Africa’s Environmental Issues

Pollution & Unequal Distribution of Water, Deforestation, & Desertification
SS7G2 The student will discuss environmental issues across the continent of Africa.

a. Explain how water pollution and the unequal distribution of water impacts irrigation, trade, industry, and drinking water.

b. Explain the relationship between poor soil and deforestation in Sub-Saharan Africa.

c. Explain the impact of desertification on the environment of Africa from the Sahel to the rainforest.
Teachers

Print off the following page for each student. They should complete the chart while discussing the presentation.
## Environmental Issues in Africa

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Africa’s Environmental Issues

Pollution & Unequal Distribution of Water, Deforestation, & Desertification
Water
Africa & Water

- Water has always been vital to Africa.
- The oceans, rivers, & seas that surround and run through Africa have allowed Africans to engage in trade and to have access to the outside world.
- The interactions around these bodies of water have enabled certain cities to become thriving centers of commerce.
Countries with large river systems have enough water for farming and for people in villages, towns, and cities.

Unfortunately, the majority of Africa has trouble getting enough water for people to survive.

Most African countries have very little clean water for drinking and washing.

Droughts (periods of very little rainfall) have hurt many parts of Africa.

People who live in areas affected by drought often face starvation and poverty.

The tension between the needs of a growing population and the limited supply of water is a serious issue for most of Africa.
Freshwater Stress and Scarcity in Africa by 2025

Water scarcity in 2025
- Less than 1,000 m³/capita/year

Water stress in 2025
- 1,000 to 1,700 m³/capita/year

Global Water Stress and Scarcity

Billions of people affected
- Low
- Medium
- High

Population projections 1995 - 2050

UNEP
Many countries in Africa do not have enough clean water, even the ones that have large rivers. African countries have the problem of increasing pollution from factories and contamination from animals & human waste. Overpopulation and poor sanitation regulations have made life along Africa’s water sources difficult. Clean water is needed for basic health and sanitation. Lack of clean water to wash with increases the frequency of skin and eye infections. People who are not able to have access to clean water are at risk for many water-borne diseases that spread by parasites living in standing water.
Water Pollution

• Some countries in Africa have tried to improve their economies by building factories.

• Oftentimes, government officials ignore the industrial wastes that are bring flushed into rivers and streams as long as the factories are profitable.
Desertification
Desertification

• The Sahel is one part of Africa that is experiencing severe problems with desertification, the process of the desert expanding into areas that had formerly been farmland.

• As the land is overused, the soil becomes poor and powdery.

• The winds coming from the Sahara gradually blow the dry topsoil away, leaving a barren and rocky land that loses its ability to hold water.
A majority of the desertification is the result of the actions of people rather than climate.

Desertification in Africa is caused by:
- Poor farming practices.
- People cutting down the trees that help hold the soil in place.
- Animals being allowed to graze too heavily in an area and stripping all of the vegetation from the soil.
- Draining the surface & underground water for industrial & home use.

The survival needs of the people living there are clear, but they are destroying major parts of their environment in the process.
Effects

• Africans who have lived for generations by farming and raising grazing animals are finding they have less and less land available to them.

• The people who live in these areas often face starvation and poverty.
  • Many move into urban areas hoping to find work, but most find only more poverty.
Some Africans work hard to try to replant trees, to build windbreaks to keep out the sand, and to push the desert back whenever they can.

- In many parts of Africa, this has become a losing battle, as the desert claims more land each year.

In recent years, the United Nations and the World Food Bank have come to the aid of those living in parts of the Sahel.

- They have worked to find solutions to help the people survive and live a better life.
Deforestation
As Africa’s population increases and nations try to develop economically, deforestation has become a growing concern. Deforestation is the process of forests being destroyed to make way for human development.

The main cause of deforestation in Africa’s rainforests today is commercial logging. The timber from the rain forest is exported all over the world and helps boost the economy of many African countries. Unfortunately, the environment is destroyed as a result.

Timber cutting businesses also need roads and heavy equipment to get the cut trees to the cities. These also destroy more of the rain forests’ natural environment.
Effects

• As the number of trees shrinks, so does the amount of oxygen produced.
  • Meanwhile, the amount of harmful carbon dioxide in the air increases.

• Less rainforests could also mean fewer medicines.
  • About one-fourth of all medicines people use come from rainforest plants.

• Deforestation also leads to extinction of species of both plants and animals.

• Destruction of forests also contributes to soil erosion and desertification.
Many of the rainforests that once ran from Guinea to Cameroon are already gone.

Nigeria is losing its rainforests at the fastest rate.

The United Nations estimates that Nigeria has now lost about 55 percent of its original forests to logging, clearing land for farming, and cutting trees to use as fuel.
Design a Shirt

Directions: Design a T-shirt that will convey a message to help solve one of Africa’s environmental issues.

1. Create a slogan for the shirt. This needs to be a thoughtful message or statement that describes the environmental issue and how it can be solved.
2. Draw a visual for the shirt. This could be an image or graphic that relates to the environmental issue.
3. On the back of the paper, write a paragraph to describe the environmental issue and your ideas for how it can be solved.
1. Why do some governments ignore industrial pollution of major rivers?
2. What is a drought?
3. What is a desertification?
4. What is one part of Africa that is experiencing major problems with desertification?
5. What are the main causes of desertification in Africa?
6. What is the life-like for Africans who are forced to leave their farms for major cities?
7. What is the main cause of deforestation in Africa today?
8. What causes the amount of carbon dioxide in the air to increase?
9. Which African country is losing its rainforest the fastest?

Directions: Answer the questions below with information that you have learned about the environmental issues that Africa is facing.
1. Literacy rate
2. South Africa
3. Gross Domestic Product
4. South Africa – economically stronger
5. Mixed, South Africa is closer to market than Nigeria
6. Oil
7. Agriculture has suffered greatly & now Nigeria must import food
8. Command
9. Gold, diamond, & platinum mining
10. Unemployment and high poverty rates, unequal distribution of wealth (GDP vs. GDP per Capita)
Teacher - Fortune-Ate Advice
Ticket Out the Door

Have students write advice for Africa regarding the environmental concerns that the continent is facing.

I like to have the students write fortunes at the end of class, and then explain them (on the back) at the beginning of the next class. I also pull up some example fortunes online to show the students examples.

*There are 2 per page.
Write a fortune cookie fortune for Africa regarding the environmental concerns that the continent is facing.
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