

Countries Around the World™

Rwanda

Program Summary

Meet Honorine. She and her family live in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. Join Honorine as she visits the Kigali Memorial Centre, where she takes a moment to honor the thousands of Rwandans who died in the 1994 genocide. Then, Honorine strolls through an outdoor market before catching a ride home on the back of a taxi-bike. Discover aspects of Rwanda's religious traditions when Honorine and her family attend a Catholic Mass. Next, Honorine travels to Rwanda's countryside to visit a tea plantation. On the way, she reveals that Rwanda's altitude and climate are ideal for agriculture, one of the mainstays of the country's economy. After helping to pick some tea leaves, Honorine tours a greenhouse that grows roses to be used in bouquets for export. Finally, Honorine travels to Nyabisindu where she explores the compound of the last Rwandan *mwami*, or king, and watches the Intore perform a traditional dance before observing some monkeys and mountain gorillas in one of Rwanda's wildlife preserves.

Country Information

- **location:** central Africa; bordered by Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania and Uganda
- **capital:** Kigali
- **official languages:** Kinyarwanda, French, English and Kiswahili
- **type of government:** republic; presidential, multiparty system
- **total area:** approximately 26,338 sq km
- **climate:** temperate; two rainy seasons (one from February to May and one from September to November); mild in the mountains with frost and snow possible
- **terrain:** mostly grassy uplands and hills; relief is mountainous with altitude declining from west to east
- **natural resources:** includes gold, cassiterite (tin ore), wolframite (tungsten ore), methane, hydropower and arable land
- **industries:** includes cement, agricultural products, small-scale beverages, soap, furniture, shoes, plastic goods, textiles and cigarettes
- **agricultural products:** includes coffee, tea, pyrethrum (insecticide made from chrysanthemums), bananas, beans, sorghum, potatoes and livestock

Vocabulary

genocide — The planned destruction of a group of people because of their race, religion, ethnicity or political beliefs.

Hutu — The majority ethnic group living in Rwanda. Militant Hutu participated in the planned extermination of hundreds of thousands of Tutsis and moderate Hutu in Rwanda in 1994.

Tutsi — A minority ethnic group living in Rwanda. The Tutsis were the favored group under Belgian colonial rule and became the targets of a Hutu massacre in 1994.

Rwandan franc — The currency of Rwanda.

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manioc — Also "cassava." A root that is eaten as a staple food in the tropics only after leaching and drying to remove cyanide. Cassava starch is also the source of tapioca.

sorghum — Any of several varieties of grass that are widely cultivated as grain or as a source of syrup.

millet — Any of several varieties of grass that are widely cultivated as a source of grain.

Nyabisindu — Also "Nyanza." A district and town located in Rwanda's southern province.

mwami — Kinyarwanda for "chief" or "king."

calabash — A dried, hollowed-out gourd that can be used as a utensil or container.

Intore — An elite troupe of warrior-dancers who once performed for the *mwami*. The Intore still perform today.

Twa — Also "Batwa." An indigenous, ethnic group of Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda.

primate — A group of animals that includes humans, monkeys and apes.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- Distribute outline maps of Rwanda to the class. Have them label the capital, other major cities, bodies of water and the neighboring countries. Ask questions, such as: How many countries border Rwanda? Based on Rwanda's location, what do you think the climate is like? How many cities are located on or near Rwanda's rivers and lakes? How many are not? Why do you think the cities are located where they are?
- Ask students what their favorite animals are, why they like them and what they already know about them. Are their favorite animals indigenous to the region where the students live? Or are they inhabitants of regions far away? If they were given the opportunity to study their favorite animals up close, what questions would they seek to answer? If their favorite animals are endangered, what would they do to help those animals?
- As a class, brainstorm a list of questions about Rwanda. Prompt students by asking them to share what they already know about Rwanda 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 Rwanda were correct or not.

Follow-up Activities

- The mountain gorilla is one of the most endangered species in the world, and only a few hundred gorillas live in the wilds of Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Invite students to learn more about mountain gorillas by visiting www.igcp.org/gorillas/gorillas_mountain.htm. Then, students can create "Save the Mountain Gorillas" posters that feature pictures or illustrations and facts about the gorillas, such as their lifespan, diet and the threats to their continued existence. Display the posters in the classroom.
- Rwanda is often called the "land of a thousand hills," a nickname that reflects Rwandan geography. Based on the information from the program and other sources, ask students what nicknames they would give Rwanda. Next, students can have fun investigating the nicknames of the 50 U.S. states and discovering their origins. Then, have students come up with new nicknames for the states based on their geographic features. As an extension, students can design and make license plates that feature their new state nicknames and images representing that state's geography.

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- National symbols, such as the flag and the national anthem, can say a lot about a country's values, history and identity. Have students investigate how and why Rwanda's flag was redesigned and the meanings behind both the flag and the country's coat of arms by visiting flagspot.net/flags/rw.html#ev. Students can also listen to Rwanda's national anthem by visiting www.gov.rw/government/anthem.htm. Discuss what Rwanda's national symbols mean and what they say about Rwanda and its people. Then, students can come up with their own designs for the Rwandan flag that reflect aspects of Rwanda's history, culture and heritage. Students can take turns sharing their designs with the class.
- Read Verma Aardema's retelling of a Bantu folktale, *Sebgugugu the Glutton: A Bantu Tale from Rwanda* (Africa World Press, 1993), to the class. Then, have students recreate this tale 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 performance, conduct a question and answer session in which students explain why they chose to retell the stories in the ways that they did. As an extension, students can write, illustrate and share their own original tales based on elements from *Sebgugugu the Glutton*. Collect the students' stories for inclusion in a class book.
- With thick bamboo forests and volcanoes in the Virunga Mountains, lush vegetation in the Kagera River Valley and a diverse array of wildlife, like mountain gorillas, lions, zebras and giant anteaters, Rwanda is a popular spot for eco-tourists. Students can create brochures as if they were eco-tour guides looking to entice people to come see the wilds of Rwanda. Brochures can include facts about Rwanda's climate regions, geography and wildlife in addition to pictures, illustrations, maps and itineraries. An interactive tool for making brochures can be found at interactives.mped.org/ppress110.aspx.
- Students can write acrostic poems about Rwanda by using words associated with the country, like "Hutu," "urwagwa" and "gorilla." For an interactive guide for writing acrostic poems, visit www.readwritethink.org/materials/acrostic/. Once students finish their poems, have them take turns sharing with the class.
- Rwanda is located just south of the equator, and the country's close proximity to it influences Rwanda's climate. However, Rwanda's relatively high altitude is also a factor in Rwanda's climate, making it less tropical than other countries at comparable latitudes. Have students investigate the equator, including the climatic effects of the equator and the length of the day/night cycle. Then, students can use a map or a globe to find other countries around the world that are located on the equator. Students can pick three countries on or near the equator and find facts about their climates, such as annual rainfall and average temperature. Students can organize their findings into graphic organizers, like charts or bar graphs, that compare the equatorial countries with Rwanda. As an extension, students can investigate the differences between living at the poles and at the equator, and create graphic organizers to highlight these differences.

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- In 1994, Rwanda suffered through one of the darkest periods of its history when, in the span of 100 days, hundreds of thousands of Rwandans lost their lives at the hands of their fellow countrymen. Thankfully, Rwanda has since become a peaceful nation again and, all across the country, several memorial sites have been built in honor of those who died. Discuss the 1994 genocide with students, including the history between the Hutu and the Tutsi, the lack of international response and how it finally ended. Next, students can explore some of the memorials by visiting www.museum.gov.rw/index.htm and clicking on the link titled "genocide memorials." Then, students can work together to create their own tribute to the victims of the Rwandan massacre. The classroom memorial can include poems, stories, letters to survivors, paintings, drawings and sculptures, among other things. Finally, students can take turns sharing their contributions to the classroom memorial and what they learned about the 1994 genocide. *Please note: Some of the material on these sites may be too intense for some students, so please preview them to determine their appropriateness for your class.*

Suggested Internet Resources

- news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1070265.stm
Learn more about Rwanda's history, geography, leaders and culture at this up-to-date site by the BBC.
- www.africa.upenn.edu/NEH/rwhistory.htm
Assembled by the African Studies Center at the University of Pennsylvania, this site includes basic information about Rwanda.
- www.rwanda-gorillas.com/index.html
This site includes comprehensive information about Rwandan gorillas.
- www.cia.gov
The CIA World Factbook web site presents detailed and up-to-date information on Rwanda 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

- Adekunle, Julius O. *Culture and Customs of Rwanda*. Greenwood Press, Westport, CT; 2007. A resource for teachers.
- Deady, Kathleen W. *Rwanda: A Question and Answer Book*. Capstone Press, Mankato, MN; 2005.
- King, David C. *Rwanda*. Marshall Cavendish, Tarrytown, NY; 2007.
- Turner, Pamela S. *Gorilla Doctors: Saving Endangered Great Apes*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, MA; 2005.

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