

The Legacy of Colonialism in Africa

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- Objectives:** The students will:
1. Learn more about the political organization of space in Africa.
 2. Better understand colonialism and imperialism and its effects on the contemporary political pattern of Africa.
 3. Discuss and explain in writing the impact of colonization on the political geography and history of modern Africa.

- Materials:**
1. Copies of the Flags of Colonial Powers sheets (about 3 sheets of each flag), preferably on card stock.
 2. Additional copies of the following handouts for each student:
 - Activity Handout: The Legacy of Colonialism in Africa
 - Blank outline map of Africa
 - Labeled outline map of Africa (or other map of Africa showing modern states)
 - Africa Quiz
 3. Masking tape or chalk (see Procedure step 1, below)
 4. Colored pencils
 5. Pen or pencil; blank paper

- Key concepts:**
1. Political organization of space
 2. Colonialism and imperialism
 3. Types of territorial morphologies
 4. Nature and meaning of boundaries
 5. Origins of modern African political geography

Links to *Geography for Life: The National Geography Standards:*

1. Using knowledge of geography to understand the world (the political organization, history, and complex nature of modern Africa).
2. Using geographic thought to ask questions about why modern Africa looks and behaves as it does (i.e. how have the many geometric, superimposed boundaries created by European colonization impacted Africa?)
3. Understanding the political geography of Africa from the context of the colonial legacy and diverse nature of Africa, not just isolated facts like where places are in Africa.

- Procedure:**
1. Before class begins, use masking tape to create a rough outline of Africa on the floor of the classroom. Alternatively, chalk can be used on an outdoor stretch of asphalt or concrete if one is available and weather permits. The outline should be large enough to accommodate most of you students inside of it.
 2. Print 3 copies of each of the flag sheets (preferably on a color printer to card stock) and cut into quarters to create cards (use a paper cutter if you have it). Also prepare copies of the other handouts listed above.
 3. Put 4 of each of the 7 flag cards upside down in a stack, shuffle them, then have the students each pick a card. If you have more or less than 28 students in your class, add or subtract cards accordingly so that every student will get one.
 4. Have students get together in groups with the other students that have their card to form a "state." Tell them they all think their state is the best and that it is their right to claim as much land as possible to try to make the strongest empire.

5. Move desks and chairs if necessary to reveal the outline map of Africa. It is fine to leave some as obstacles like desks and chairs in places like central Africa (to represent dense rainforest), northwest Africa (to represent the Atlas mountains), east Africa (to represent the highlands of Ethiopia and Kenya), and Mt. Kilimanjaro in northern Tanzania. You also might want to lay down some large sheets of brown construction paper or cardboard to represent the Sahara desert in North Africa and possibly the Namib Desert in southwest Africa.
6. Give each group 8 or so more of their flag cards to be placed on the map of Africa to lay claim to territories. If possible, have them all gather on one side of the room as far away from the map of Africa as possible to represent their starting point in Europe. Give Great Britain a few second head start (because that's what happened historically), then let the rest of the groups scramble to catch up. Tell them they are racing to try to claim as much territory as possible.
7. After a minute or so when things look crazy, stop the students and ask if anyone has any ideas about how these territorial claims might proceed more smoothly. Hopefully it can be agreed that the European powers should meet to discuss a more orderly division of Africa. This should be done in the part of the room where they started—Europe—with representatives from each group sitting at chairs in a circle to discuss the various claims and decide who should get what territory. Take a couple of minutes to try to work this out while the other three or so members of each group are relayed information about where the flags should be moved and where they should stand to support their claims.
8. Congratulate the students if they are able to do this, but then ask if anyone was left out of the negotiations. Answer: Africans and possibly other world states. Do they think this was a good idea? Might it create any problems in the long run? Tell the students that the Africans were—and still are—very diverse, with about 2,000 languages spoken on the continent and a very large number of ethnic groups. If these groups are split or combined with traditional enemies and/or those who speak different languages, practice different customs, etc., how might this impact traditional trading practices, agricultural patterns, etc.? Make sure they understand that this scramble and division of Africa has had profound implications for Africa that are still very much in evidence today. Do they know the terms for the drive to carve up empires (imperialism) and the administration of the territories by the outside powers (colonialism)? Balance these negatives with a short discussion about how Africans might also have benefited by the presence of the Europeans (i.e. access to new technologies, improved health care, education, trade, etc).
9. Move desks back into position and pass out the activity handout: The Legacy of Colonialism in Africa. Discuss roughly where the colonial powers were actually able to lay claim. If you have access to a data projector or color transparency you might also want to show students a color map of the colonial powers in 1914. There are some good ones available online, such as the one listed in the Additional Resources section below.
10. Pass out the blank outline map of Africa. Take a couple of minutes to see how many of the modern states (with borders largely created by the Europeans when they met at the Berlin Conference in 1884-85) they can label. Have them use pencil so they can make corrections if necessary. After they have tried this for a couple of minutes let them use a modern map of Africa like the labeled handout to finish labeling the rest of the states.
11. Have students follow the other directions on the activity handout to create a legend of colonial powers in 1914 using 7 different colored pencils for the seven colonial powers (or 8 if the independent states are also colored). Then the the map should be colored accordingly.
12. After students have finished, the class should discuss interesting political geography features of Africa. For example, which colonial power(s) controlled the largest expanse of territory in Africa in 1914? Which of the following territorial morphologies can be found and which are most prevalent: Compact, Elongated, Fragmented,

Perforated, and Prorupt (protruded) (de Blij and Murphy 2003, p. 210). How might these morphologies have impacted the history and development of African states? Also, which types of boundaries are most prevalent? (see de Blij and Murphy 2003, p. 213-214). How might these boundaries also have impacted the history and development of African states?

13. For homework, have the students write a short reflective essay about the colonization of Africa and how it has impacted the political geography and modern history of the continent.

Assessment:

1. Completion of the map of Africa with modern states and colonial powers.
2. Completion of the Africa Quiz, which can be done as a pretest and/or posttest.
3. Short writing assignment to reflect on the colonization of Africa and how it has impacted the political geography and modern history of the continent.
4. If desired, have students also memorize the states of Africa and pass out a blank outline map to be completed as a quiz. See Additional Resources below for links to great online resources to help students memorize the states.

Final products:

1. Completed map of Africa.
2. Quiz on African political geography
3. Completed writing assignment on the political geography of Africa.

Additional resources:

1. For more discussion of the political organization of Africa see this excellent article published on the web by Christopher Clapham of the University of Lancaster: *Territoriality and Statehood in Tropical Africa* <<http://www.psa.ac.uk/cps/1996/clap.pdf>>.
2. Colonial map of Africa available through World Book Encyclopedia Online: <http://www.worldbook.com/wc/popup?path=features/explorers&page=html/impact_colonial_eurocolo.html&direct=yes>.
3. de Blij, H.J. and Murphy, A.B. (2003). *Human Geography: Culture, Society, and Space*, 7th ed. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley and Sons.
4. A fun way for students to test themselves and memorize the states of the world: Geography quizzes: <<http://www.lizardpoint.com/fun/geoquiz/index.html>>. Flash enabled quizzes: <<http://www.sheppardsoftware.com/index.html>>.
5. Flags used by permission from the FOTW Flags Of The World website: <<http://flagspot.net/flags>>.

* Please note: I published part of this lesson in the Wide Ranging World Map Teacher's Guide and Activity Kit (2005) through the Exploration Company and Teacher's Discovery. I wrote the guide with Daniel Rirdan, but this lesson (and the one published) was written entirely by me.