



## Chapter 12

# Africa

### Learning Outcomes

- Locating Africa on the world map
- Identifying countries in Africa
- Locating major physical features of Africa on the map
- Relating how the geography of Africa affects the lives of people



21<sup>st</sup> critical thinking

### Thinking Cap

Name two places in Africa you may want to visit. Discuss with your partner the reasons why you have selected these places.

Africa is the second-largest continent on Earth. It occupies a total area of 3,02,21,532 km<sup>2</sup>, equivalent to one-fifth of the Earth's land surface.



In the 19th century, Africa was a topic of interest for many explorers. However, due to difficult physiographical and climatic conditions, most of the continent remained undiscovered. The presence of rapids and waterfalls in rivers, extensive equatorial forests, swampy lands and dangerous

tsetse flies and poisonous insects made the exploration of African lands even more challenging.

Africa: Main Features	
Latitudinal extent:	37°N–35°S
Longitudinal extent:	18°W–51°E
Highest point:	Mt Kilimanjaro in Tanzania (5,895 m above sea level)
Lowest point:	Lake Assal (155 m below sea level)
Population (2023):	1,433,090,448 approx.
Political divisions:	54 nations

Nonetheless, a few explorers like David Livingstone, Mungo Park and Henry Morton Stanley opened Africa to the outside world. They discovered many places in the heart of Africa, like the Victoria Falls, Congo and Niger rivers. Such explorations gradually led to the colonisation of Africa by many European powers. In the later part of the 20th century, the indigenous people of Africa took back control of their lands and declared independence.

21<sup>st</sup> Information literacy

### Did you know?

In the pre-historic age, the earliest humans, who later moved out to settle all over the world, originated in Africa. It is also the birth place of the ancient Egyptian Civilisation.

## Location

Africa occupies a central position on the world map. The Equator passes through the middle of the continent. As a result, most of Africa lies within the tropics; hence, it is also referred to as the 'hottest continent'.

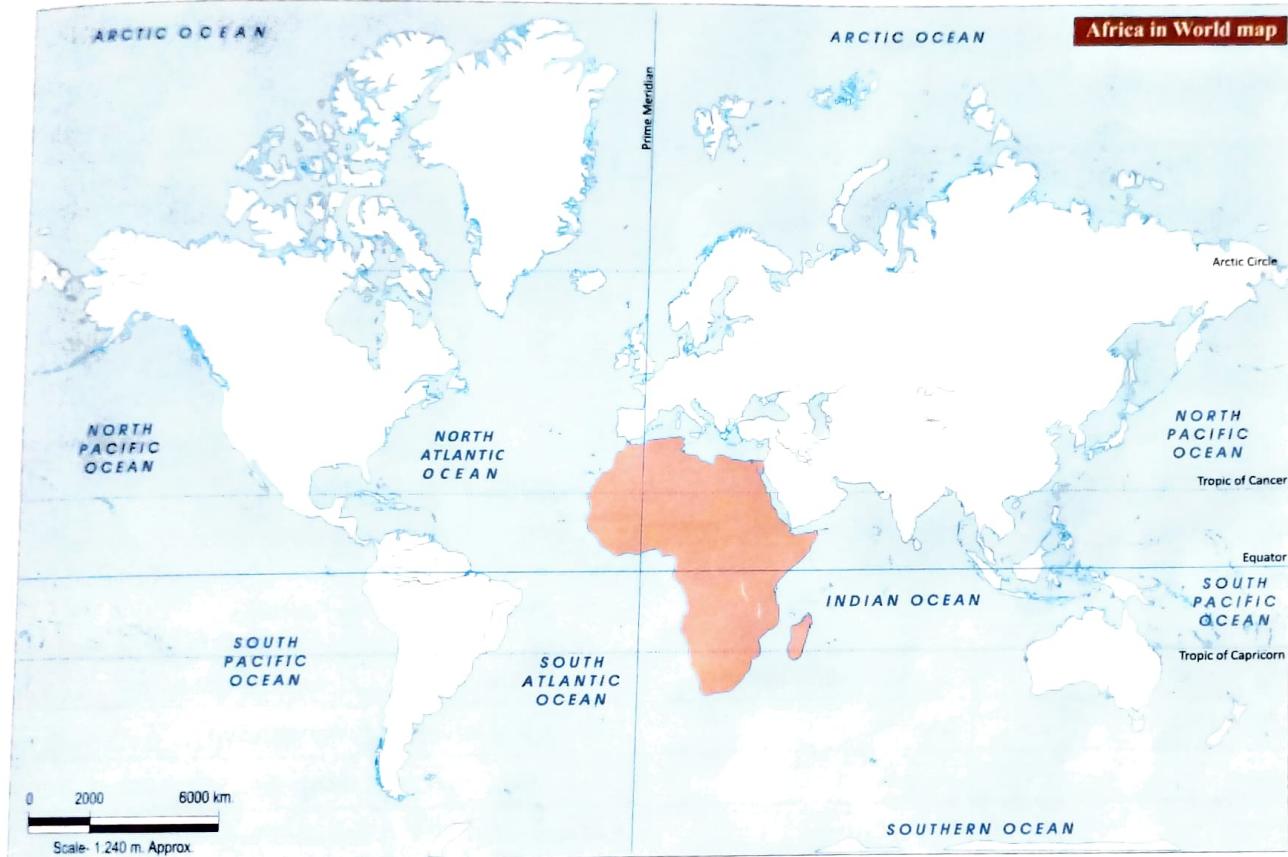
The Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn pass through Africa in the

north and south, respectively. The Prime Meridian also passes through the continent.

21<sup>st</sup> information literacy

### Did you know?

Africa and South America were once part of the Gondwanaland, from which they split around 140 million years ago.



Location of Africa on the world map

## Boundaries

The Mediterranean Sea borders Africa in the north, and the Suez Canal and the Red Sea in the north-east. The Isthmus of Suez, lying between the Mediterranean and Red seas, connects the continent to Asia. In the north-west, Africa is connected to Europe by the Strait of Gibraltar. The Indian Ocean lies to the southeast of the continent, the

Atlantic Ocean to the west and the Southern Ocean to the south.

Africa also comprises a number of islands and archipelagos. Amongst these, Madagascar is the most significant and is one of the largest islands in the world. The southernmost tip of the continent is called the 'Cape of Good Hope'.

## Political Divisions

Africa comprises 54 countries. The African Union is an international body that represents the nations of the continent. This body takes collective decisions regarding the region's political, social and economic concerns.

African countries, and their capitals are listed in the following table.

### 21<sup>st</sup> Information literacy

#### Did you know?

Until 2011, Sudan was the largest country in Africa. However, after a peace agreement, South Sudan gained independence from Sudan.

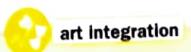


*Political divisions of Africa*

Country	Capital city	Country	Capital city
Algeria	Algiers	Madagascar	Antananarivo
Angola	Luanda	Malawi	Lilongwe
Benin	Porto-Novo	Mali	Bamako
Botswana	Gaborone	Mauritania	Nouakchott
Burkina Faso	Ouagadougou	Mauritius	Port Louis
Burundi	Gitega	Morocco	Rabat
Cabo Verde	Praia	Mozambique	Maputo
Cameroon	Yaounde	Namibia	Windhoek
Central African Republic	Bangui	Niger	Niamey
Chad	N'Djamena	Nigeria	Abuja
Comoros	Moroni	Rwanda	Kigali
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Kinshasa	Sao Tome and Principe	São Tomé
Republic of the Congo	Brazzaville	Senegal	Dakar

Country	Capital city	Country	Capital city
Côte d'Ivoire	Yamoussoukro	Seychelles	Victoria
Djibouti	Djibouti (city)	Sierra Leone	Freetown
Egypt	Cairo	Somalia	Mogadishu
Equatorial Guinea	Malabo ( <i>de jure</i> ),	South Africa	Pretoria ( <i>administrative</i> ),
	Oyala ( <i>seat of government</i> )		Cape Town ( <i>legislative</i> ),
Eritrea	Asmara		Bloemfontein ( <i>judicial</i> )
Ethiopia	Addis Ababa	South Sudan	Juba
Gabon	Libreville	Sudan	Khartoum
Gambia	Banjul	Eswatini	Mbabane ( <i>administrative</i> ),
Ghana	Accra		Lobamba ( <i>legislative, royal</i> )
Guinea	Conakry	Tanzania	Dodoma
Guinea-Bissau	Bissau	Togo	Lomé
Kenya	Nairobi	Tunisia	Tunis
Lesotho	Maseru	Uganda	Kampala
Liberia	Monrovia	Zambia	Lusaka
Libya	Tripoli	Zimbabwe	Harare

### ACTIVITY



Draw the flags of any five independent nations of Africa in your notebook.

### Major Physical Features

ANM

Today, parts of Africa have been explored. It is home to diverse ecosystems ranging from sandy deserts to lush rainforests. The major part of the continent is a plateau composed of ancient rocks. Thus, Africa is also known as the 'Plateau Continent'.



Towards the narrow coasts, the plateau descends in the form of steps. Its altitude is low in the north, and rises towards the south. Its average elevation is about 600 m.

The physiographic features of Africa include highlands, lowlands, tablelands and arid lands. It has eight major physical regions: the Sahara, the Sahel, the Ethiopian Highlands, the Savannah, the Swahili Coast,

the Rainforest, the African Great Lakes and Southern Africa.

### The Highlands

There are a few scattered mountains in the African continent. The major mountain ranges are the Atlas Mountains and the Ethiopian Highlands.

### Atlas Mountains

The Atlas Mountains in north-western Africa run in a north-east to south-west direction.

These are a young fold mountain range, largest in the continent, stretching for a distance of almost 2,500 km (1600 miles) through the countries of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, in the north-western part



of the continent. Mt. Toubkal is its highest peak at an altitude of 4,167 m, located in southwest Morocco.



*Physical map of Africa*

### Ethiopian Highlands

These are also called the 'Roof of Africa', due to their height and vast spread. Ethiopian Highlands make up around 80 per cent of Africa's highest mountains. The highest peak here is **Ras Dashan** (4,550 m). Other important peaks are **Mt Kenya** (5,199 m) and **Mt Elgon** (4,321 m).

### Low Central Plateau

It extends from the Atlantic coast in the west to the Nile Valley in the east. The

Low Central Plateau in Africa comprises numerous arid lands or deserts, including the Sahara Desert.

### Sahara Desert

A desert is any region that receives less than 25 cm of precipitation annually. The surface of a desert can, therefore, be sandy, stony or rocky.

The desert landscape is exemplified by the Sahara. It is the largest hot desert in the world and the third-largest desert overall (after Antarctica and the Arctic). It extends from the Atlantic in the west to the Red Sea in the east. It covers an area of 8.6 million square kilometres (3.32 million square miles) covering practically the whole of North Africa.

The desert surface of Sahara is characterised by the following features:

- **Oases:** Large depressions fed by underground water sources, which are major sources of fresh water for the desert tribes, flora and fauna
- **Serir or reg:** Vast areas of gravel covered plains
- **Hamadas:** Rocky desert surfaces
- **Ergs:** Sandy desert plains

The highest elevation in this region is **Mount Koussi**, also called Emi Koussi, (3,415m) in the Tibesti mountains. The lowest point is **Qattara Depression** (133 m below sea level) in Egypt. **Lake Chad** is an area of inland drainage.

## The Sahel

Sahel is Arabic for 'shore' or 'beach'. It forms a zone of transition between the arid Sahara in the north and humid Savannah in the south. It is located in western and north-central Africa, extending from Senegal in the west to Sudan in the east, approximately.

Sahel is drained by two major rivers, **Niger** and **Senegal**, which supply water for cultivation of millets and groundnuts. The rest of Sahel is semi-arid and consists of thorny shrubs and acacias.

## The Savannahs

*Savannah* is derived from the Spanish word *Sabara* which means treeless. The Savanna or the Savannah are natural regions that consist of large extensive tracts of very tall, coarse grasses, interspersed by scattered tree growth.

In Africa, the Savannah covers almost half of the continent. It is a vast area of tropical grasslands forming a distinct ecosystem. These stretch for more than 13 million square kilometres, through the countries of Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Mozambique and South Africa.

African Savannah consists of many kinds of plants—Acacia Senegal, baobabs, elephant grass (alfalfa), Bermuda grass and Whistling Thorn.

## The Tablelands

The southern half of Africa is a plateau of volcanic origin. The edges of the plateau fall sharply towards the coasts. The average elevation here is 1,000 m.

## The Great Rift Valley

The Great Rift Valley is a long narrow valley, formed between 25 million and 30 million years ago. The valley extends from Lake

Malawi to the Red Sea and from the **Gulf of Aqaba** to the **Dead Sea** in Jordan. It stretches for 5,000 km and consists of vertical cracks, developed because of the movements within the Earth. The valley cuts through the Ethiopian Highlands. Many freshwater lakes, such as **Tanganyika**, **Malawi**, and **Turkana** are located in this rift valley.

## High Plateau

The **Drakensberg Mountains** form the eastern edge of the High Plateau.

The **Namib** and **Kalahari** deserts are both parts of the plateau. The Namib Desert runs along the western coast in south-west Africa. The Kalahari Desert lies in the southern part of Africa. **Mt Kilimanjaro** (5,895 m) is the highest peak in the plateau. It is a snow-capped dormant volcano in Tanzania that lies near the Equator.

## Nile and Zaire Basins

The Nile and Zaire basins are formed by the two rivers, respectively. The Nile Basin is a flat dry region that borders the River Nile. Its tributaries drain north-eastern Africa, creating fertile farmlands in the region. A massive swamp called the Sudd lies to the south of this basin, while deserts lie to its north.

The Zaire Basin lies in west-central Africa. Here, most of the land is drained by the river Zaire and its tributaries. Most of the region is under **tropical rainforests**.

## Coastal Plains

Africa, being surrounded by large seas and oceans on the north, west, and south-eastern sides, has coastal plains of varying width in three major zones:

- In the north, along the Mediterranean Sea, where the world's longest river Nile forms a large delta in Egypt



- The western coastal plains along the Atlantic Ocean: It stretches from Mauritania to Namibia, and is drained by large rivers such as the Zaire, the Niger and the Orange.
- The eastern coastal plains are found bordering the Indian Ocean, through the islands of Madagascar, Mauritius, Réunion and Seychelles.

The coastal plains are densely populated, with agriculture and tourism being the primary economic activities as well as occupation. The northern and western coastal plains of Africa are broad and well-drained. The riverside plains of the Nile River and the Congo River are important agricultural zones.

## Rivers

Most rivers of Africa flow through the plateaus in their upper courses. In their lower courses, they descend into the coastal plains. Presence of numerous rapids and waterfalls, however, makes them difficult to navigate.

The **Nile** is the world's longest river. It flows northwards from east-central Africa to the Mediterranean Sea. Its source is Lake Victoria, which lies in the rainy equatorial region. As such, the river is perennial and receives water throughout the year.

The **Zaire** and The **Niger** are two other important rivers in Africa. These rivers empty into the Atlantic Ocean. The **Senegal**, flowing through Northern Africa, is another river that drains into the Atlantic Ocean. The rivers **Limpopo** and the **Zambezi** flow into the Indian Ocean, and the **River Chari** empties into Lake Chad, forming an inland drainage area.

The **Okavango** flows through the Namib desert. It originates in the mountains of Angola. The river is perennial and passes through tropical forests on its course.

The **Congo** is Africa's second-longest river. It discharges more water than the Nile and is the deepest river in the world. The Congo River flows westwards through central Africa.

## Lakes

Except **Lake Victoria**, most large lakes in Africa are in the Great Rift Valley. It is the world's second-largest freshwater lake, covering an area of 69,490 km<sup>2</sup>. It is bordered by Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania.

**Lake Tanganyika** is another important lake. It is one of the longest freshwater lakes in the world. Other large lakes include **Malawi**, **Mobutu**, **Edward**, **Chad** and **Turkana** in the Great Rift Valley.

## Case Study: Cocoa Cultivation in Ghana

Ghana is a West-African country that lies along the shores of the Gulf of Guinea. It is also referred to as the 'Cocoa Land'. This is because of the large-scale cultivation of cocoa here, which plays an important role in the economy of the country. Cocoa is an important ingredient in chocolate.

## The Cocoa Tree

The cocoa tree is an evergreen tropical plant. It is indigenous to the **Amazon Basin** and tropical areas of south and central America. The tree grows up to a height between 4 m and 9 m, and only begins to yield cocoa pods in 5–7 years.



Cocoa pods on tree in a plantation



Cocoa pods grow on trunks and main branches to a length between 18 cm and 25 cm. The pods consist of pulp and beans. Beans are used to extract cocoa powder, and the pulp is processed to produce cocoa butter. Cocoa butter is used in the manufacturing of cosmetics and drugs.

## Favourable Geographical Conditions

The cocoa tree requires high temperature and humidity. Average monthly temperature between 24 degree Celsius and 28 degree Celsius is ideal. It also requires an annual rainfall between 125 cm and 150 cm that is well-distributed throughout the year. Thus, equatorial regions within 15° north and south of the Equator are suitable for cocoa cultivation. Direct sunlight is harmful to cocoa trees. Strong winds can blow off unripe pods and damage ripe pods.

Cocoa trees can grow on a wide range of soils, provided the soil is fairly deep, well-drained and rich in humus, iron and potassium.

Lowland regions are suitable for cocoa production, as roads and railways can be easily constructed there. Cocoa production

requires huge employment of manual labour to support cultivation, harvesting and processing of cocoa beans.

## Cocoa in Ghana

Cocoa was first introduced to Ghana in 1895. The country is now one of the world's major producers and exporters of cocoa, along with other west-African countries such as Nigeria, the Ivory Coast and Cameroon.

Cocoa cultivation in Ghana is mainly concentrated in the towns of Accra, Kumasi and Takoradi. Besides the coastal regions, the plant is also grown inland due to suitable climatic conditions and availability of cheap and abundant labour.

Cocoa is best grown on forest lowlands. It is cultivated in large estates as well as small holdings.

Cocoa seedlings are first planted in nurseries. These are later planted in rows till they grow up to 5 cm in height. The rows are 2–4 m apart and are usually separated by planting tall and leafy banana trees. The banana trees protect the cocoa plants from strong winds and provide shade.

21<sup>st</sup> Information Literacy

### Did you know?

Today, cocoa counts for 35–40 per cent of Ghana's total export.

## Processing Cocoa

Once harvested, cocoa pods are split open with a knife. Beans and pulp are scooped out and the beans are covered with banana leaves. These are left to ferment for a week. The beans are then washed, cleaned and dried in the sun. The dried beans are graded according to their quality, then packed and transported to the nearest ports for export.

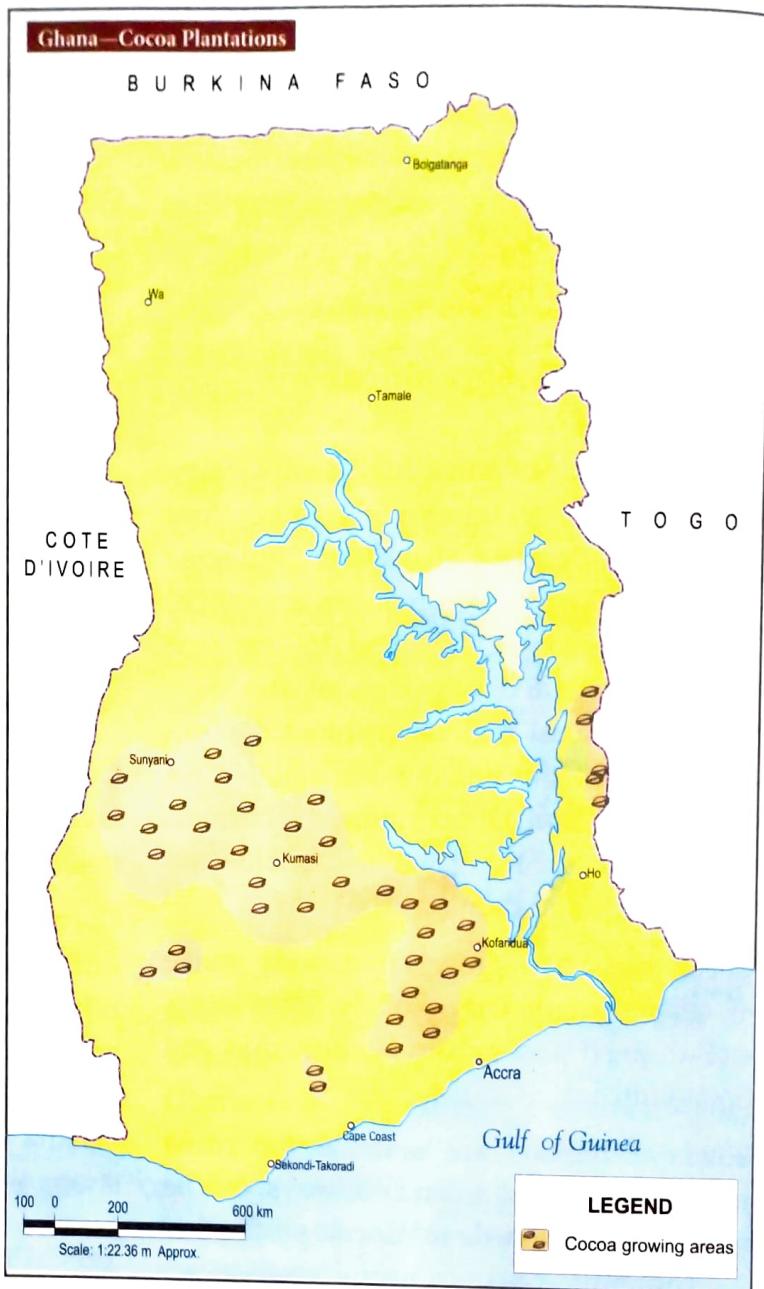


## Cocoa Production and Export

Cocoa is the chief agricultural export of Ghana. It is the second-largest cocoa exporter in the world. Cocoa was first exported from Ghana at the end of the 19th century. It is exported mainly to the USA and Europe. The major importing ports of cocoa crop include London, Le Havre, Hamburg, Marseilles, New York and New Orleans.

Cocoa production has been reduced in recent years due to aging trees and spread of diseases. Regional droughts and accompanying bush fires, along with bad farm management practices have also led to reduced production. However, the international demand for cocoa is increasing, resulting in high prices.

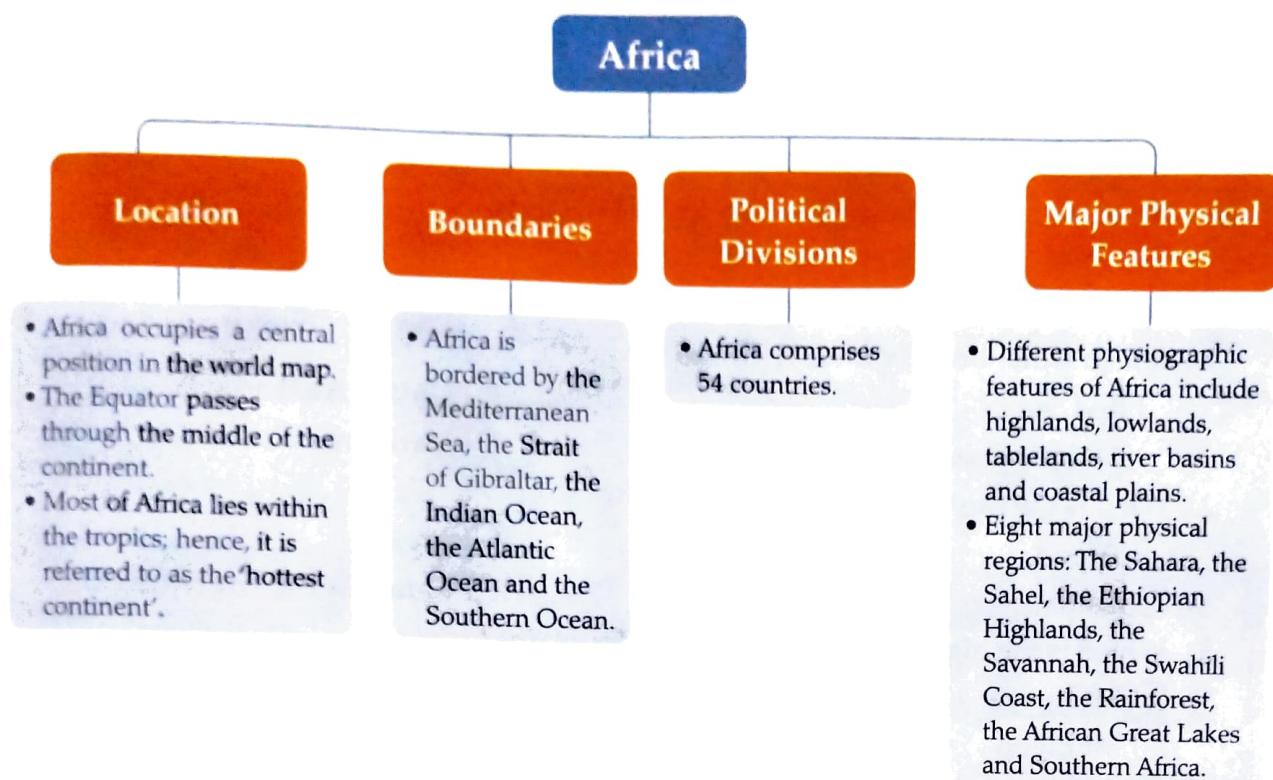
In recent years, advanced research has led to the production of high-yielding varieties. Today, the by-products of cocoa processing are used more efficiently to manufacture animal food, soaps and cosmetics.



Map showing cocoa plantations in Ghana



## AT A GLANCE



## EXERCISE

### A. Fill in the blanks.

- The \_\_\_\_\_ passes through the middle of the African continent.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ is an international body that represents the nations of the African continent.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ mountains are spread across Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.
- Lake \_\_\_\_\_ is the source of river Nile.
- Ghana is a west African country that lies along the shores of the Gulf of \_\_\_\_\_.



INT



### B. Match the following.

State	Capital
1. Angola	a. Abuja
2. Botswana	b. Luanda
3. Nigeria	c. Addis Ababa
4. Ethiopia	d. Harare
5. Zimbabwe	e. Gaborone

INT



### C. State whether true or false.

1. Africa occupies an area equivalent to two-fifth of the Earth's land surface.
2. The Tropic of Cancer passes through Africa in the north.
3. The Atlas Mountains are young fold mountains.
4. Lake Victoria is located in the Great Rift Valley.
5. In Ghana, cocoa is best grown on forest lowlands.

INT



### D. Choose the correct answer.

1. Which water body borders Africa to the north?  
 Red Sea       Gulf of Aqaba  
 Atlantic Ocean       Mediterranean Sea
2. What is the capital of Libya?  
 Tripoli       Algiers  
 Cairo       Kampala
3. Which is the highest peak in the Atlas Mountains?  
 Mt Kenya       Mt Toubkal  
 Mt Elgon       Mt Kilimanjaro
4. Which physical feature forms a transition zone between the Sahara Desert in the north and the Savannahs in the south?  
 Atlas Mountains       The Great Rift Valley  
 Ethiopian Highlands       The Sahel
5. In which year was cocoa introduced in Ghana?  
 1875       1895  
 1885       1905

INT



### E. Give reasons.

1. Most parts of Africa were undiscovered in the 19th century.
2. Africa is known as the 'Plateau Continent'.
3. The riverside plains of the Nile and the Congo rivers are important agricultural zones.
4. Ghana is also referred to as the 'Cocoa Land'.

### F. Answer in a paragraph or two.

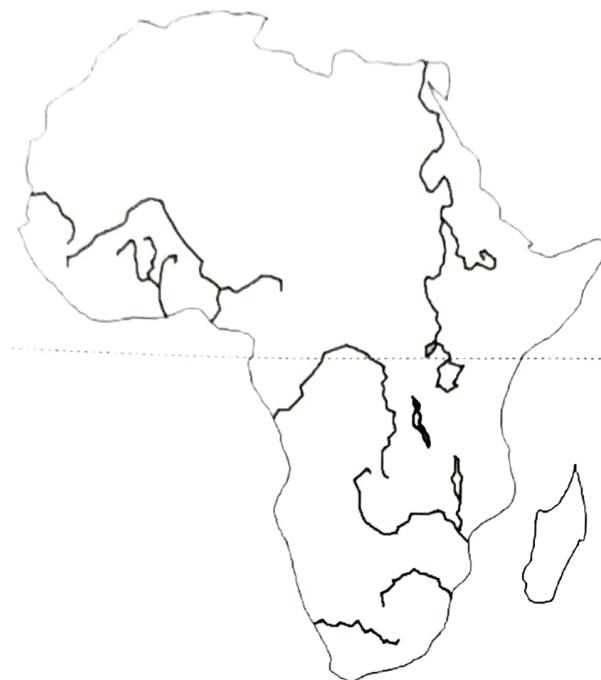
1. Describe the boundaries of Africa.
2. Explain the location and extent of the Sahara Desert.
3. Explain the features of the Atlas Mountains.
4. Write a short note on the Great Rift Valley.
5. Describe the geographical conditions required for cocoa cultivation.





## Map work

Label the different water bodies shown in the map.



## Integrate



art integration



language and communication

*Heart of Darkness* (1899) is a novella by Polish-British novelist Joseph Conrad about a voyage up the Congo River into the Congo Free State, located in the heart of Africa. Read the summary of the novella and find out how fitting is the title of the novella.



## Life Skills

21<sup>st</sup>

environmental literacy



## Project



respect for diversity and the local context

21<sup>st</sup>

information literacy

- A. Find information about the life of people in the African continent and prepare a report in about 300 words. Include the following in your report.
  1. Major tribes
  2. Their distribution and cultures
  3. Pictures
- B. Mark and label any 10 African countries on a political map of Africa.

