

Afro Probe

Understanding Challenges in Africa Today

An Integrated Literacy-based Unit

For Intermediate and Senior Students

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Educator's Guide

"Afro Probe" is a project designed to provide teachers (in elementary and secondary schools) with resources to assist them in presenting images and information about African people and cultures that are not usually conveyed through mainstream media sources. Too often, mainstream print and broadcast media portray Africa and its people as victims of poverty, disease, and conflict while neglecting to tell stories of the extraordinary resilience of Africans and the many contributions they make and have made to global civilization. A better balance between the "negative" and "positive" is needed to ensure that Africans are portrayed in a manner that is accurate, fair, just and respectful of their inherent dignity.

What is AfricaFiles?

AfricaFiles is a network of volunteers committed to promoting African perspectives and alternative analyses for human rights and economic justice in Africa. It is website-based (www.africafiles.org) and evolved out of electronic information services provided by the former Inter-Church Coalition on Africa (ICCAF) and KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives. AfricaFiles provides high quality articles and documents that attempt to augment conventional reporting on Africa with alternative sources of news and analysis of the continent and its people, all designed to represent Africa and its people in more accurate and just manner. The AfricaFiles website contains more than 10,000 articles and documents and is growing rapidly. More than 1,000 people from around the world are subscribers to the site and regularly receive mailings about countries, themes and issues of their choice, and many more people visit the site regularly. AfricaFiles includes a developing section on "Africa's image in the world" which consists of articles and documents divided into several categories.

An Integrated Literacy-based Approach

Addressing **Literacy** is a key element of the units, since each unit revolves around reading a **Focus Article** to expose a contemporary challenge in Africa. Attention is given to the readability of each piece through addressing key vocabulary, providing graphic organizers for guided reading, visual resources that can function as schemata to enhance comprehension, and follow up activities that provide students the opportunity to respond to the materials and demonstrate their understanding through a variety of literacies—oral, written, emotional and artistic. Ancillary materials are recommended that provide a range of challenge to offer enrichment as well as address the need for "differentiated learning" for groups of students that display a range in skills and abilities within a single classroom. Suggestions for accommodations to meet some of the particular individual needs of students are included in the notes to teachers. The units are tailored to allow **Integration** to take place, in other words to meet curriculum objectives in many subject areas simultaneously by teaching through a theme. **Afro Probe** provides instructional focus for aspects of the **English, Media, Geography, Science, Math, History, Drama, Visual Arts and Music** programs as well as opportunities for **Character Education**. Suggestions and tools for evaluation accompany the unit, including checklists and rubrics.

Instructional Level

There are three basic units of study: ***A Day in the Life of a Child—Spotlight on Africa, Sustainable Agriculture in Ethiopia***, and ***HIV AIDS and Children in Lesotho***. The units are designed to be useful for a variety of age levels. Activities have been designed to cater for Junior and Intermediate classrooms (grades 4 to 10); however, there are significant applications for courses at the senior secondary level, particularly with regard to the units on **HIV AIDS and Children in Lesotho** and **Sustainable Agriculture in Ethiopia**. Sensitivity with regard to the discussion of sexually transmitted diseases needs to be taken with regard to discussing AIDS in a junior classroom, and the unit is best suited to students from Grade 6 and up. Discussion of sexually transmitted diseases is mandated in Ontario only from grade 8 onwards. A chart of the ministry objectives which each unit covers or touches upon is included at the end of the Educator's Guide for this unit.

How to use Afro Probe

The units are conceived to support literacy in the classroom and to cater to a variety of instructional levels. The notes to the educators are always presented in two columns. The column on the left presents the core program. The column on the right provides accommodations to provide accommodations to students who may require them and add additional enrichment to students who would benefit from enrichment.

The units are designed to be able to stand alone or be used in any sequence as a trilogy. That said, the unit on AIDS in Lesotho may have limitations for use with younger students. Teachers are at liberty to adapt materials to be accessible to a wider range of students.

A suggested order of presentation for each unit is provided in the **Educator's Guide**; however, teachers are at liberty to pick and choose from the activities and present them in any order which supports their own unit objectives. Before allowing students to work with the units, teachers are encouraged to use the **Unit Opener** below. The notes to the teachers include comments on the level of challenge for the various activities which may help teachers individualize instruction for students.

Unit Opener

Students often have little knowledge about Africa. For many, Africa is a country, not a continent, and the diversity of its people, its geography, its countries and its cultures are a blur. The units present two major focus countries - Ethiopia and Lesotho. The third unit, ***A Day in the Life of A Child*** presents vignettes of life in Burkino Faso, Cameroon, Eritrea, Gambia, Ghana, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda South Africa, and Tanzania.

Activity A: Physical Geography

- ⇒ Provide students with an outline of the continent of Africa that also includes the major rivers. You can obtain one at the Enchanted Learning website at <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/africa/rivers/outlinemap/>
- ⇒ Have students use an atlas to label the surrounding bodies of water, as well as the names of the major rivers.
- ⇒ Have students consult a physical map of Africa and add for themselves the major mountain ranges and deserts. Provide students who need more guidance with the following "label bank":
 - Mountains: Atlas Mountains, Ahaggar Mountains, Drakensberg Mountains, Ethiopian Highlands, Great Rift Valley, Tibesti Mountains
 - Deserts: Sahara Desert, Kalahari Desert, Namib Desert(WorldAtlas.com is an excellent online resource which has an excellent simple physical map of Africa that is coloured appropriately.)
- ⇒ Have students colour the map appropriately. Consider having students use green for river valleys and areas of low elevation, beige for deserts, brown/orange/purple for areas of higher elevation.

Activity B: Regions of Africa

- ⇒ Ask students how they might talk about Canada regionally. Brainstorm and note on chart paper or on the blackboard their responses. (Possible answers: the Maritimes, Central Canada, Northern Canada, the Prairie provinces, Western Canada)
- ⇒ Ask students why it may be useful to look at a country or a continent regionally. (Possible answers: the needs or problems may vary between regions, the geography regionally may determine the challenges that people have, generalizing about an entire continent or an entire country may get in the way of learning about or understanding the realities of the individual countries or areas.)
- ⇒ Underscore the importance of recognizing the various regions and individual countries of Africa.
- ⇒ Provide students with the opportunity to play the **Africa Level 1** game at the **Sheppard Software** site which is available free of charge at <http://www.sheppardsoftware.com/>. Have students use the game by using the “select a region” control to learn the regions of Africa.
- ⇒ To consolidate, provide students with a political outline map of Africa. (You can print an outline map from the Enchanted Learning Website at: <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/geography/outlinemaps/>.) Ask students to label the regions of Africa independently or while doing the game.
- ⇒ Much discussion today involves understanding the problems of “sub Saharan Africa”. Ask students where they might draw a horizontal line to determine the location of “sub Saharan Africa” (based on their knowledge of physical geography).

Activity C: Borders of African Countries Today

Many of the realities of African countries have developed as a result of the experience of colonialism. Borders were often established to fulfill agreements between colonial powers with little regard for traditional homelands of African peoples. Trade routes were disrupted, families were divided, and people found themselves living in redefined areas with new and sometimes very difficult political realities.

Borders between most countries in the world have been determined by natural barriers—lakes, rivers, mountain chains, oceans, etc. These boundaries are easily observable by the irregular pattern they trace on maps which reflect the realities of nature. Straight line borders are the product of geometry and the invention of man. In the case of Africa, these straight lines were established by colonial powers. The extent to which Africa was carved up by the colonial powers can be easily illustrated.

- ⇒ Provide students with an outline map of Africa. (See: <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/africa/rivers/outlinemap/>.) Have students highlight all straight line borders on the map with one colour, and all natural borders with a second colour.
- ⇒ Provide students with a map of Europe. Repeat the activity. Compare the results.
- ⇒ The exercise can be further extended by having students actually research the agreements that established each of the straight line borders. Few, if any, of the straight line borders were established post independence. Many of the conflicts that continue to plague Africa include a dimension of discomfort caused by colonial reorganization of borders that has disrupted the definition of traditional homelands. Again, the activity could be extended by plotting onto the map recent and/or ongoing conflicts and seeing if there is a correlation between the highlighted straight line borders and the areas of conflict.

Activity D: Where in the World Is? ...Getting to Know the Countries of Africa

Many students have little idea of the names or location of the countries of Africa.

- ⇒ Have students return to Sheppard Software site at <http://www.sheppardsoftware.com/>. Students can quiz themselves on the names of the countries of Africa by using the “all of Africa” command at Level 1 of the game. They can also try **Level 2** to recognize countries by their shape and location.

Activity E: Studying a Focus Country

Students should know the location in Africa of the countries that are highlighted in the Focus Article for each unit.

- ⇒ Provide students with a political map of Africa.
- ⇒ Have students label each focus country as they encounter a reading about it.
- ⇒ Print an outline map of the individual country of focus, make copies and distribute them to students. Outline maps are available at the Enchanted Learning Website at <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/geography/outlinemaps/>. Ask students to label: the capital city, major cities and any physical features that they can transfer from their general physical map of Africa to their country focus map.

Using the individual units

A short introduction prefaces each of the units in the Educator's Guide. The units each include:

- ⇒ **An Orientation Activity:** an exercise to help students review key concepts that will be a target in the Focus Article and/or help students relate the issues that will be presented to their own lives.
- ⇒ **The Focus Article(s):** designed to expose aspects of contemporary African reality. In the unit, ***A Day in the Life of a Child***, the articles are a selection of photo journals. Students are also provided with meaningful readings from a variety of online resources.
- ⇒ **Terms and Terminology:** a section designed to build vocabulary essential to the unit
- ⇒ **Facts and Figures:** a section to help students focus on the main messages of the key reading
- ⇒ **Inferring Meaning:** an activity designed to help students “read between the lines” and discern “point of view” and “underlying issues” that are inherent to a contemporary discussion of Africa. In the unit, ***A Day in the Life of a Child***, this element is largely provided by the challenge to interpret meaning that is conveyed through photographs and by completing the **Additional Themes or Messages** component of the graphic organizers.
- ⇒ **Searching for Solutions:** elements to help students view Africa not only as a continent beset with problems, but a place of hope where Africans are seeking and finding solutions to their challenges.
- ⇒ **Extensions and Personal Response:** a series of activities that allow students greater opportunities for independent thought, personal research and self expression. Students are guided to develop a greater awareness of the dignity of the work of Africans, their rights as members of a global community and their contributions to the world. A range of challenge is presented in these activities. Teachers may select activities which meet their curriculum needs, and guide students to choose challenges that best match their abilities or needs. It is not necessary to complete all of the challenges.
- ⇒ **Making a Difference for Others:** provides a challenge to students to become part of the solution through designing a social action project.
- ⇒ **Additional Teacher Resources :** an annotated list of additional resources that are available to teachers.
- ⇒ **Evaluation:** Checklists and rubrics which can be used for evaluation are provided with Student Worksheets.

Teachers are invited to submit their comments and suggestions after using **Afro Probe** by using the **Teacher Evaluation Page**.

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Teacher Evaluation

Your views and opinions are valuable to us. Please take a few moments to send in your thoughts, suggestions and comments.

Please indicate which units you have used, and then on a scale of 1 to 5 evaluate the materials according to the following criteria.

I have used the following units:

___ A Day in the Life of a Child

___ Sustainable Agriculture in Ethiopia

___ Children in HIV/AIDS in Lesotho

Please circle one:

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The units presented a positive vision of Africa. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. The materials were useful additions to my teaching materials. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1. Students enjoyed the content and activities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. The units added concepts and ideas that were insufficiently covered by other teaching materials I was using. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Additional comments: