Africa Countries and Tribes

Journey Through Our Heritage Jeopardy Competition
Africa: A brief description

Africa is the World’s second-largest and second most-populous (population) continent, Asia is the first. Africa is about 11.7 million square miles and this includes islands. Africa covers 6% of the Earth’s total surface area and about 20.4% of total land area. There are 61 territories in Africa. The continent is surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea to the north. The Suez Canal and the Red Sea are along the Northeast side. The Indian Ocean lies on the Southeast of Africa and the Atlantic Ocean to the West.

There are 53 countries in Africa, including Madagascar and island groups. Africa is well known to be where humans originated and the great apes. The earliest known hominids (apes) were living seven million years ago. The earliest known Homo sapiens (humans) were found in Ethiopia, 200,000 years ago. Africa straddles the equator (the center of the earth). It is the only continent to stretch from northern temperate zones to southern temperate zones (stretches along both north and south the longest). Temperate zone is between 30 and 60 degrees latitude. Latitude stretches from West to East.

http://www.ehow.com/facts_5656086_temperate-zone_.html

Slavery

Slavery trade has been practiced in Africa between the seventh and twentieth century’s (600 through 1900’s). Arab slave trade (slavery in the east) took 18 million slaves from Africa. Between the fifteenth and the nineteenth centuries, the Atlantic slave trade took 7-12 million slaves to the New World. In West Africa, the decline of the Atlantic slave trade in 1820 caused dramatic economic shifts. Between 1808 and 1860, the British West Africa Squadron seized approximately 1,600 slave ships and freed 150,000 Africans who were aboard.

Languages

Well over a thousand languages are spoken in Africa today. Most are of African origin, but there are some from European or Asian origin. Africa is the most multilingual continent in the world. It is not rare for individuals to speak African languages along with European ones as well. There are four major language families indigenous to Africa:

1. The Afro-Asiatic languages are a language family that consists of 240 languages and 285 million people from the Horn of Africa, North Africa, the Sahel and Southwest Asia.
2. The Nilo- Saharan language family consists of more than a hundred languages spoken by 30 million people. Nilo- Saharan languages are spoken by Nilotic tribes in Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Uganda, and northern Tanzania.
3. The Niger-Congo language covers much of Sub- Saharan Africa and is probably the largest language family in the world.
4. The Khoisan languages number about fifty and are spoken in Southern Africa by 120,000 people. The Khoi and San peoples are considered the original inhabitants of this part of Africa.
Following the end of colonialism, nearly all African countries adopted official languages that originated outside the continent. Several countries granted legal recognition to indigenous languages (such as Swahili, Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa). In numerous countries English and French are used for communication in the public sphere (government, education, commerce and media).

What are the five myths about Africa?

**Myth One:** Race- All Africans are black
False- While many African people may be considered black by certain cultures, not everyone uses this terminology including some Africans themselves. Africans range from an almost dark blue-black skin color to a very light skin color that would “pass” in the United States as socially white.

**Myth Two:** History- Africa has made no meaningful contributions to world history and Western values such as political freedom and democracy are not traditionally African.
False. It was through slavery, which stripped the Africans of their dignity and history that this myth developed. Africans built numerous ancient cultures, civilizations and empires. Africa was also the center of one of the oldest of all civilizations, Egypt and the ancient Greeks borrowed man of their ideas.

**Myth Three:** Primitivism- Africans are primitive in lifestyle, art and technology. Africa has contributed no innovations to the rest of the world.
False. The word primitive is derogatory. What Africans have by way of traditional lifestyles, arts and technology is AFRICAN, developed in Africa. Western society terms this primitive because it is different to them, and they feel inferior.

**Myth Four:** Geography- Africa is mostly comprised of jungle and desert.
False. Although Africa does contain the world’s largest region of forest, the continent has tremendous ecological and geographical diversity. Included are the largest desert in the world, high snowy mountains, tropical forest, grassland, mixed savanna and pine forests.

**Myth Five:** Population- Africa is densely over-populated
False. Africa has marginally more population per square mile than North America. Vast areas of Africa, like North America is completely unpopulated.
Map of the African Continent with its current borders showing the distribution of African language families and some major African Languages, map based on a map made by Mark Dingemanse, which is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 License.

http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/african-language-map.htm