malta.
- Provide students with an outline map of Malta. Have students find and label the islands that make up Malta in addition to its capital and any other major cities. Then, have students answer questions, such as: Which countries are closest to Malta's islands? Based on its location, what do you think life is like for people living on Malta? What do you think the climate is like? Why?
- Discuss traveling to and experiencing different places. Ask questions, such as: What places have you traveled to? Has anyone ever traveled to a foreign country? What did you do? Was there anything that seemed different to you while you were traveling? What similarities did you share? Then, ask students to generate a list of things that they think will be different about Malta. As they prepare to watch the program, instruct students to watch to see if any of their assumptions about Malta were correct or not.

Follow-up Activities

- Compared to countries like the United States or Russia, Malta is relatively small, but is it the smallest? Using an atlas, have students find out which are the largest and smallest countries in the world. Then, have students pick five countries, Malta included, and create a bar graph that compares the sizes of each country in terms of total area. As an extension, ask students to pick another aspect of their chosen country, like population or number of bordering countries, and convert that data into a companion graph.
- Malta is a maritime culture and depends heavily on boating for its commerce. Students can expand their knowledge of boats by exploring different types of boats used by different cultures, from Viking drakkars and Swahili dhows, to Native American canoes and U.S. Navy battleships. Divide the class into small groups and assign each group a different type of ship. Have students investigate their vessel and build a diorama featuring their ship. Each diorama should be accompanied by a fact sheet with information about the ship, including its name, the culture that used it and its purpose, in addition to any other relevant information. Display the dioramas in the classroom.
- In the program, Anthony compiles information about Malta for use on his own web page. Students can share information about their communities by creating a flip book about where they live. To begin, students can brainstorm on different topics for inclusion in the flip-book (places of interest, favorite restaurants, fun pastimes, local songs, etc.). Then, have students pick what they want to use in their book and get started! For an interactive flip-book creator, visit www.readwritethink.org/materials/flipbook/. If possible, work alongside your school's technology administrator to design and create a web page featuring information from the students' flip-books.
- In the program, Anthony reveals the history behind the symbolism of Malta's flag. Assign students different state or national flags and have them investigate the history behind them. Instruct each student to draw a picture or print an image of his or her assigned flag and create an accompanying fact sheet with information about the flag's history and meaning. Students can present their findings to the class.
- In the program, students witness a holiday parade celebrating aspects of Maltese heritage and history. Invite students to create their own holidays. But the students' holidays don't have to be based on history; they can even be based on an event in their lives — like when they learned to ride a bike or lost their first tooth! Include a name and date for the holiday, different activities people can do to celebrate it and a brief history behind the holiday. Encourage students to share their holidays with the class.

(Continued)

- The Knights of the Order of Malta are an important part of Maltese history and culture, as evidenced by the medieval stone fortifications present on the main island and the ceremonies and parades still held in the knights' honor. To obtain a better understanding of the knights, have students further investigate the Knights of the Order of Malta and create an illustrated informational booklet about them. As a resource, visit: www.orderofmalta.org/storia.asp?idlingua=5.
- Maltese is a combination of several languages — Arabic, Italian, English and French, making for an interesting mix of words! Have students investigate words used regularly in English that have origins in another language, like “tortilla” or “kindergarten.” For each word that the students find, instruct them to write the word on a note card and include the part of speech, the definition and the language of origin. Post all the cards on a “word wall” dedicated to words from other languages.
- As a series of southern Mediterranean islands, one of Malta’s main industries is tourism, thanks to its beautiful, azure waters and scenic views. In groups, have students pretend they are travel agents looking to drum up business by creating a travel brochure for Malta, that highlights the main tourist attractions shown in the program. Brochures can have different sections on the separate islands, helpful information about places of interest and colorful pictures.

Suggested Internet Resources

- www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5382.htm
This site, assembled by the U.S. Department of State, presents information on the geography, history, people, culture, government and economy of Malta.
- www.cia.gov
The CIA World Factbook web site presents detailed and up-to-date information on Malta 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

- Sheehan, Sean. *Malta*. Marshall Cavendish, Tarrytown, NY; 2000.
- Steffoff, Rebecca. *The Ancient Mediterranean*. Marshall Cavendish, Tarrytown, NY; 2004.

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