

# Countries Around the World™

## South Africa

### Program Summary

Meet 10-year-old Sabelo. He and his family live in Cape Town, a city on the southwestern tip of South Africa. Join Sabelo as he travels north and goes on safari at the Kruger National Park, where he sees some of South Africa's most famous animals, like lions, elephants, hippopotamuses and giraffes. Back in Cape Town, Sabelo introduces us to aspects of South Africa's history when he and his friend Joshua visit the District Six Museum, which is dedicated to remembering the displacement of black South Africans during the period of apartheid. Discover the history and culture of some of South Africa's indigenous peoples when Sabelo and his friend Beates wander the halls of a natural history museum and marvel at the displays that feature artifacts and clothing from Kalahari hunter-gatherers. After perusing the handmade crafts at the waterfront and a trip to the aquarium, Sabelo stops at a town outside of Cape Town to pick up his friend Attie. Together, they visit a protea flower farm before ending their journey at a cheetah breeding center.

### Country Information

- **location:** the southern tip of the continent of Africa; bordered by Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe
- **capital:** Pretoria
- **official languages:** there are 11 official languages: Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Pedi, Sotho, Swati, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa, and Zulu
- **type of government:** republic
- **total area:** approximately 1,219,912 sq km
- **climate:** mostly semiarid, but subtropical along the East Coast
- **terrain:** vast interior plateau rimmed by rugged hills and a narrow, coastal plain
- **natural resources:** includes gold, chromium, antimony, coal, iron ore, manganese, nickel, phosphates, tin, uranium, gem diamonds, platinum, copper, vanadium, salt and natural gas
- **industries:** includes mining, automobile assembly, metalworking, machinery, textiles, iron and steel, chemicals, fertilizer, foodstuffs, commercial ship repair
- **agricultural products:** includes corn, wheat, sugarcane, fruits, vegetables, beef, poultry, mutton, wool and dairy products

### Vocabulary

**Xhosa** — A large Bantu tribe of which Nelson Mandela is a member. It is also the language spoken by this tribe.

**Afrikaners** — White South Africans of European descent who established the policy of racial segregation, or apartheid, starting in 1948.

**Zulu** — A large ethnic group of Bantu-speaking people in South Africa.

**Afrikaans** — A language of white South Africans that developed from the Dutch language.

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**apartheid** — A South African government policy that was characterized by racial, political and economic discrimination against black and mixed-race citizens.

**Nelson Mandela** — A leader of the movement against apartheid. Nelson Mandela spent 28 years in prison for his political beliefs and activism. He became the first black president of South Africa in 1994 and served until 1999.

**rand** — The currency of South Africa.

**Kalahari** — A desert plateau region of southern Botswana, eastern Namibia, and western South Africa.

**protea** — A tropical African shrub that has alternate, rigid leaves and dense, colorful flower heads that resemble cones.

**docile** — Describes something or someone who is easily handled or managed.

### Pre-viewing Discussion

- A person's identity can be based upon many different factors, such as religion, nationality, gender and ethnicity. Lead a discussion on what constitutes identity and how it factors into students' lives. Ask questions, such as: If you had to describe who you are as a person, what would you say? What are some things that you identify with? How are those things a part of your identity? How is the place where you live a part of your identity?
- Distribute maps of South Africa to the students. Have them label South Africa, its capital and other major cities in addition to the neighboring countries and their capitals. Questions to ask include: How many countries border South Africa? What is unique about the location of the country of Lesotho? Based on South Africa's location, what do you think the climate is like? What do you think the people are like?
- Remind students of the distinction between fact and opinion. Introduce the ideas of nationalism as a feeling of a common identity and patriotism as pride in one's country. Ask students to think about how they would describe their country to a student from another country. What would be a fact? What would be an opinion? Discuss what impressions one might have after listening to the different descriptions. How can people from the same place ultimately have different descriptions of it? Does that make one description wrong, or can differing opinions all be valid? Have students watch for examples of facts and opinions about South Africa in the program.

### Follow-up Activities

- Students can discover some of the main points in South African history by visiting [www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/history.htm](http://www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/history.htm). Then, using the information they find, have students break into small groups to produce sections for a classroom time line about the history of South Africa, from the early hunter-gathers and the arrival of European explorers to the abolition of apartheid and the ascension of Nelson Mandela to the presidency. Each group can include facts, pictures and illustrations and even maps to accompany its time line section. When each group has finished, students can work together to post the South African time line in the classroom. As an extension, each group can plan and give a short presentation about its period of South African history.
- From lions and giraffes to rhinoceroses and great white sharks, the wilds of South Africa are teeming with life! Invite students to learn about the different types of wildlife found in the different regions of South Africa. Students can choose a particular animal and, using the information they gather, create informational booklets. For an interactive tool, visit [www.readwrite-think.org/materials/animal-inquiry/](http://www.readwrite-think.org/materials/animal-inquiry/). Students can take turns sharing their booklets with the class. As an extension, students can collect pictures of their animals and create a classroom collage dedicated to the wildlife of South Africa.

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- Nelson Mandela is a national hero in South Africa, and the story of his lifelong struggle for freedom and equality continues to inspire people around the world. Invite students to learn more about Nelson Mandela's extraordinary life by building a classroom display dedicated to him. The display can feature fact sheets, pictures or illustrations, posters, a time line of his life and even quotations by Nelson Mandela. Students can take turns presenting and explaining their contributions to the display. For information about Nelson Mandela, visit [www.anc.org.za/people/mandela.html](http://www.anc.org.za/people/mandela.html). Students may also enjoy reading Yona Zeldis McDonough's *Peaceful Protest: The Life of Nelson Mandela* (Walker Books for Young Readers, 2002).
- Discover the rich tradition of storytelling in Africa by reading Nelson Mandela's *Favorite African Folktales* (Norton, W.W. & Company, 2002) to the class. Then, have students recreate one of these tales 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 stories in the ways they did. Discuss the idea that adapting and changing a story by retelling it is part of the oral tradition. As an extension, invite students to tell their own tales modeled after the African stories.
- From 1948 to 1990, the people of South Africa struggled with apartheid, the governmental policy of racial segregation. Students can learn more about the turbulent time of apartheid in South Africa by visiting [www.apartheidmuseum.org/](http://www.apartheidmuseum.org/). Students can explore this site and write a series of journal entries about what they learned and what affected them the most. Encourage students to share some of their thoughts with the class. Then, discuss apartheid with students by asking questions, such as: How did apartheid affect the people of South Africa? Why was there so much conflict? How did the people of South Africa finally overcome apartheid? What are some lessons we can learn from the period of apartheid? How does the period of apartheid in South Africa compare to the Civil Rights Movement here in the United States?
- Since South Africa is well-known for its diamonds, what better way to celebrate the country than by writing diamante poems? An interactive resource for writing diamante poems can be found at [www.readwritethink.org/materials/diamante/](http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/diamante/). Students can write their poems using information from the program and other sources. Encourage students to share their poems with the class.
- Hello from South Africa! Postcards are a fun way to 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 South Africa and wanted to tell their friends back home all about it. Students can visit [www.readwritethink.org/materials/postcard/](http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/postcard/) to create postcards online.
- Over a thousand years ago, the kingdom of Mapungubwe thrived in South Africa's Limpopo Valley. But it wasn't until the 1930s that the remnants of this civilization were discovered — by accident! Students can pretend that they are archeologists uncovering the secrets of Mapungubwe by making their own artifacts. Using different craft materials, students can make replicas of the different types of artifacts found at Mapungubwe. Then, bury the artifacts and have students find them, and describe and keep track of their "discoveries" in a journal. After all the artifacts have been found, students can create backstories about their artifacts that tell how they were a part of the culture of Mapungubwe. For information about Mapungubwe and a sample of the artifacts found there, visit [www.mapungubwe.com/cultural.htm](http://www.mapungubwe.com/cultural.htm).
- Students will have fun learning words and phrases in Xhosa, one of South Africa's official languages. For a list of some common Xhosa words and phrases, along with pronunciation sound files, visit [library.thinkquest.org/22868/index.htm](http://library.thinkquest.org/22868/index.htm). Students can pair up and make flash cards to practice speaking in Xhosa. They can post their flashcards on a word wall dedicated to Xhosa. Students can even participate in a trivia game where they answer yes or no questions — in Xhosa! "Ewe" means "yes," and "hayi" means "no."

## Suggested Internet Resources

- [www.southafrica.info/](http://www.southafrica.info/)  
This web site by the International Marketing Council of South Africa provides comprehensive information about the history, geography, people, economy and politics of South Africa.
- [www.timeforkids.com/TFK/specials/goplaces/0,12405,384364,00.html](http://www.timeforkids.com/TFK/specials/goplaces/0,12405,384364,00.html)  
Discover South Africa and what it is like to live there! This web site by Time Inc. presents information about South Africa's famous sites, history and language in addition to an interview with Nelson Mandela. Also includes a quiz.
- [www.peacecorps.gov/kids/world/africa/southafrica.html](http://www.peacecorps.gov/kids/world/africa/southafrica.html)  
This child-friendly site provides basic facts and information about South Africa.
- [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)  
The CIA World Factbook web site presents detailed and up-to-date information on South Africa 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. *South Africa*. Children's Press, Danbury, CT; 2006.
- Holland, Gini. *Nelson Mandela*. Gareth Stevens Publishing, Milwaukee, WI; 2002.
- Naidoo, Beverly. *Out of Bounds: Seven Stories of Conflict and Hope*. Harper Collins Children's Books, New York, NY; 2003. This is a historical fiction text that deals with apartheid in South Africa.
- Rissick, Dee and Ike Rosmarin. *South Africa*. Marshall Cavendish, Tarrytown, NY; 2004.

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