

Kenya

A Reading A-Z Level U Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,255

LEVELED BOOK • U

Kenya

Discussion Questions

Analyze:

How has the British Empire affected Kenya's history?

Evaluate:

Why does Kenya have more than fifty parks and reserves?



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Front and back cover: Two warriors from the Maasai (muh-SEYE) tribe stand in a reserve in Kenya.

Title page: Cheetahs live in Kenyan savannas. These cats can run up to 114 kilometers (71 mi.) per hour.

Page 3: A man from the Samburu (sam-BOO-roo) tribe in Kenya looks out over the land. Much of the country has vast stretches of land with few people.

Kenya
Countries Around the World
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Correlation

LEVEL U

Fountas & Pinnell	Q
Reading Recovery	40
DRA	40



Where Is It?

Kenya is a country in Africa that lies along the **equator**, midway between the North Pole and the South Pole. Because it's close to the equator, the temperature doesn't change much with the seasons. Some seasons have more rain than others, though, and the mountains are cooler than the lowlands.

Kenya borders five other countries: Tanzania (tan-zuh-NEE-uh), Uganda, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia. The southeastern edge of Kenya is on the Indian Ocean.

Table of Contents

Where Is It?	4
People	6
Land	8
History	10
Animals	11
Conclusion	14
Glossary	16



Nairobi is the largest city in Kenya.

The capital city of Kenya is Nairobi (neye-ROH-bee). It began as a simple railway station but has grown into a large city of more than three million people. Nairobi is the center of industry in Kenya, where raw materials are collected and made into products in factories. Nairobi's factories make goods such as clothing and furniture, along with processed foods such as bread and cornmeal. Because of Nairobi's location near East African farmlands, crops used as raw materials do not have to travel far to the food processing factories.

Nairobi National Park, a large game **reserve**, is located just a few kilometers outside the capital. Visitors to the park can see lions, giraffes, and other mammals in addition to reptiles and birds.

Kenya has many hotels for tourists who visit the country, but one hotel very close to Nairobi is a little different. At Giraffe Manor, guests can eat breakfast and dinner next to giraffes! The area around the hotel is a sanctuary for a rare species of this long-necked animal.



The Maasai (muh-SEYE) are one tribe of Kenyan people. Maasai are herders who raise cattle, goats, and sheep.

People

More than forty-five million people live in Kenya, and the population includes more than thirty African tribes. Almost all Kenyans have African ancestors and speak the language of their tribe. A very small number of people have ancestors from Europe, Asia, or the Middle East. Almost all Kenyans speak one or both of the national languages: English and Swahili (swah-HEE-lee).

Many Kenyans enjoy watching and playing football, which is also called soccer. Many famous runners have come from Kenya. Kenyan runners have competed in international races and have won gold medals in the Olympic Games. Some Kenyans also play bao, a game with a wooden board that has cups for holding seeds or stones.

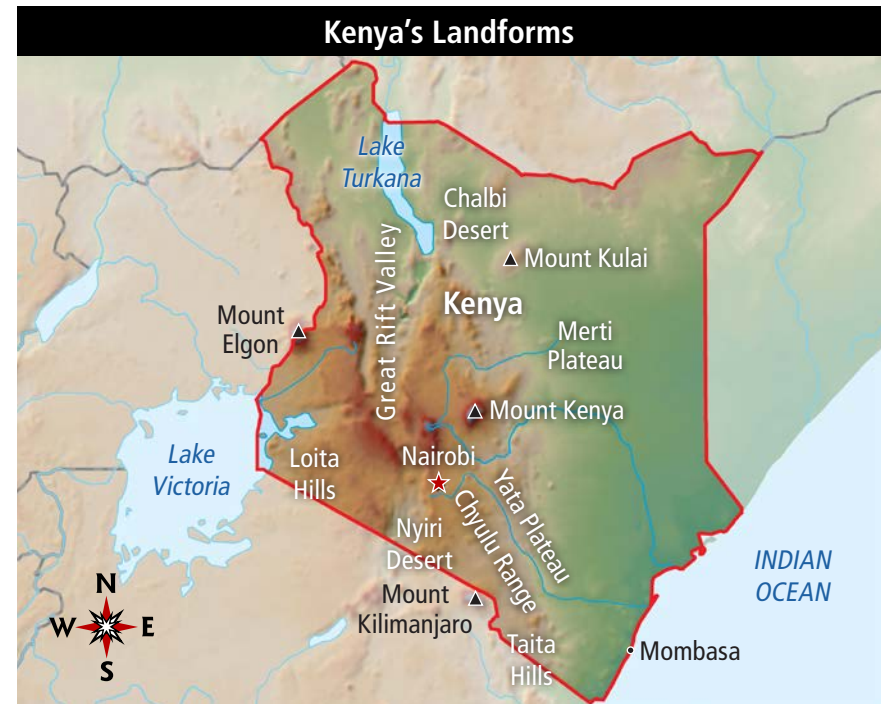


Some farmers in Kenya grow sisal plants. Sisal is dried and used to make ropes and mats.

Most Kenyans live in the countryside, where they farm to make a living. They grow food to feed their families and grow other crops to sell, such as tea, coffee, corn, sweet potatoes, and wheat.

Say It with a Kanga

Cotton is grown in Kenya and is used to make kangas, a type of large, colorful cloth. Women wear kangas as shawls, head scarves, and skirts. A woman might also use a kanga to carry her child. Many kangas have a proverb or saying on them, such as: "He who digs a well gets himself inside."



Land

The western part of Kenya contains highlands that are divided by the Great Rift Valley. This valley is a 6,437 kilometer (4,000 mi.) crack in the Earth's crust. It is about 50 to 130 kilometers (30–80 mi.) wide, and its floor contains lakes, volcanoes, and deserts. The walls of the valley are cliffs called **escarpments** that rise as high as 2,700 meters (9,000 ft.) above the floor.

The highlands are one of two areas that receive enough rain for farming, so most of Kenya's people live there. Mount Kenya, in the highlands, is the highest mountain in the country.



Kenya's coastal lowlands also receive enough rain for farming. White sand beaches and **mangrove** forests line the coast. Mombasa, an important port for East Africa, sits in a natural harbor. Farmers grow coconuts and cashews in this area of the country.

Kenya has desert areas in the north, where a few tribes herd sheep and goats. At the western edge of the deserts is Lake Turkana, where fossils of the earliest humans have been discovered.

Kenya is famous for its **savanna**, found in the areas west and east of the highlands. In the grasslands of the savanna, large herds of wildebeests (WIL-duh-beest), zebras, gazelles, and other animals graze. Grasses grow as tall as 1.5 meters (5 ft.). Thorny, flat-topped **acacia** (uh-KAY-shuh) trees dot the landscape.



Traders often came to Kenya for ivory, which comes from elephants and hippos. Many countries today ban the sale of ivory.

History

Kenya has evidence of some of the earliest humans. They did not interact much with the rest of the world until traders came from China, India, and the Middle East. In the late 1400s, people from Europe arrived in Kenya. In 1920, Kenya became a **colony** of the British Empire.

The British gave much of the land in Kenya to white people from Great Britain and South Africa, which made the native Kenyans angry. In 1952, Kenyans began to push for freedom from the British. By 1963, the country was free from British rule.

For a few decades, the president of Kenya had a great deal of power, and there was only one political party. Many Kenyans wanted to have more of a voice in how the country was run. Kenya passed a new constitution in 2010 that gave the president less power and the people more power.



People can see zebras, gazelles, and other animals at the Tsavo West National Park in Kenya.

Animals

Kenya is famous for its wildlife, and some of its animals are very rare. To protect them, Kenya has set aside more than fifty parks and reserves. Every year, millions of tourists go on **safari** to see animals such as rhinoceroses, lions, leopards, zebras, hippos, gazelles, and elephants.

Two kinds of elephants live in Kenya. The forest elephant lives in the highland rainforests, while the savanna elephant lives in many environments, including deserts.

Kenya also has two kinds of rhinoceroses. They are called the white rhino and the black rhino, but both are actually gray. The white rhino is larger and has a square lip. Rhinos do not see well, but they have keen senses of hearing and smell. Even though they are very heavy—about 3,600 kilograms (8,000 lbs.)—they can run as fast as 45 kilometers (28 mi.) per hour.



Crocodiles lie in wait for the wildebeests as they cross the Mara River.

Zebras and other grazing animals fill the Kenyan savanna. One of the most amazing sights in all of Africa is the **migration** of wildebeests and zebras. Every year, about 1.5 million wildebeests and 300,000 zebras travel over 1,600 kilometers (1,000 mi.) from Tanzania's Serengeti (ser-en-GEH-tee) Plain to Kenya's savanna to find food and water. The trip is difficult and dangerous; about 250,000 wildebeests don't survive. Along the way, lions, leopards, cheetahs, hyenas, and wild dogs follow the herds, hunting for easy prey. One of the most dangerous parts of the migration is crossing the Mara River.

Rivers such as the Mara are also home to hippopotamuses. These animals may look harmless, but they actually cause more human deaths in Africa than lions do. They are aggressive, territorial animals whose huge teeth make them deadly.



Pigments in their food, mainly shellfish, give flamingos their pink color.

Hippos stay in the water most of the time, but at night they emerge to feed on grass and other plants. Sometimes they eat crops, which causes conflict between the hippos and people.

On Lake Nakuru in the Great Rift Valley, pink flamingos gather by the millions. These wading birds stick their heads into the water to feed on small plants and animals. Scientists are not sure why they often stand on one leg.

Two of the most dangerous animals in Kenya are very small. The tsetse (TSEE-tsee) fly and the mosquito infest about one-third of the country. These insects carry the diseases of sleeping sickness and malaria. Both diseases make people very sick. Sleeping sickness gets its name from one of its symptoms: infected people have trouble staying awake due to extreme fatigue.



The tsetse fly looks like a large housefly.

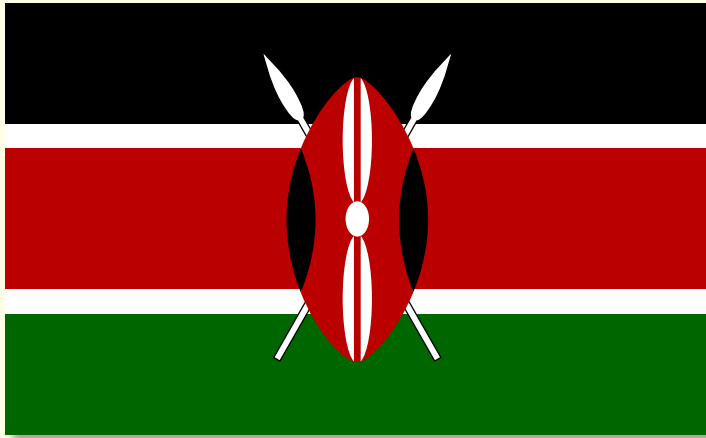


Towering over Kenya is Mount Kilimanjaro, which lies in Tanzania near its border with Kenya.

Conclusion

Kenya is famous for its savanna and the animals that live there. Many of Kenya's animals are found nowhere else. Yet the country is much more than a savanna. The cliffs of the Great Rift Valley tower over the land. Its tribes have many different customs. Its capital city is the center of industry for East Africa. From Mombasa, African goods are sent to places all over the world. Kenya is one of Earth's most amazing countries.

Kenya



Population: 45,010,056

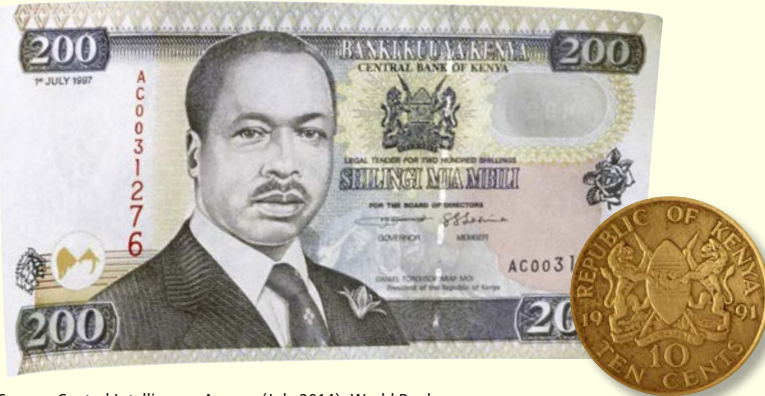
Land: 569,140 sq km (219,746 sq. mi.)

Capital City: Nairobi

Primary Languages: Swahili, English

Primary Religion: Christianity

Currency: Kenyan shilling



Source: Central Intelligence Agency (July 2014), World Bank

Glossary

- acacia** (*n.*) a tree with small yellow or white flowers that grows in warm climates (p. 9)
- colony** (*n.*) an area or a country that is ruled by or belongs to another country (p. 10)
- equator** (*n.*) an imaginary line that circles Earth halfway between the North and South Poles (p. 4)
- escarpments** (*n.*) steep slopes or cliffs that separate two areas of land (p. 8)
- mangrove** (*n.*) a tropical tree that grows in swamps or shallow salt water and grows roots from its branches (p. 9)
- migration** (*n.*) a regular, predictable movement of living things from one location to another (p. 12)
- reserve** (*n.*) a place where wild plants and animals are protected (p. 5)
- safari** (*n.*) a journey to search for wild animals (p. 11)
- savanna** (*n.*) a flat grassland with few trees (p. 9)