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History and Geography of Africa and the World

The lands, peoples and turning points every student should know

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A note on this book

An educated person carries two maps: one of places, one of times. This general volume builds both — the geography of Africa and the world, and the great movements of history from early kingdoms to the present — written as orientation, not examination cramming: the framework on which all later reading hangs.

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Chapter 1

Reading the Map — Geography's First Tools

Geography begins with the map's grammar: scale, direction, latitude and longitude, and the reading of relief and climate. This chapter teaches that grammar and the habit of locating every place you ever read about.

Scale, direction and symbols

A map is a country shrunk by a stated ratio — its scale. North is conventionally up; symbols and a legend translate features into marks. The reader who checks scale first will never mistake a village path for a highway, in geography or in life.

Latitude and longitude

Latitude measures distance from the equator — and with it, the broad bands of climate. Longitude measures east–west position from the Greenwich meridian, and with it, time. Together they give every place on earth an address of two numbers.

Relief, rivers and climate

Highlands wring rain from winds and moderate tropical heat; rivers gather valleys into highways of settlement and trade. Read any region's history with its relief and rainfall beside you, and much that seemed arbitrary becomes inevitable.

Key points

- Check scale and legend before reading any map.
- Latitude foretells climate's broad bands.
- Relief and rivers shape settlement and history.

Exercises

1. Find the coordinates of your home town and of Makurdi.

2. Describe how a named river shaped the settlements along it.

3. Sketch your region's relief from memory, then correct it against a map.

Chapter 2

Africa Before the Colonisers

Africa's history did not begin with European ships. This chapter surveys, in outline, the continent's early civilisations — Egypt and Nubia, the empires of the western Sudan, Great Zimbabwe, the forest kingdoms — and the trade worlds that linked them.

The Nile and the early states

Along the Nile, Egypt built one of the world's earliest civilisations, and Nubia to its south traded, rivalled and at times ruled it. Writing, monumental building and statecraft have African addresses thousands of years old — a fact every student should carry against lazy assumptions.

Empires of the western Sudan

Ghana, Mali and Songhai rose in turn on the savanna's edge, taxing the trade that crossed the Sahara — gold moving north, salt moving south. Their cities, above all Timbuktu, became centres of commerce and scholarship whose manuscripts still survive.

Stone cities and forest kingdoms

Great Zimbabwe's stone enclosures witness a wealthy Shona state trading to the Indian Ocean. In the forest belt, kingdoms such as Benin — whose bronze casting astounded the world — and the Ashanti built states of art and administration. Africa before colonisation was a continent of polities, not an absence of them.

Key points

- African statecraft is thousands of years old.
- Trans-Saharan trade linked West Africa to the Mediterranean world.
- Timbuktu was a city of scholarship as well as gold.

Exercises

1. Place Ghana, Mali and Songhai in time order and name each one's basis of wealth.

2. Explain the gold–salt trade in one paragraph.

3. Choose one pre-colonial state and write its portrait in ten lines.

Chapter 3

The Colonial Century and Its End

Between the 1880s and the 1960s, European powers partitioned Africa and ruled it — then, within a generation, independence returned state by state. This chapter outlines colonisation, its machinery and legacies, and the liberation century that ended it.

Partition and rule

At Berlin in 1884–85, European powers agreed rules for claiming African territory, and within decades nearly the whole continent was ruled from abroad. Borders were drawn for convenience in distant capitals, bundling peoples together and splitting others — a geography today's maps still carry.

What colonial rule changed

Colonial economies were built to export raw materials: railways ran from mine to port, not from town to town; cash-crop farming displaced food farming in many regions; new cities, schools and religions reshaped life. The legacies — economic, educational, political — are argued about still, because they are lived still.

Independence and after

Ghana's independence in 1957 under Kwame Nkrumah opened the floodgates; Nigeria followed in 1960, and most of the continent within the decade. The new states inherited colonial borders and economies and set about the unfinished work of nation-building — the story of

Africa's present, still being written.

Key points

- Partition was agreed in Europe in 1884–85 and executed within decades.
- Colonial economies were built for export of raw materials.
- Independence came mainly between 1957 and the mid-1960s.

Exercises

1. Name three legacies of colonial borders visible on today's map.

2. Summarise the Berlin conference's significance in five lines.

3. Write a timeline of five independence dates you should know.

Chapter 4

The World's Turning Points

Beyond Africa, a handful of transformations remade everyone's world: agriculture's invention, the industrial revolution, the world wars, and the digital age. This chapter sketches each as orientation for all your other reading.

The agricultural beginning

Farming began independently in several world regions some ten thousand years ago, and everything else followed: villages, cities, states, writing, and surplus enough for specialists — priests, smiths, scholars. The agronomy in this very library is the modern chapter of humanity's oldest revolution.

Industry and its consequences

From the late eighteenth century, steam, factories and fossil fuel multiplied production beyond all precedent, moved populations to cities, and shifted world power toward the industrialisers. Its benefits and its wounds — wealth and pollution, longer lives and new poverties — still structure the world's arguments.

Wars, decolonisation and the connected world

Two world wars in the twentieth century broke old empires and orders; the decades after brought decolonisation, new international institutions, and eventually the digital networks that now carry this

school's lessons. History's pace has not slowed for its students.

Key points

- Agriculture is humanity's first and foundational revolution.
- Industrialisation multiplied wealth and remade societies from the 1700s.
- The twentieth century broke empires and connected the world.

Exercises

1. List, in order, the four transformations of this chapter with a date or period for each.

2. Give two benefits and two wounds of industrialisation.

3. Explain how the digital age changes education — using this school as your example.

Chapter 5

Nigeria and Cameroon — Neighbours in History

This school's people live where Nigeria and Cameroon meet in story as in geography. This chapter outlines the two countries' formation and the ties between them, in the plain outline a general reader needs.

Many peoples, two states

Both countries gather hundreds of peoples and languages within borders drawn in the colonial period. Nigeria joined northern and southern protectorates in 1914; Cameroon's territory passed from German rule to French and British mandates after the First World War, leaving its anglophone and francophone regions' distinct inheritances.

Independence and nation-building

Nigeria became independent in 1960, Cameroon in 1960–61 with reunification of its French and British parts. Both states have since worked — through constitutions changed and debated, economies rising and strained — at the common African task of making nations of inherited borders.

Ties across the border

Trade, kinship, language and faith cross the Nigeria–Cameroon border as they always have; students, traders and families move along routes older than either state. A school serving both peoples stands naturally in

this shared ground.

Key points

- Both states unite many peoples within colonial-era borders.
- Nigeria: independence 1960. Cameroon: 1960–61 and reunification.
- Cross-border ties are older than the border.

Exercises

1. Explain the 1914 amalgamation in three sentences.
2. Name the source of Cameroon's two official languages.
3. List three ties between Nigerian and Cameroonian communities.

Chapter 6

Thinking Like a Historian

The final chapter teaches the discipline itself: how historians use sources, why accounts disagree, and how a general reader can judge historical claims — including the ones in this book.

Sources — primary and secondary

Primary sources are the era's own remains: documents, objects, oral traditions recorded. Secondary sources are later accounts built from them. Every historical claim can be chased toward its sources, and the chase is the reader's right and duty.

Why accounts disagree

Sources are partial, memories interested, and questions change with the asker. Two honest histories of one event can differ in emphasis and even in fact-selection. Disagreement is not scandal; it is the normal state of a living discipline.

Judging a claim

Ask: what source would settle this? Does the writer show it? Who benefits if I believe this version? These three questions, applied calmly, will protect a reader through a lifetime of newspapers, speeches and textbooks — this one included.

Key points

- Chase claims toward their primary sources.

- Disagreement among honest accounts is normal.
- Ask who benefits from a version of the past.

Exercises

1. Classify five sources about one event as primary or secondary.

2. Find two accounts of one event that differ, and diagnose why.

3. Apply the three questions to a historical claim you heard recently.

Appendix — Worked Examples and Practice

From Chapter 1 — Reading the Map — Geography's First Tools

Worked example: Makurdi stands near latitude 7.7° north — deep in the tropics, where the sun passes nearly overhead and seasons are written by rain, not temperature: a wet season under rain-bearing winds, a dry season under the harmattan. Two numbers, correctly read, have already told you the farming calendar of Benue State.

From Chapter 2 — Africa Before the Colonisers

Worked example: salt, scarce in the savanna, was worth near its weight in gold dust in the exchange markets where the desert's salt slabs met the forest's gold. Geography wrote that price: the two goods' homes were a desert apart. Trade routes are geography turned into history, and empires grew where the routes could be guarded and taxed.

From Chapter 3 — The Colonial Century and Its End

Worked example: a railway that runs from an inland mine straight to a port, passing towns it never serves, is a fossil of colonial purpose — extraction, not connection. Reading infrastructure as evidence is a historian's skill: the map of what was built confesses what it was built for.

From Chapter 4 — The World's Turning Points

Worked example: a student in Makurdi downloads a statistics book written for a school whose lessons travel by satellite and fibre — a sentence impossible in 1960, ordinary now. The digital age is not a topic beside the others; it is the medium in which all the others are now studied. History's turning points eventually become the reader's own desk.

From Chapter 5 — Nigeria and Cameroon — Neighbours in History

Worked example: the teacher of this school was schooled in Bamenda, studied at Buea, and researches in Makurdi — one life crossing the border region this chapter describes. Personal geographies like his are the region's history at walking scale: states draw lines; lives, as always, draw routes.

From Chapter 6 — Thinking Like a Historian

Worked example: a market-day speech declares that 'in the old days, no food was ever imported'. The historian's questions answer: the sources — trade records, elders' varied memories — show food moving between regions for centuries wherever harvests differed. The claim was not history but nostalgia wearing history's coat. The three questions took one minute.

Further Practice — Review and Discussion

Work through these prompts in writing; they are the revision spine of this book. Answer in full sentences, with examples from your own place of study wherever the prompt allows.

Chapter 1 — Reading the Map — Geography's First Tools

- Explain in your own words, with one example: Check scale and legend before reading any map.
- Explain in your own words, with one example: Latitude foretells climate's broad bands.
- Explain in your own words, with one example: Relief and rivers shape settlement and history.

Discussion: where does the subject of this chapter — reading the map — geography's first tools — touch your own community, farm, school or workplace? Write one page, naming real places and real constraints, and end with one question you would research next.

Chapter 2 — Africa Before the Colonisers

- Explain in your own words, with one example: African statecraft is thousands of years old.
- Explain in your own words, with one example: Trans-Saharan trade linked West Africa to the Mediterranean world.
- Explain in your own words, with one example: Timbuktu was a city of scholarship as well as gold.

Discussion: where does the subject of this chapter — africa before the colonisers — touch your own community, farm, school or workplace? Write one page, naming real places and real constraints, and end with one question you would research next.

Chapter 3 — The Colonial Century and Its End

- Explain in your own words, with one example: Partition was agreed in Europe in 1884–85 and executed within decades.
- Explain in your own words, with one example: Colonial economies were built for export of raw materials.
- Explain in your own words, with one example: Independence came mainly between 1957 and the mid-1960s.

Discussion: where does the subject of this chapter — the colonial century and its end — touch your own community, farm, school or workplace? Write one page, naming real places and real constraints, and end with one question you would research next.

Chapter 4 — The World's Turning Points

- Explain in your own words, with one example: Agriculture is humanity's first and foundational revolution.
- Explain in your own words, with one example: Industrialisation multiplied wealth and remade societies from the 1700s.

- Explain in your own words, with one example: The twentieth century broke empires and connected the world.

Discussion: where does the subject of this chapter — the world's turning points — touch your own community, farm, school or workplace? Write one page, naming real places and real constraints, and end with one question you would research next.

Chapter 5 — Nigeria and Cameroon — Neighbours in History

- Explain in your own words, with one example: Both states unite many peoples within colonial-era borders.
- Explain in your own words, with one example: Nigeria: independence 1960. Cameroon: 1960–61 and reunification.
- Explain in your own words, with one example: Cross-border ties are older than the border.

Discussion: where does the subject of this chapter — nigeria and cameroon — neighbours in history — touch your own community, farm, school or workplace? Write one page, naming real places and real constraints, and end with one question you would research next.

Chapter 6 — Thinking Like a Historian

- Explain in your own words, with one example: Chase claims toward their primary sources.
- Explain in your own words, with one example: Disagreement among honest accounts is normal.

- Explain in your own words, with one example: Ask who benefits from a version of the past.

Discussion: where does the subject of this chapter — thinking like a historian — touch your own community, farm, school or workplace? Write one page, naming real places and real constraints, and end with one question you would research next.

Glossary of Key Terms

Latitude — Angular distance north or south of the equator.

Longitude — Angular distance east or west of the Greenwich meridian.

Primary source — A source from the era studied itself.

Secondary source — A later account built from primary sources.

Partition — The division of Africa among European powers in the late 1800s.

Amalgamation — The 1914 joining of Nigeria's northern and southern protectorates.

Relief — The shape and height variation of land.

Harmattan — The dry, dusty north-east trade wind of West Africa's dry season.

End of book. Nji Griphan · griphan.48hourrfprescue.com · info@griphan.48hourrfprescue.com