Behind the Mask

What is the first thing that pops into your mind when you think about wearing a mask? Perhaps it's October 31st, the day when young people, and some older folks too, don costumes and masks to celebrate Halloween!

In the United States, Halloween is one of the few occasions on which we wear masks. But masks have a long and complex history. Check out the mask on the right. It is 9,000 years old and is made of stone. In fact, it is the oldest mask ever discovered.

People from cultures all over the world have been using masks in celebrations, religious rituals, and just for fun for centuries.

Stone Mask, 7,000 BCE

THINK INSIDE THE BOX

What emoticon does this mask remind you of?

In Europe and the United States, masks are worn in religious celebrations connected to Lent. In Latin America, the Aztecs made masks of copper and clay in which to bury their dead. The Iroquois wore wooden masks called the *false face*, which were used in healing ceremonies, and the masks on the upper left are used in a Venetian carnival, which has its origins in the Middle Ages.

Carnival of Venice Masks

Meaning of the Mask

It's pretty clear that people from different cultures and different times have been wearing masks for centuries. But why wear masks at all? What purpose is served by concealing one's face?

Sometimes, a mask can be a sign and a symbol of a person's status. Masks may also be worn by people who make and enforce the laws, like judges, or by tribal leaders. Masks can show a transition from one stage in life to another; for example, from childhood to adolescence, or from the single to the married life. Often, masks are worn to mourn the passing of a family member, or as a way to worship and pray. Sometimes, groups of people wear masks simply for the fun of it. Masks are used in dances, storytelling, and other kinds of entertainment.
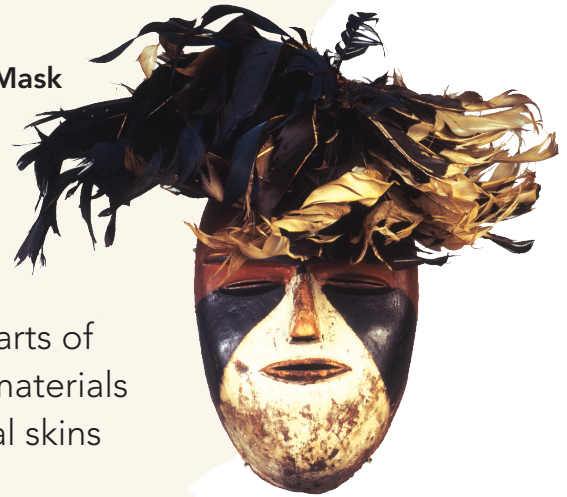
Although there are thousands of different types of masks used for many different reasons, all masks are worn to conceal the identity of the wearer and to assist the wearer in transcending their everyday self. Think of how you feel when you put on a disguise on Halloween. You feel a little different; perhaps stronger, magical, maybe even scary!

It is similar with the traditional masks that are used by different cultural groups. They all help the person who is wearing them to play another part.

African Masks

Okukwe Mask

The continent of Africa is home to hundreds of different cultures, and mask wearing is common in many of them. The masks made in Africa are world-famous objects of art and have had a major influence on the art in many other parts of the world. Most African masks are made from the natural materials available to the makers. Wood, bones, feathers, and animal skins are all common elements of the African mask.
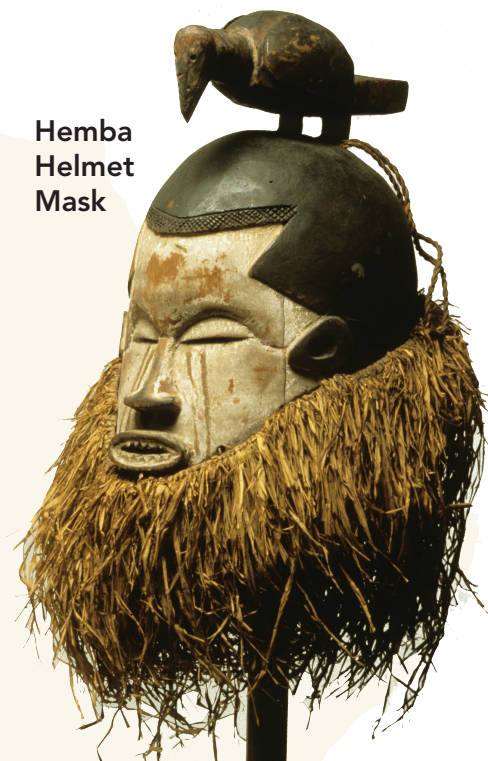

The Okukwe mask is made by the Galwa people, who live in Gabon. It is used at birth ceremonies, funerals, and by judges who determine the guilt or innocence of people accused of crimes.

The Yoruba people of Nigeria made the Gelede mask to the left. The Yoruba believe that older women have powers equal to or greater than the gods. These masks are used in celebrations to honor older females and to show their importance.

Gelede Mask

Penn Museum | 3

Revealing Masks

The Suku, who live in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo, use this Hemba Helmet mask in initiation ceremonies. Young boys of about 10 years are sent to a camp to learn the customs and laws of Suku society. When they return, they wear these masks to symbolize their entrance into adult society.

The vertical tracks or lines beneath the eyes represent tears for community members who have died. The bird on the top of the mask is a symbol of wisdom.
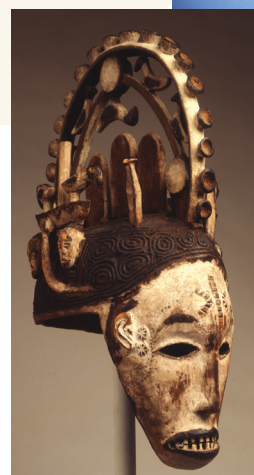
Hemba Helmet Mask

Okuyi Masks

The Puni and Lumbo people of Gabon made the Okuyi masks above. They are worn by men on stilts at funerals. The white, serene faces on the masks represent peace and the afterlife.

The Nsikpe dance crest is a wooden sculpture covered in antelope skin, which is worn on top of the head. The Nsikpe people use this crest during important ceremonies to enforce laws and maintain the peace.

The Igbo people of Nigeria made this Agbogho Mmuo mask. The mask is a representation of an adolescent girl and is worn by men in ceremonies intended to honor women.

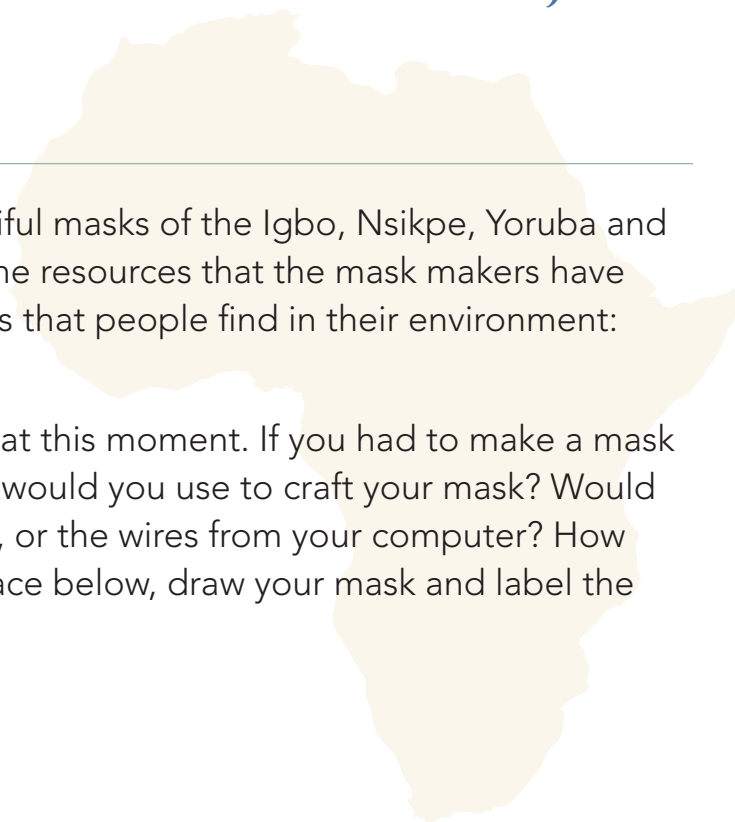**Nsikpe Dance Crest**

Agbogho Mmuo Mask

DID YOU KNOW?

The word *mask* can be both a noun and a verb.

Design Your Own Mask

You have learned that the elaborate and beautiful masks of the Igbo, Nsikpe, Yoruba and other cultural groups in Africa are made from the resources that the mask makers have available. The masks are crafted from the things that people find in their environment: wood, fur, feathers, animal skin, and grass.

Take a look around the environment you are in at this moment. If you had to make a mask using only the things in this environment, what would you use to craft your mask? Would you employ a mouse pad, the pages of a book, or the wires from your computer? How about something from the trash can? In the space below, draw your mask and label the materials that you would use.

Culture & Religion

The culture of any place consists of essentially five basic elements: food, art, (including music and dance) clothing, language, and religion.

Religious beliefs can take many different forms and vary from culture to culture. Religion and its accompanying rituals play an essential role in helping people understand the world in which they live and their role in it.

Divination Stones, Sierra Leone

VOCABULARY

1) divination
2) polytheism
3) Oracle of Delphi
4) oracle bones
5) scrying

A commonality among all religions are the established rituals that help believers make contact with a higher power, like a god. For example, Christians and Muslims pray, Native American tribes dance, and Hindus chant in the ancient language of Sanskrit.

Divination is a spiritual practice in which people use stones, bones, sticks, and other objects to interpret the world of the supernatural and foretell the future. The divination stones pictured here were tossed on the ground and the patterns they made were read by diviners. A **diviner** is a special person who is skilled at the rituals associated with particular forms of divination. They are usually holy people like priests or healers.

Ancient Divination

One type of religious ritual is divination, and different forms of it have been used since the beginning of civilization.

The ancient Greeks practiced **polytheism**, meaning belief in many gods. They built a temple to one of their gods, Apollo, in the town of Delphi. A famous form of divination took place in this temple for centuries.

Temple of Apollo at Delphi, Greece

The ancient Greeks believed that Apollo spoke through the **Oracle of Delphi**, an elderly woman who sat on a three-legged stool, placed over a crevice in the temple floor, and
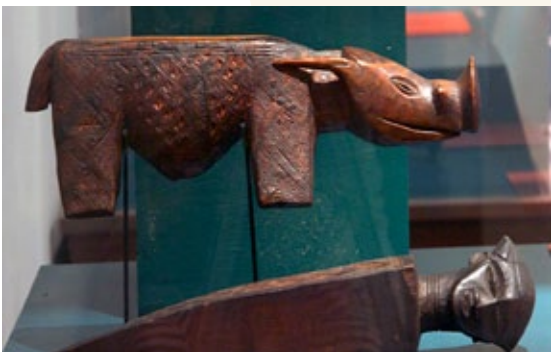
predicted the future. The oracle, also known as the Sibyl, made many famous prophecies.

Over 3,000 years ago, ancient Chinese civilization practiced another form of divination using **oracle bones**. These animal bones were super-heated until they began to crack. Diviners would then read or interpret the meaning of the cracks in the bones.

The Olmecs and the Aztecs, two ancient civilizations in Mexico, also practiced a form of divination called scyring. **Scrying** involves using a reflective surface, like a crystal ball, the surface of the water, or a mirror in which to predict the future. In fact, the Aztecs had a god called Tezcatlipoca, which means *smoking mirror*. The name *Tezcatlipoca* refers to the practice of scrying.

Divination and Africa

If you visit the Africa Gallery at the Penn Museum you will see many unusual objects connected to the practice of divination, including the oracle figures to the left.

Itombwa Oracle Figures, Zaire

Opon Ifa and Tapper, Nigeria

Oracle Figures
Diviners used these oracle figures to determine the guilt or innocence of someone accused of a crime. A diviner would call on the nature spirits by lubricating a figure with palm oil and rubbing the back of it with a knob or stone. During this process, he would call out the names of people who were suspected of committing a crime. When the stone got stuck on the oracle figure, the guilty person had been identified!
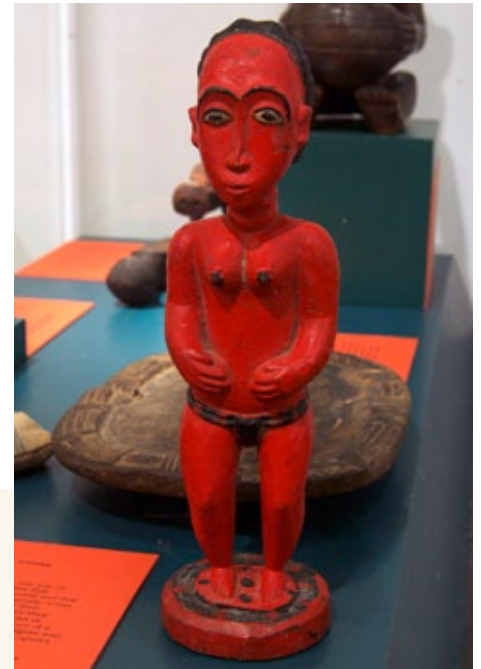
Board and Tapper
This board and tapper was used by the Yoruba who sought advice to help all kinds of problems or to answer questions about the right course of action.

The Ifa priest would gently knock on the board with the tapper to call Ifa, the creator, into attendance.

Next, the priest would throw eight objects (shells or seeds) onto the board and examine the patterns they made. He would tell his client the solution to the problem.

Spirit Spouse

This red figure to the right is called a Baule spirit spouse. In Baule mythology, there is a belief that every person who is born has a spirit husband or wife that they have forgotten. Sometimes, this spirit spouse becomes jealous and makes mischief in the lives of the human husband or wife. When trouble starts, an offering is made to the carved figure, which represents the spirit spouse, to keep her or him quiet and happy.
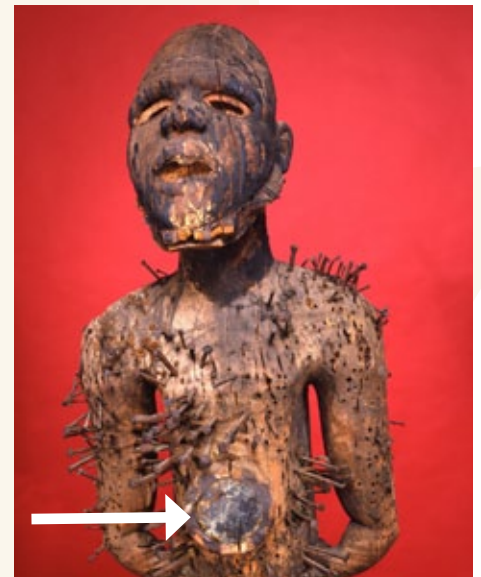
Nail Figures

These spiky wooden statues to the right are called nail figures. To the Kongolese, they represent their ancestral and natural spirits. When a person needed spiritual assistance to help solve a problem or answer a difficult life question, he would ask the nail figure and then pound a nail or metal spike into the statue. When his question was answered or his problem solved, he would go back to the figure and remove the nail.

If you look carefully at the belly of the figure on the right, you will see a round compartment. The Kongolese would put different kinds of healing herbs into that tiny space. The *belly container* is covered by a mirror. The Kongolese, like the Aztecs and many other cultures, practiced the divination method of scrying.

Spirit Spouse, Ivory Coast

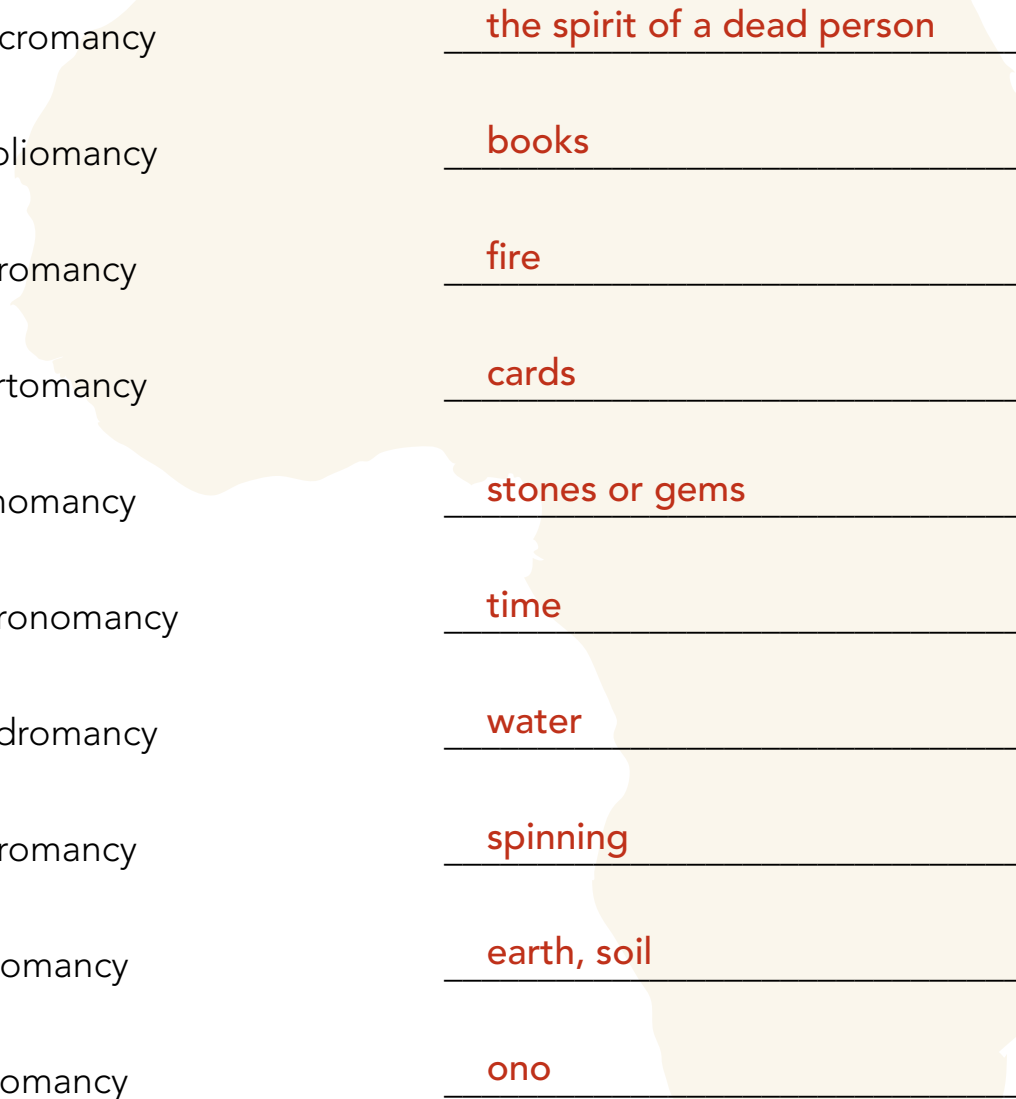**Nail Figure, Kongo Tribe**

Nail Figures, Kongo Tribe

Mancy Schmancy

Prefixes and suffixes can often help you determine the meaning of an unfamiliar word. The suffix **mancy** means **using something as a means of divination**. For example: **crystallomancy** is the practice of using a crystal ball as a means of divination. Look at the words below. Examine the prefixes to see if you can determine what method of divination is being used. Consult a dictionary if you get stuck.

1. necromancy   _____

2. bibliomancy   _____

3. pyromancy   _____

4. cartomancy   _____

5. lithomancy   _____

6. chronomancy   _____

7. hydromancy   _____

8. gyromancy   _____

9. geomancy   _____

10. onomancy   _____

Mancy Schmancy

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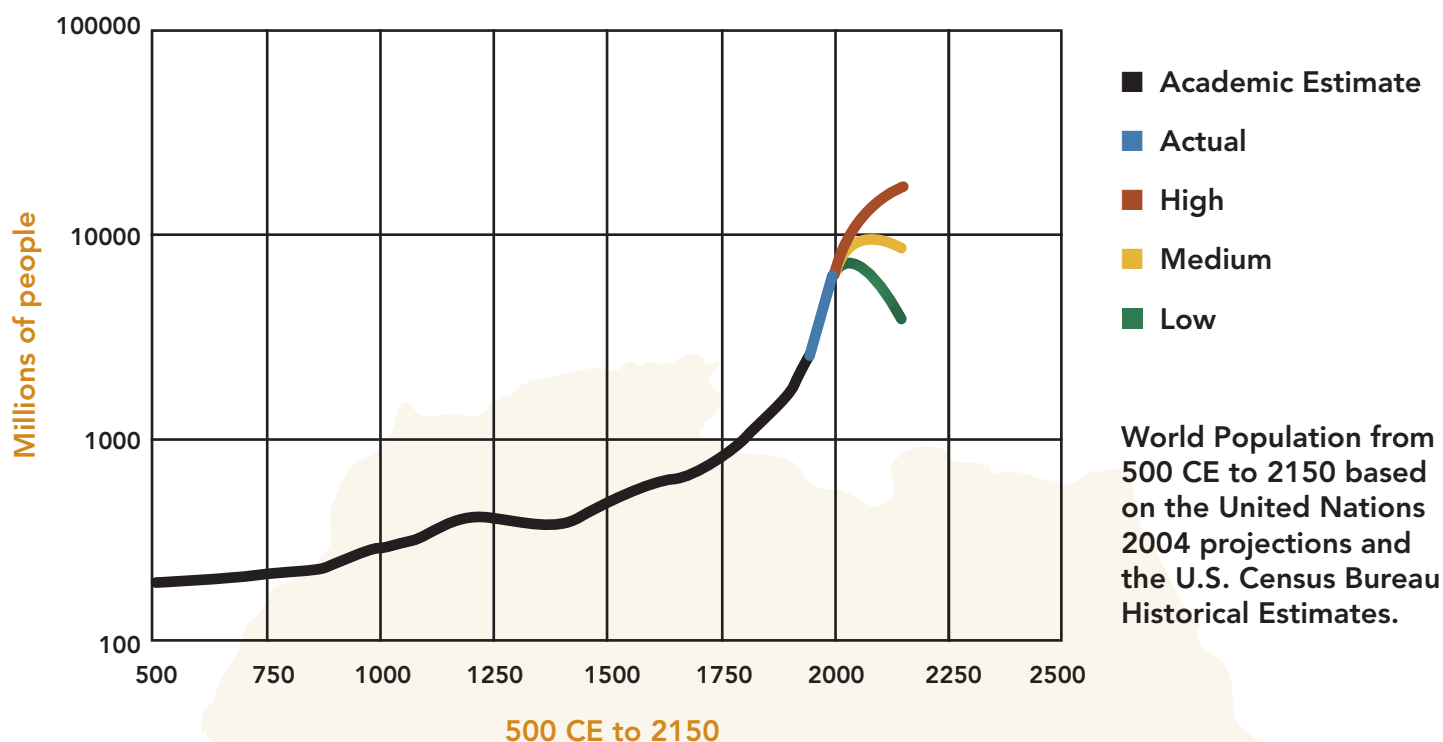
1. necromancy   the spirit of a dead person

2. bibliomancy   books

3. pyromancy   fire

4. cartomancy   cards

5. lithomancy   stones or gems

6. chronomancy   time

7. hydromancy   water

8. gyromancy   spinning

9. geomancy   earth, soil

10. onomancy   ono

Penn Museum 1

What Is Demography?

- ■ Academic Estimate
- ■ Actual
- ■ High
- ■ Medium
- ■ Low

World Population from 500 CE to 2150 based on the United Nations 2004 projections and the U.S. Census Bureau Historical Estimates.

Demography is the analysis of human populations and how populations change over time. Demographics can tell us how many people there are in a city, state, or country, the ratio of males to females, the percentage of the population that has graduated from college, and the numbers of people who live on farms or in cities.

Demographics alone can not tell the whole story of a particular place, but we can often get a snapshot of an area, draw conclusions about what life is like there, make predictions and plan for the future. For example, take a look at the line graph above. Its data describes how the world population has changed, and predicts how it will continue to change over time. If a government or international agency knows that the population of the world will steadily increase, then they can plan ahead to meet the basic needs (fuel, food, shelter, medicine) of an increasing population.

VOCABULARY

1) demography
2) census
3) anthropology
4) life expectancy
5) age structure

THINK INSIDE THE BOX

What cultural factors do you think have an impact on the increase or decrease in population?

Gathering the Data

The science of demography relies heavily on a tool called a census. A **census** is a questionnaire that asks some very basic questions about the individuals in a particular population. Most countries in the world conduct some kind of an official census. This helps them to determine where to build schools, hospitals, and other things that their population may need.

The United States Census Bureau uses a long form and a short form to collect demographic data about its citizens. All *heads of households* are required to fill out the short form, but only 1 in 6 Americans are selected to complete the longer form.

DID YOU KNOW?

The United States takes an official census of its population every 10 years. Find out more at:

http://www.census.gov/

DID YOU KNOW?

The word *census* comes from the Latin word *censere*, meaning *estimate*.

Ancient Demography

Demography is nothing new. In fact, ancient civilizations used the census to gather population data and make informed decisions about housing, taxes and agriculture. Here are some ancient census highlights:

> The world's oldest census was taken by the Chinese about 4,000 years ago.

> The Roman census of about 600 BCE showed that there were 80,000 arms-bearing citizens.

> The Incas recorded census information on *quipus*, a kind of abacus made of animal hair or cotton.

Demography and Anthropology

It may not seem so obvious at first, but there is a connection between demography and anthropology. **Anthropology** is the study of the culture of a population of people. By looking only at population data you can tell much about what the culture of a place is like.

Demographic Deductions

Look at the demographic data below about the country of Thailand and draw conclusions about the culture.

Thailand's Total Population: 66,720,153

Buddhist: 94.6%   Muslim: 4.6%   Christian: 0.7%

1. Based on the data above, do you think there are more mosques or more churches in Thailand?

   ANSWER: _____

2. Which do you think is an official holiday in Thailand: Christmas, which celebrates the birth of Jesus, or Vesak, which celebrates the birth of the Buddha?

   ANSWER: _____

LIFE EXPECTANCY

Monaco: 89.73 years

Angola: 31.88 years

One area that demographers measure is life expectancy. **Life expectancy** means the average number of years a person in a particular place is likely to live. Many factors affect life expectancy, including individual wealth, access to health care, clean drinking water, environmental conditions, and war.

AGE STRUCTURE

0 to 14 years of age

Uganda: 49.9%

Switzerland: 15.2%

To the left, you can see the incredible, nearly 58 year difference in life expectancy between Monacans and Angolans. One contributing factor is that while 100% of the population of Monaco has access to clean drinking water, only 50% of the population of Angola does.
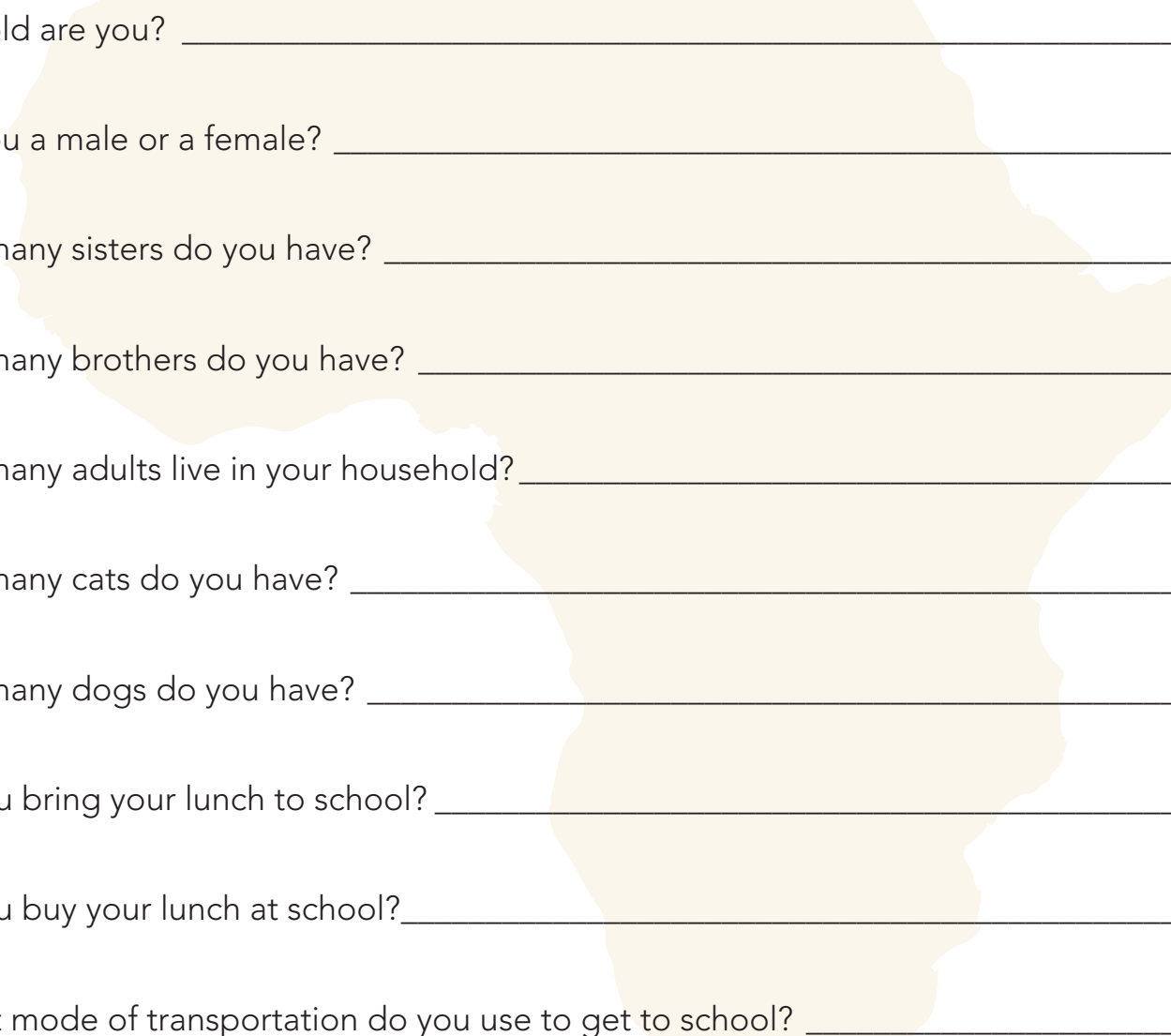
Age structure shows how the overall population of an area is distributed into various age groupings. This information can help governments make decisions about how to best use economic resources.

THINK INSIDE THE BOX

If you were the president of Uganda, what would you build more of: schools or hospitals? Explain.
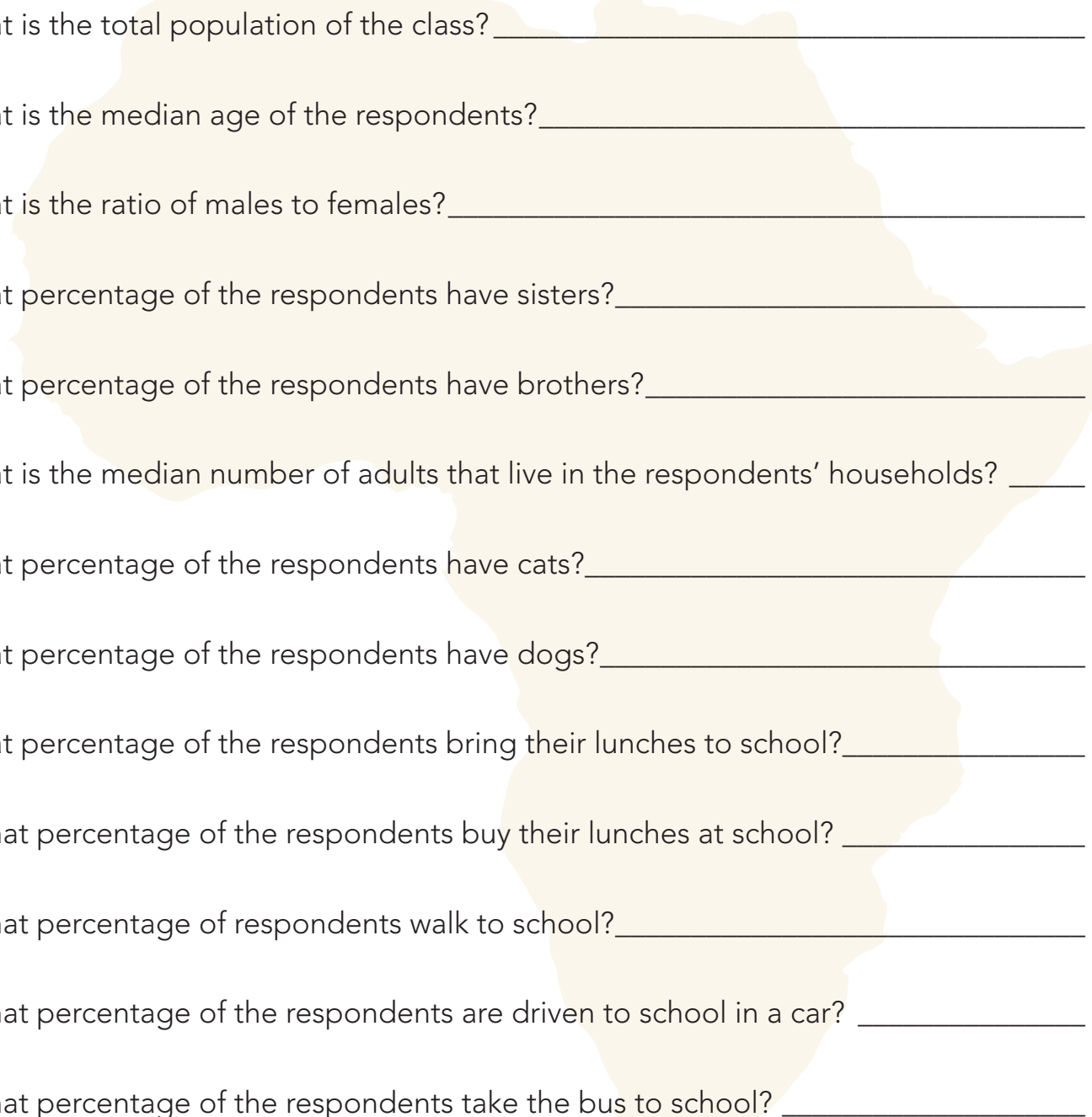
The Demography of the Classroom Questionnaire

Use this questionnaire to gather raw data about the individuals in a class of students in your school to complete a census. A census is usually anonymous, so assign each participant a number from 1 to 25, 26, etc. Write that number in the top right-hand corner of this page.

1. How old are you? _____

2. Are you a male or a female? _____

3. How many sisters do you have? _____

4. How many brothers do you have? _____

5. How many adults live in your household? _____

6. How many cats do you have? _____

7. How many dogs do you have? _____

8. Do you bring your lunch to school? _____

9. Do you buy your lunch at school? _____

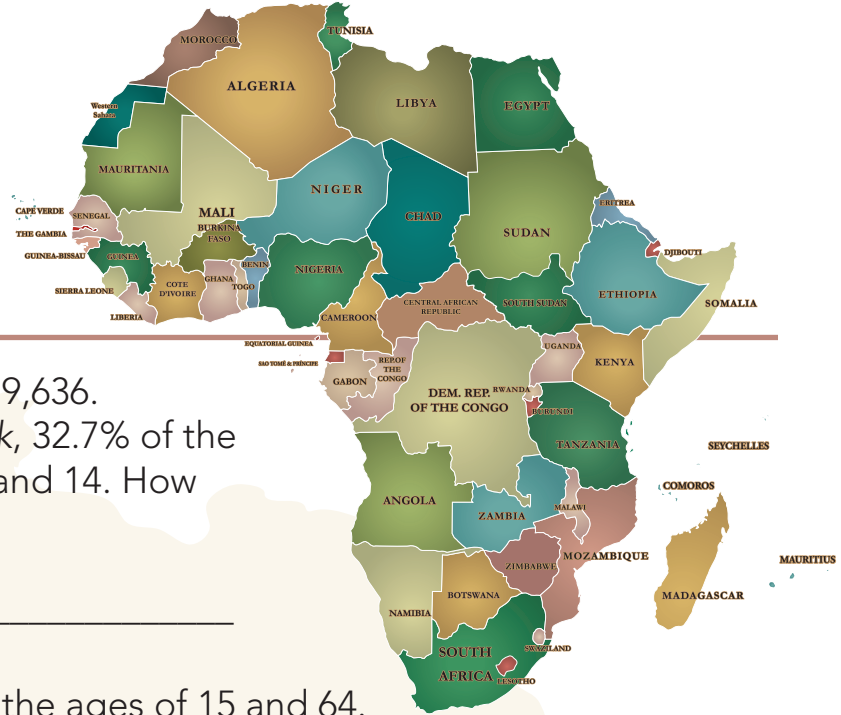10. What mode of transportation do you use to get to school? _____

The Census of the Classroom

Once you have collected the raw data using the questionnaire, you can complete your census. Describe your data as instructed below.

1. What is the total population of the class?_____

2. What is the median age of the respondents?_____

3. What is the ratio of males to females?_____

4. What percentage of the respondents have sisters?_____

5. What percentage of the respondents have brothers?_____

6. What is the median number of adults that live in the respondents' households? _____

7. What percentage of the respondents have cats?_____

8. What percentage of the respondents have dogs?_____

9. What percentage of the respondents bring their lunches to school?_____

10. What percentage of the respondents buy their lunches at school? _____

11. What percentage of respondents walk to school?_____

12. What percentage of the respondents are driven to school in a car? _____

13. What percentage of the respondents take the bus to school? _____

Africa by Numbers

Use what you know about percents, decimals, and fractions to study the demography of some African countries.

1. In 2011, Egypt's population was 82,079,636. According to the *CIA World Factbook*, 32.7% of the population is between the ages of 0 and 14. How many people is that?

   ANSWER:_____

2. 51,541,868 of Egyptians are between the ages of 15 and 64. What percentage of the population is that?

   ANSWER:_____

3. 43.4% of Egyptians live in cities. How many people is that? How do you write 43.4% as a fraction? Reduce to lowest terms.

   ANSWER:_____

4. If 90% of the Egyptian population is Muslim, and 9% are Coptic, then what percentage of the population is Christian?

   ANSWER:_____

5. Based on a population of around 82 million, if Egypt's population growth rate is 1.96% annually, about how many new Egyptians are born each year?

   ANSWER:_____

6. In 2011, Nigeria's population was 155,215,573. The Yoruba people account for 21% of the population. How many people is that?

   ANSWER:_____

7. 40% of the Nigerian population practices Christianity. Write 40% as a fraction. Reduce to lowest terms.

   ANSWER:_____

8. Based on a population of 155,215,573, if 85,368,565 of Nigerians are between the ages of 15 and 64, about what percentage of the population do they represent?

   ANSWER:_____

9. The Igbo people account for 18% of the population of Nigeria. What is the approximate number of people? Write 18% as a decimal.

   ANSWER:_____

10. Based on a population of around 155 million, if Nigeria's rate of urbanization grows by an annual rate of 3.5%, about how many Nigerians will move to cities each year?

    ANSWER:_____

11. The population of Ghana is 24,791,073. 892,478 people are over the age of 65. What percentage of the population do they represent?

    ANSWER:_____

12. 74% of the population of Ghana lives in rural areas. Write 74% as both a fraction and as a decimal.

    ANSWER:_____

13. The total population of Mali is 14,159,904. The Songhai people comprise 6% of the total population. How many people are Songhai?
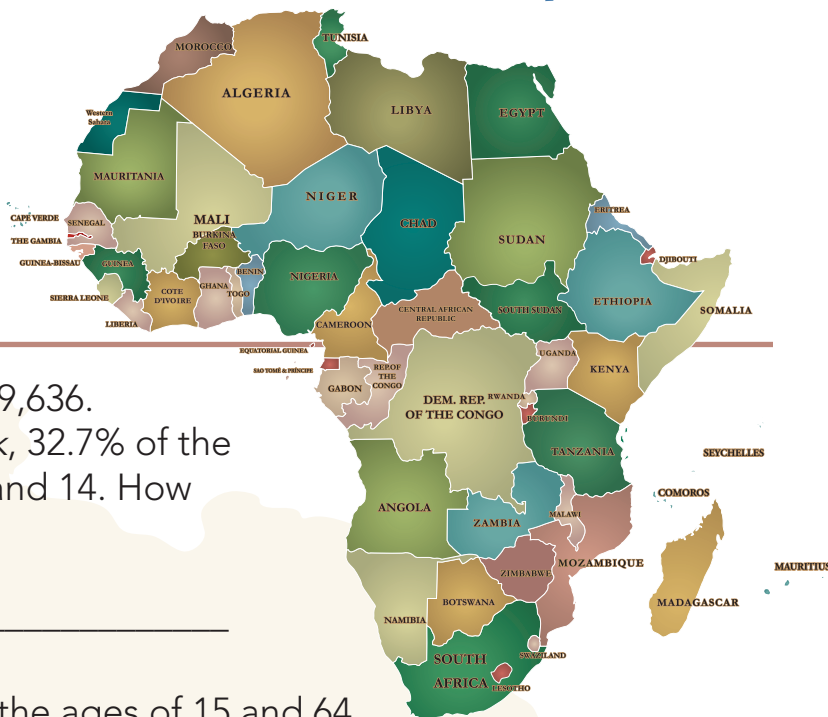
    ANSWER:_____

14. 11.49% of the total population of Mali (14,159,904) lives in the capital city of Bamako. About how many people live in Bamako? Round your answer to the nearest thousand.

    ANSWER:_____

Penn Museum 1

Africa by Numbers

Use what you know about percents, decimals, and fractions to study the demography of some African countries.

1. In 2011, Egypt's population was 82,079,636. According to the *CIA World Factbook*, 32.7% of the population is between the ages of 0 and 14. How many people is that?

   ANSWER: 26,840,040

2. 51,541,868 of Egyptians are between the ages of 15 and 64. What percentage of the population is that?

   ANSWER: 62.79%

3. 43.4% of Egyptians live in cities. How many people is that? How do you write 43.4% as a fraction? Reduce to lowest terms.

   ANSWER: 35,622,562   434/1000 = 217/500

4. If 90% of the Egyptian population is Muslim, and 9% are Coptic, then what percentage of the population is Christian?

   ANSWER: 1%

5. Based on a population of around 82 million, if Egypt's population growth rate is 1.96% annually, about how many new Egyptians are born each year?

   ANSWER: 1,607,200

6. In 2011, Nigeria's population was 155,215,573. The Yoruba people account for 21% of the population. How many people is that?

   ANSWER: 32,595,270

Africa by Numbers

7. 40% of the Nigerian population practices Christianity. Write 40% as a fraction. Reduce to lowest terms.

ANSWER: 40/100 = 2/5

8. Based on a population of 155,215,573, if 85,368,565 of Nigerians are between the ages of 15 and 64, about what percentage of the population do they represent?

ANSWER: 55%

9. The Igbo people account for 18% of the population of Nigeria. What is the approximate number of people? Write 18% as a decimal.

ANSWER: 27,938,803   0.18

10. Based on a population of around 155 million, if Nigeria's rate of urbanization grows by an annual rate of 3.5%, about how many Nigerians will move to cities each year?

ANSWER: 5,425,000

11. The population of Ghana is 24,791,073. 892,478 people are over the age of 65. What percentage of the population do they represent?

ANSWER: 3.6%

12. 74% of the population of Ghana lives in rural areas. Write 74% as both a fraction and as a decimal.

ANSWER: 74/100 = 37/50   0.74

13. The total population of Mali is 14,159,904. The Songhai people comprise 6% of the total population. How many people are Songhai?
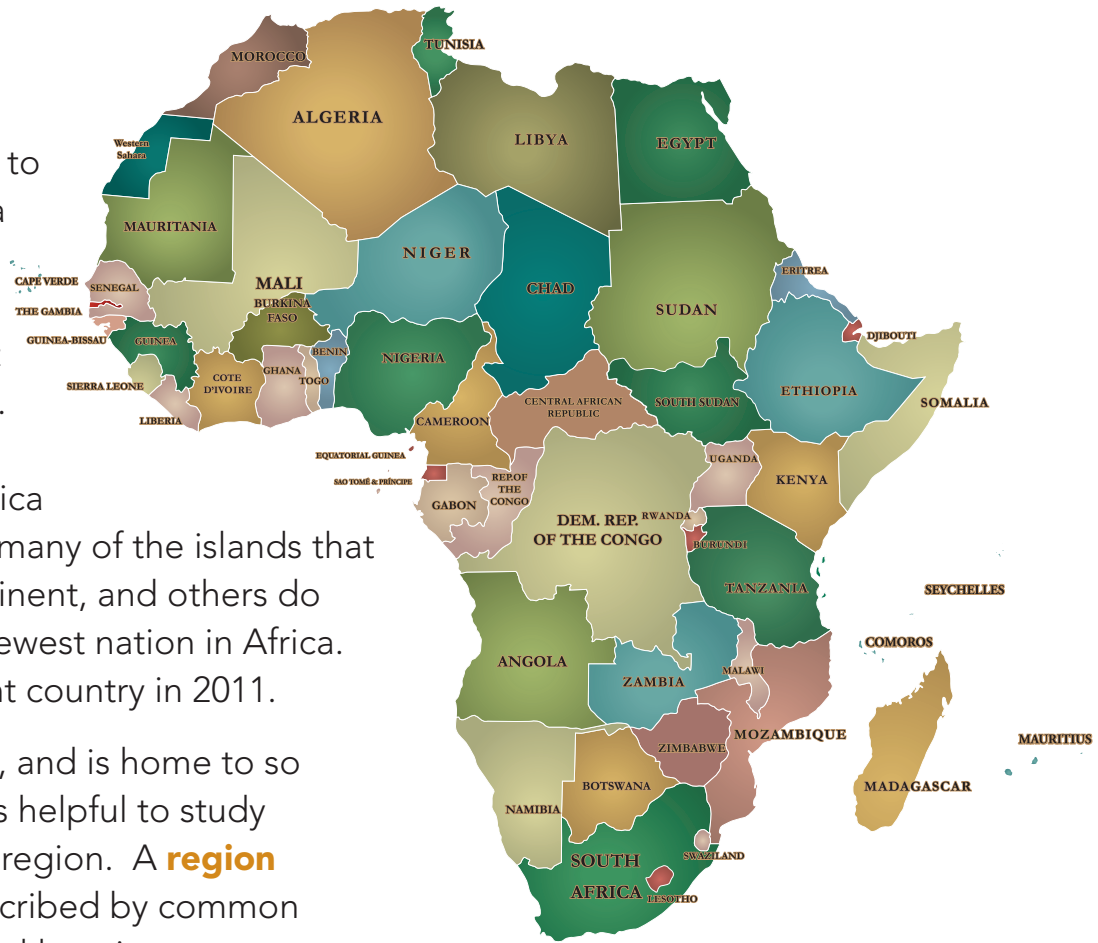
ANSWER: 849,594

14. 11.49% of the total population of Mali (14,159,904) lives in the capital city of Bamako. About how many people live in Bamako? Round your answer to the nearest thousand.

ANSWER: 1,627,000

The Countries of Africa

Africa is a huge continent which is home to about 1 billion people. According to the United Nations, Africa contains 54 independent countries and one area called Western Sarah that is currently under dispute. Different organizations count the countries of Africa differently. Some include many of the islands that surround the African continent, and others do not. South Sudan is the newest nation in Africa. It became an independent country in 2011.

Because Africa is so large, and is home to so many different nations, it's helpful to study the countries of Africa by region. A **region** is an area that can be described by common characteristics, like physical location.

MNEMONIC DEVICES

A mnemonic device is a learning strategy that you can use to help remember important information. Here are some popular mnemonic devices:

Acrostics: An acrostic is a sentence in which the first letter of each word stands for the word you are trying to remember. The acrostic **King Phil Can Only Find his Green Slippers,** can help you remember the classification of living things: Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, Species.

Acronyms: An acronym is a word or words in which the first letter in the word stands for the words you are trying to remember. The acronym SCUBA stands for Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus.
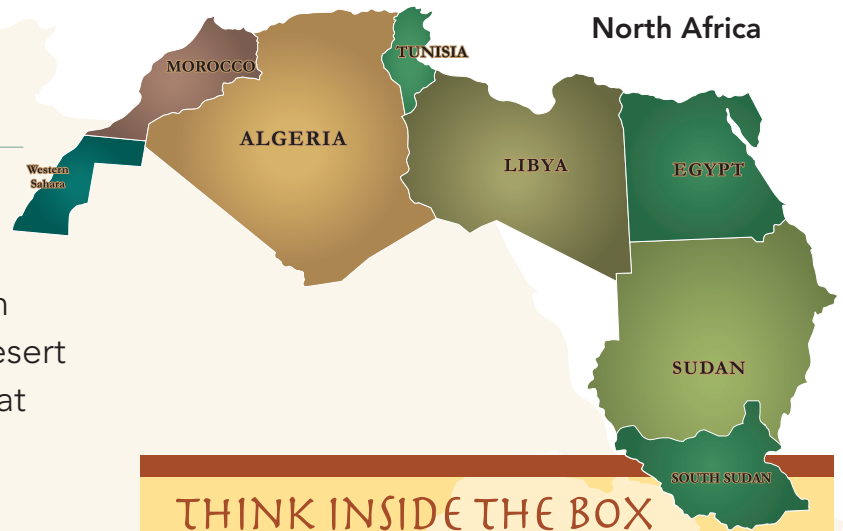
VOCABULARY

1) region
2) North Africa
3) Middle Africa
4) West Africa
5) East Africa
6) Southern Africa

North Africa

North Africa

North Africa borders the Mediterranean Sea to the north, the Atlantic Ocean to the west, the Indian Ocean to the east, and the Sahara Desert to the south. There are 8 countries that comprise North Africa. They are:

> **L**ibya

> **A**lgeria

> **S**udan

> **T**unisia

> **M**orocco

> **E**gypt

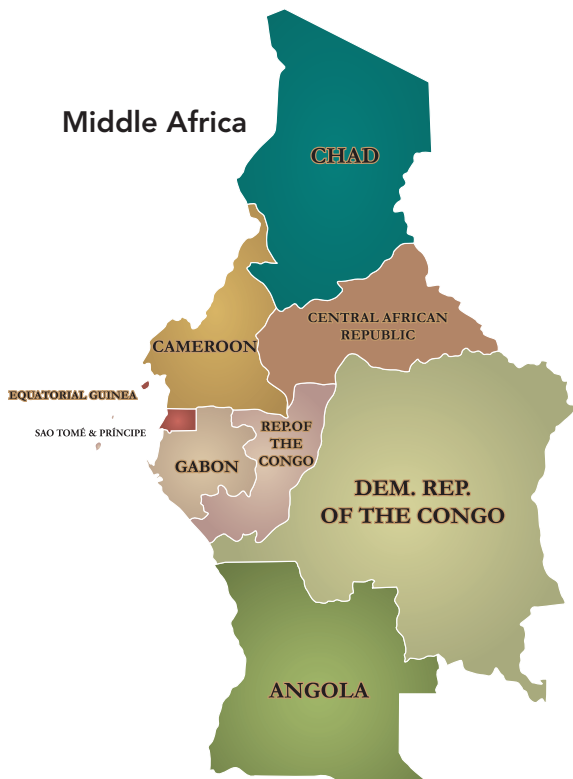> **W**estern Sahara

> **S**outh Sudan

THINK INSIDE THE BOX

How does the acronym below help you remember the countries located in North Africa?

LAST MEWS

Middle Africa

Middle Africa, sometimes called Central Africa includes 9 countries. These countries stretch down the middle of Africa, like a spine. They are:

Middle Africa

> **C**ameroon

> **C**entral African Republic

> **C**had

> **G**abon

> **R**epublic of Congo

> **E**quatorial Guinea

> **A**ngola

> **D**emocratic Republic of Congo

> **S**ao Tomé & Príncipe

THINK INSIDE THE BOX

Here is a mnemonic that can help you remember the countries of Middle Africa. Look at the map and locate these countries.

C3G-READS

West Africa

West Africa consists of a group of 16 countries. Many of them border the coast of the
Atlantic Ocean. These countries are:

> Benin
> Burkina Faso
> Cape Verde
> Cote d'Ivoire
> Gambia
> Ghana
> Guinea
> Guinea-Bissau
> Liberia
> Mali
> Mauritania
> Niger
> Nigeria
> Senegal
> Sierra Leone
> Togo

THINK INSIDE THE BOX

Create a mnemonic device that can help you remember all of
the countries located in West Africa. Write it here.

East Africa

Many of the countries in **East Africa** border the Indian Ocean. They are:

> Burundi
> Comoros
> Djibouti
> Eritrea
> Ethiopia
> Kenya
> Madagascar
> Malawi
> Mauritius
> Mozambique
> Rwanda
> Seychelles
> Somalia
> Tanzania
> Uganda
> Zambia
> Zimbabwe

East Africa

CHUNKING

Chunking is another technique that you can use to help you remember large pieces of information. When you chunk information, you break it down into smaller units. Telephone numbers are chunked into 3 digits, 3 digits, then 4 digits. For example: 215-898-4000.

THINK INSIDE THE BOX

How could you chunk the countries of East Africa to help you remember them?

Southern Africa

There are five countries in southern Africa: Some of them border the Atlantic, the Pacific and the Indian Oceans. The countries are:

> **S**outh Africa
> **S**waziland
> **B**otswana
> **L**esotho
> **N**amibia

South Africa

THINK INSIDE OF THE BOX!

Snakes slithered by last night.

Explain what this sentence has to do with countries in Africa?

Africa Anagrams

An anagram is a kind of word play. To create an anagram you must rearrange all of the letters in the word to create a new word or phrase. Here are a few examples:

> *No Tin Cent* is Continent
> *Ignore* is Region

Below are 15 anagrams of African countries. See if you can solve them.

1. Aim A Bin   _____

2. Be Inn   _____

3. Funk Boa Airs   _____

4. Bag I Am   _____

5. Age Lens   _____

6. Earlier Nose   _____

7. Sandal Wiz   _____

8. An Key   _____

9. Swan Boat   _____

10. Age Liar   _____

11. Ably I   _____

12. And Us   _____

13. Tuna I Is   _____

14. Roam Once   _____

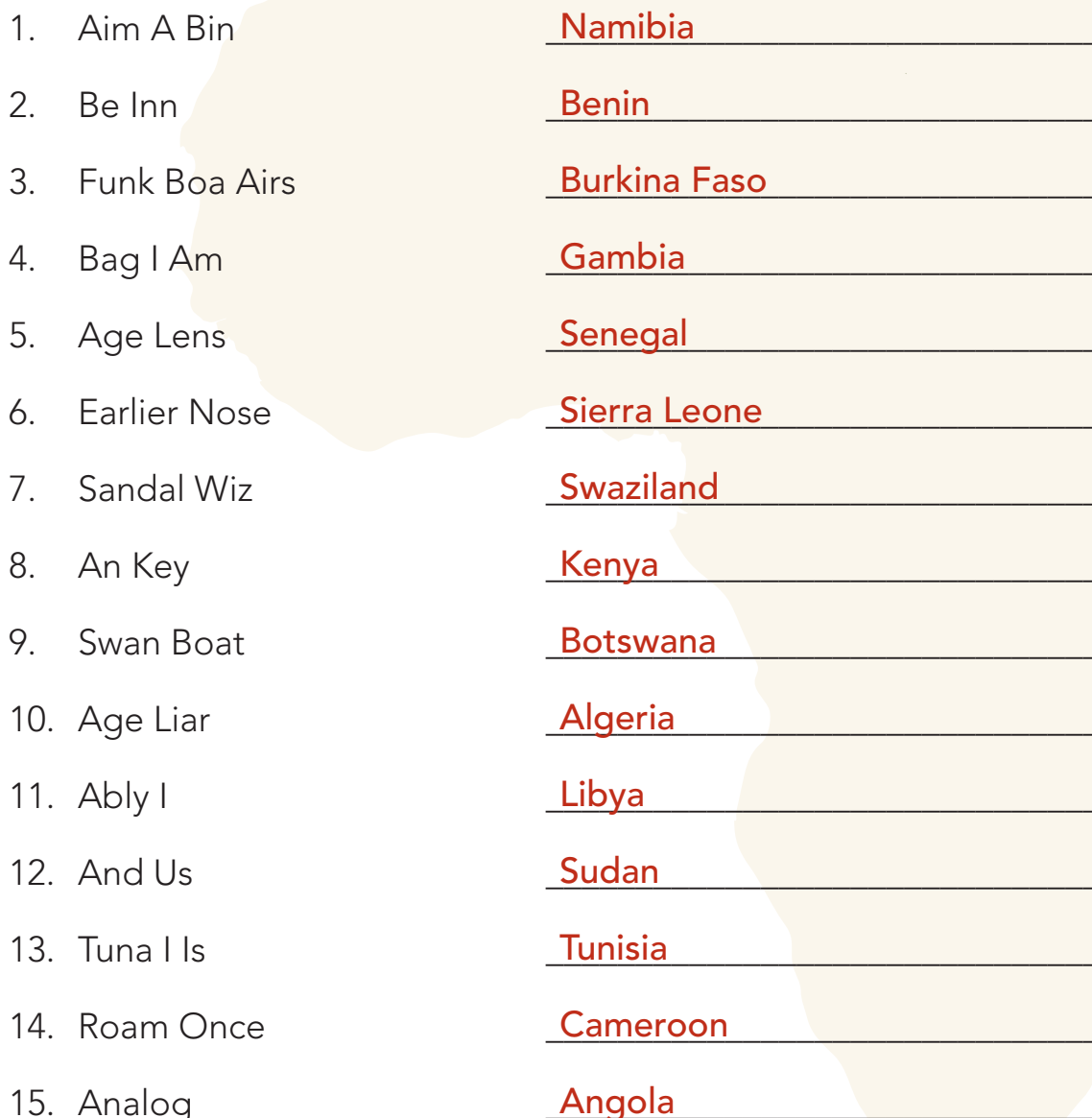15. Analog   _____

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Africa Anagrams

An anagram is a kind of word play. To create an anagram you must rearrange all of the letters in the word to create a new word or phrase. Here are a few examples:

> *No Tin Cent* is Continent
> *Ignore* is Region

Below are 15 anagrams of African countries. See if you can solve them.

1. Aim A Bin   **Namibia**

2. Be Inn   **Benin**

3. Funk Boa Airs   **Burkina Faso**

4. Bag I Am   **Gambia**

5. Age Lens   **Senegal**

6. Earlier Nose   **Sierra Leone**

7. Sandal Wiz   **Swaziland**

8. An Key   **Kenya**

9. Swan Boat   **Botswana**

10. Age Liar   **Algeria**

11. Ably I   **Libya**

12. And Us   **Sudan**

13. Tuna I Is   **Tunisia**

14. Roam Once   **Cameroon**

15. Analog   **Angola**