

UNIT 5: Africa is Not a Country

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Introduction: Literature provides a wonderful foray into another culture, and this lesson invites students to learn more about Tanzania through words and writing. First, students are confronted with their own perceptions of Africa and are encouraged to challenge these images through greater exploration. They then have the opportunity to read about Tanzanian culture and write about it in relation with their own culture. This lesson blends language arts with the social studies content area by integrating literature and literacy skill building with literature that takes place in a Tanzanian setting.

Unit Organization: Unit organized into five lessons (5A, 5B, 5C, 5D, and 5E). Evaluation applies to entire unit. Everything else applies to each individual lesson.

Target Audience: Grades 6-8

Unit Evaluation: See Evaluation (page 5-9).

Lesson 5A: Africa Is Not A Country - Introduction

Objectives: Upon completing this unit, students will be able to:

- Understand that Africa is a continent and not a country.
- Understand that there is diversity in the land, people, languages, cultures, histories, etc. in the various countries of Africa.

Time Allotment: 60 to 80 minutes

Materials:

Included:

- A large outline map, a climate region map, and/or a topographical map of Africa (page 5-10)
- "Images of Africa" handout (page 5-11)

Not Included:

- Computers with Internet access or print-outs of listed websites (listed below)
- Sticky notes

Procedure:

Ask students to take a few minutes and write down what comes into their minds

when they think of Africa.

Ask students to share what they wrote. For each response ask the question, "Where in Africa?" (For example, if one of the responses is "wild animals roaming free" ask, "Where in Africa do animals roam free?") Write each response on a sticky note. Place every response, on a large outline wall map, a climate region map, and/or a topographical map of Africa.

You can take this conversation one step further by giving your students a copy of the "Images of Africa" handout (page 5-11). Working individually, students should follow the directions on the sheet. If there is time, they can compare their answers with one or two other students before a general class discussion about their mental images of the African continent.

Now initiate a class discussion about clothing, housing, and forms of entertainment in the various climate regions that make up the United States.

Look at a world map to see how large the African continent is compared to the area of the United States.

Point out to students that given so much diversity in the environment of the United States, there must be even more diversity on the African continent.

Inform students that they will be focusing on Tanzania, one country on the east coast of Africa.

Divide the class into five groups, and assign each group to do research in one of the following areas using the computer lab, classroom computers, or print-outs of the websites listed below. The five areas are Government, Economy, History, Geography, and Culture. Each group should assign one student to be the recorder and write down 10 facts about the topic the group is working on.

Government

<http://www.tanzania.go.tz/>

<http://www.abacci.com/atlas/politics3.asp?countryID=337>

<http://www.kasbah.com/guides/tanzania.htm>

http://www.kasbah.com/vitalstats/government/tanzania_zanzibar_1.htm

Economy

<http://www.empereur.com/tanzania.html>

<http://www.tanzania.org.za/economy.htm>

<http://www.abacci.com/atlas/economy3.asp?countryID=337>

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/tz.html>

History

http://www.globalvolunteers.org/1main/tanzania/tanzania_info.htm

<http://www.abacci.com/atlas/history3.asp?countryID=337>

<http://www.africanet.com/countries/tanzania.htm>

<http://www.1uptravel.com/international/africa/tanzania/history-culture.html>

Geography

<http://www.tanzaniaconsul.com/geography.html>

<http://www.worldrover.com/vital/tanzania.html>

<http://geography.about.com/library/cia/blctanzania.htm>

<http://www.safariafrica.co.uk/profile-tanzania.htm>

Culture

<http://www.globalvolunteers.org/1main/tanzania/tanzanialegends.htm>

Have students share the information by asking each group to report the findings back to the class.

This extension is for classrooms that have established an Internet relationship with a school in Tanzania:

- Have students make up a list of cultural questions they would like to ask students in Tanzania.

Lesson 5B: Wait, Wait Don't Tell Me

Objectives: Upon completing this unit, students will be able to:
Identify and use context clues to unlock the meaning of unknown words.

Time Allotment: 60 minutes

Materials:

Included:

- Context Clues Explanation (page 5-12)
- A Vicarious Journey (page 5-13)
- A Vicarious Journey Worksheet (page 5-15)
- Context Clues Worksheet (page 5-16)

Procedure:

Tell students that all readers come across words they do not understand and that there is a specific skill they can learn to help figure out the meaning of unknown words.

Define "context" by explaining to students that the context of a word consists of the words, phrases, and sentences surrounding the unknown word. "Context" includes the words in the sentence containing the unknown word, as well as in other sentences in the paragraph, where the unknown word is found.

Hand out the Context Clues Explanation (page 5-12) and discuss *direct* and *indirect* context clues.

Hand out A Vicarious Journey (page 5-13) and A Vicarious Journey Worksheet (page 5-15). This can be read out loud, stopping to ask students the meaning of the bolded words, or they can read it to themselves and define the bolded words on the worksheet as they read.

Distribute the Context Clues Worksheet (page 5-12) for more practice. Tell students to complete this in class or assign it as homework.

This extension is for classrooms that have established an Internet relationship with a school in Tanzania:

- Exchange pictures via the Internet, ask for names of items to use in a writing activity.

Lesson 5C: The Lion & The Hunter (Point of View)

Objectives: Upon completing this unit, students will be able to:

- Write creatively from another point of view.
- Explore historical events from different points of view.
- Examine an environmental issue from the points of view of many different stakeholders.

Time Allotment: Approximately 80 minutes

Materials:

Included:

- The Maligned Wolf (page 5-17)
- A Vicarious Journey – Part 2 (page 5-18)
- A Maasai Story by Niki Davis (page 5-20)

Not Included:

- Computers with Internet access or print-outs of listed websites (listed below)

Procedure:

Write the following saying on the board.

Until the lion has a historian, the hunter will always be glorified.

Discuss the saying – what does it mean? Ask students if they can think of another example that would illustrate this same idea. Also, explain that proverbs are a very important aspect of most African cultures.

Sites for African proverbs (for further research):

<http://www.bluegecko.org/kenya/tribes/maasai/beliefs.htm> beliefs

<http://www.afriprov.org/resources/proverbs.htm> proverbs

<http://www.cogweb.ucla.edu/Discourse/Proverbs/African.html> proverbs

http://www.educationworld.com/a_tsl/archives/02-1/lesson005.shtml

Lesson plans using proverbs

Pass out and have students silently read *The Maligned Wolf* (page 5-17).

When the students are finished, ask what fairy tale this is. Briefly discuss what makes *The Maligned Wolf* different from *Little Red Riding Hood* that everyone is familiar with.

Mention what they have learned from Lesson 5A (Tanzania government, economy, history, geography, and culture) and ask about the point of view of the sources. (Even if the point of view of any of those sources happens to be Tanzanian, it is usually not written for a Tanzanian audience.)

Since most of what is written about Africa is from a westerner's point of view, explain the importance of keeping point of view in mind when reading about the history and culture of Africa and its people.

Pass out and have students silently read *A Vicarious Journey – Part 2* (page 5-18).

Have students use the Internet to find out more facts and issues about Tanzania and its people. Explain that they are going to write a story from a different point of view. They will need at least three solid facts or issues about Tanzania to use in writing this story from a different point of view. You can suggest the following sites to focus their research:

<http://www.mankato.msus.edu/emuseum/cultural/oldworld/africa/maasai.html>

<http://www.maasaierc.org/maasailegacy.html>

<http://www.maasaierc.org/maasailand.htm>

<http://maasai-infoline.org/>

Pass out and have students read *A Maasai Story* (page 5-20), written by Niki Davis, a student at Hamilton International Middle School in Seattle, WA. This is a good example of a creative story from the point of view of a young, married Maasai girl who is affected by the government policy not allowing the Maasai to follow their longstanding tradition of hunting and killing the animals that attack their cattle. **Note:** If the class will be doing lesson 5E, have students hold on to their copy of *A Maasai Story* or collect it to use it again.

Have students pick at least three facts or issues they found from their research. Using these facts and/or issues, challenge students to write a creative story from the point of view of a Tanzanian who is affected by them.

Lesson 5D: Use of Thinking Maps

Objectives: Upon completing this unit, students will be able to:

- Use a bubble map to define the concept of a family.
- Use a double bubble map to compare Maasai family structure with their own.
- Use a bracket map to analyze how location and life circumstances determine various aspects of their life.

Time Allotment: This lesson can be divided into three 20 minute sections, by introducing one thinking map at a time, or one 60 minute lesson focusing on thinking critically about the role of families, and life circumstances that are influenced by location and family structure.

Materials:

Included:

- Bubble Map (page 5-22)
- Bracket Map (page 5-23)
- Venn Diagram (page 5-24)

Note: Some teachers prefer to use “Double Bubble Maps” instead of Venn Diagrams. A “Double Bubble Map” looks like two connected bubble maps, and it is used to organize information about two things in order to compare and contrast them. Due to copyright restrictions, we were unable to provide a “Double Bubble Map” as part of this curriculum, but you can visit

<http://www.mapthemind.com/thinkingmaps/themaps/dbubble/> for on-line examples. You can find other examples of these maps and other similar writing tools by conducting a *Google* search for “Double Bubble Map.”

Procedure:

Use a bubble map to define family:

- Review the following terms: qualities, attributes, and characteristics.
- Draw a large circle on the board, (or distribute copies of a bubble map (page 5-22)) and write the word family in the center.
- Ask students to brainstorm, giving you words that could be used to describe a family.
- Write as many of their responses in bubbles that extend from the main circle.

Next, use a Venn Diagram or double bubble map to compare Maasai family structure with your students’:

- Review the following terms: comparing, contrasting, similarities, and differences.

- Distribute a Venn Diagram or double bubble map and ask students to write “My Family” and “Maasai Family” in the two larger center circles.
- Put the common elements, or similarities, in the center bubbles that connect the two circles, and the differing elements in the outer bubbles.
- Ask students to write a paragraph about the similarities and differences between their own family structure and that of a Maasai family.

Finally, use a bracket map to analyze how location and life circumstances determine various aspects of their life:

- Review the following terms: whole, parts, and subparts.
- Ask students to think about their favorite leisure activity.
- Distribute the Bracket Map (page 5-23).
- On the single line to the left, have them write a leisure activity.
- Have students use the next three sets of lines, to write the life circumstances that allow them to enjoy that activity.
- On the next set of lines, have them identify how location plays a role in creating each life circumstance they list.
- Using the information from their map, ask students to write a paragraph about whether a Tanzanian would be able to enjoy the same activities or not. Have a few students read their paragraphs aloud. Discuss as a class.

Lesson 5E: Inference & Implication

Objectives: Upon completing this unit, students will be able to:

- Focus on details.
- Think inferentially for non-explicit information.
- Recognize point of view.
- Learn to paraphrase information by restating ideas orally and in writing.
- Learn how to monitor their comprehension.

Time Allotment: 60 to 80 minutes

Materials:

Included:

- A Maasai Story (page 5-20 – used earlier)
- Character Profile Sheet (page 5-25)

Procedure:

Hand out copies of *A Maasai Story* (page 5-20: students may already have it from doing lesson 5C).

Hand out the Character Profile Sheet (page 5-25).

Have students read the story silently.

Pair students up and designate one member of the pair "A" and the other one "B." Ask students to put the story under their desks. First, have all the "A" members talk to their partners simultaneously, telling them as much as they can remember from their reading without looking at the text. Next, repeat the process with "B" members telling the "A"s what they remember.

Have each students pick one character from the story and complete the character profile sheet.

Ask students to discuss the reasoning behind their answers with their partners. (This could also be done as a class activity to enhance their thinking process. For example, in the story, the age of the character is not specified, and the reader has to infer the age from the character's words or behavior, and knowledge of the Maasai culture. Through discussion and questioning, students can reach a consensus about age etc.)

Ask them to use information they have gathered so far about the Maasai and use their imagination to write a short story using inference as a main element, by implying, rather than directly stating what aspects of Maasai life and culture are like.

To explore further, you can have students fill out the Character Profile Sheet (page 5-25) again – this time using personal information. Then, have them write a short story that infers their own family structure. (For example if their parents are divorced, they could write a story about the advantages or disadvantages of having to follow two different rules, implying, but not directly stating, that they live under two different households, therefore have divorced parents etc.)

Evaluation

In contrast to traditional evaluation that so often marks the dead end of a unit of study, the evaluation for this curriculum unit is designed to be a springboard for continued interest in studying the continent of Africa. Group work will be used to both reflect on how Africans live and learn, and to help students share what they know. By having students write what they know in their own words and restate their ideas orally, this evaluation system will solidify what they have learned and may generate more questions and interest in Africa, or specifically Tanzania.

Procedure

1. Organize the class into four or five teams and establish a home base for each team.
2. Give each team a large sheet of sturdy paper and ballpoint pens or pencils of the same color. For example, Team A gets red pens, Team B gets blue pens etc. All members of each team will need a pen.
3. Have someone on each team write the topic in the center of the paper and draw a circle around it. Give each team a different topic.
4. Have each team create a web of ideas around the topic by writing things that they know about the topic on lines that radiate from the circled topic. Have students write statements (sentences) rather than single words or phrases. All students should write at the same time and talk about what they are writing. Give the teams about five minutes to write, then stop everyone at once.
5. Have students take their pens with them and, staying in teams, move to the next station. Have teams move in the same direction (clockwise or counterclockwise) to avoid confusion. After students rotate instruct them to do the following:
 - Read what is already on the web at that station.
 - Add new ideas if they can. If they can't think of new ideas, they can write the same ideas in different words.
6. Have students rotate through all the stations, reading and writing, until they return to their home base. At their home base, ask them to do the following:
 - Read all the ideas on the web they started.
 - Identify one or two statements they think are especially good or interesting and share them with the whole class.
 - Think of one or two questions they have about the items the other teams added to their web.

As students read and discuss the completed webs, discourage criticism about what “they” added to “our” web. Instead, encourage questions and suggestions for revising statements that other team members added. This time of reflection and discussion should be an occasion for students to refine and extend their comprehension of the material. Some classes may need guidance and practice to interact effectively.

Adapted from *Thinking Strategies for Student Achievement* by Denise Nesseland Joyce Graham Baltas, SkyLight, 2000.

Blackline Map of Africa



Map can be found at <http://abcteach.com/Maps/africa.htm>, 2004.

Images of Africa

The terms listed below describe things found all over the world. Think about the images of Africa that you have in your mind. Read each term and decide whether or not the thing described could be found in Africa today. Would each thing be “never found, “ rarely found,” sometimes found,” or “often found”? Record your decision by placing a check in the appropriate blank following the term. Don’t worry about being right or wrong – instead think carefully about what you already know and what you *perceive to be true*.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Airports	_____	_____	_____	_____
Artists	_____	_____	_____	_____
Automobiles	_____	_____	_____	_____
Buddhist temples	_____	_____	_____	_____
Pollution	_____	_____	_____	_____
Christian Churches	_____	_____	_____	_____
Big Cities	_____	_____	_____	_____
Colonies	_____	_____	_____	_____
Computers	_____	_____	_____	_____
Dancing	_____	_____	_____	_____
Democracy	_____	_____	_____	_____
Deserts	_____	_____	_____	_____
Disease	_____	_____	_____	_____
Educated People	_____	_____	_____	_____
Forests	_____	_____	_____	_____
Elephants	_____	_____	_____	_____
Extended Families	_____	_____	_____	_____
Factories	_____	_____	_____	_____
Farms	_____	_____	_____	_____
Grasslands	_____	_____	_____	_____
High-paying jobs	_____	_____	_____	_____
Hospitals	_____	_____	_____	_____
Houses	_____	_____	_____	_____
Huts	_____	_____	_____	_____
Immigrants	_____	_____	_____	_____
Independent Countries	_____	_____	_____	_____
Jungles	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mines	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mosques	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mountains	_____	_____	_____	_____
Professional sports	_____	_____	_____	_____
Remains of ancient cities	_____	_____	_____	_____
Rivers	_____	_____	_____	_____
Royalty	_____	_____	_____	_____
Schools	_____	_____	_____	_____
Synagogues	_____	_____	_____	_____
Televisions	_____	_____	_____	_____
Tribes	_____	_____	_____	_____
Villages	_____	_____	_____	_____
War	_____	_____	_____	_____

Context Clues Explanation

Direct Context Clues

Definition Clue

This type of clue is mostly used in textbooks to introduce new words or technical terms that must be learned and understood in order for the reader to understand the idea or concept that the author is explaining. *The unknown word is usually followed by the following words: is, means, called, named, defined as, or any form of the verb to be.*

Example: The *perimeter* is the boundary line of any figure of two dimensions.

Restatement Clue

A word, or group of words used to restate the word's meaning. A *restatement, or rewording, is signaled by a comma after the word that is being explained.*

Example: The *hackles*, short hairs on the back of an animal's neck, often rise up on end when the animal is angry.

Indirect Context Clues

Comparison/Contrast Clue

Words that mean the same or the opposite of the unknown word. This type of clue is called a comparison (like) or contrast (different) clue.

Examples:

Like his attitude toward people, which *evolved* from one of distrust to trust, his outlook on life gradually changed for the better.

Unlike my brother, who loved the thrill of danger, I was looking for *security*.

Summary Clue

Sometimes an unknown word summarizes all the information in the phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that come before it.

Example: Carol is one of the most talented students ever to have attended Hamilton. She has won many awards in art, music, and theater. She also writes poetry and short stories for the school paper and creates video games on her computer. She is on the basketball team, and runs road races in the summer. Carol's talents are *innumerable*.

A Vicarious Journey

By Menkeli Kanaa, 2003

I would like to take you on a **vicarious** trip, a trip I want you to experience through my description, to Tanzania. I visited Tanzania with five other teachers this summer, and I can truly claim that it was the most **memorable** summer I've had. I doubt I will ever forget it.

Tanzania is located in East Africa. It's **bordered** on the south by Mozambique, Malawi, and Zambia; on the west by Zaire, Burundi, and Rwanda; on the north by Uganda and Kenya; and on the east by the Indian Ocean. Tanzania is the largest of the East African nations. Its area is three times that of New Mexico, and its geography is spectacular.

Our destination was Arusha, a small but growing city located in the northeast of Tanzania. It is in a mountainous region that includes Mt. Meru (14,979 ft/4,566 m) and Mount Kilimanjaro (19,340 ft./5,895 m). The **latter**, Mount Kilimanjaro, is the highest point in Africa and possibly the most breathtaking mountain imaginable. Kilimanjaro truly stands alone among the mountains of the world. The huge, **solitary** volcano is unaccompanied by any mountain chain. We all found ourselves **mute** in its presence, but having witnessed Kilimanjaro, I am sure we all will speak of it for years.

Serengeti National Park is west of these peaks. The name "Serengeti" has come to represent the safari experience itself, **evoking** images of sweeping savannas swarming with lions, zebras, wildebeest, and gazelle. In the language of the Maasai the word means "endless plain," and the 5700 sq. miles (14,763 sq. km) of park land do indeed seem **infinite**. The greatest concentration of **migratory**, game animals in the world roam upon these grasslands. Throughout the winter months of December to March (the best time to visit the Serengeti), many of the animals are concentrated in the park's southern regions, near Ngorongoro.

Ngorongoro is a 20-mile-wide volcanic crater within the Serengeti. The crater is ringed with towering walls and sheltering forests, grasslands, fresh springs, a large lake, and a dazzling abundance of animals of all sorts. Unlike the people who live there and take this crater for granted, we considered ourselves very **fortunate** to see it. The sunken cone of the extinct volcano serves as a natural cradle for the wildlife, which remains in the vicinity year-round.

During the spring months of May or June, the vast herds of wildebeest and zebra start to head west in search of water, beginning a **migration** that takes some of them to the shores of Lake Victoria, and others to northern areas and to Kenya's Maasai Mara park just across the border. Virtually every African game animal can be seen in the Serengeti; however, because the animals are more **dispersed** between July and November it took us quite a while to track them.

We were all **ecstatic** to have visited the Serengeti, but were disappointed that we did not get a chance to see three of Africa's best-known lakes, which also happen to be in Tanzania. Lake Victoria in the north, is the largest lake on the continent and one of the **primary**, or main headwater reservoirs of the Nile. Lake Tanganyika in the west, is the longest and the second deepest freshwater lake in the world. It also forms Tanzania's border with Zaire. And Lake Malawi (previously Lake Nyasa), in the south is the third largest lake on the continent.

The other sites that we wanted to visit, but did not get a chance to see are the relatively modern city of Dar es Salaam, and the beautiful island of Zanzibar.

Dar Es Salaam used to be the capital city of Tanzania. We were told that it has an old world charm, and that its most attractive feature is its harbor, where you can see beautiful sailing crafts **wafting** into port.

Zanzibar, a spectacular island in the Indian Ocean, lies twenty-two miles off the Tanzanian coast. We were told that besides its beautiful white sandy beaches, it is known for its spice farms, lush forests and cloistered Arabic alleyways. Some day I would like to go back and visit the places we could not visit this past summer.

Name: _____

A Vicarious Journey Worksheet

Use context clues to figure out the meaning of the following words.
Write the meaning on the line provided.

1. Vicarious _____

2. Memorable _____

3. Bordered _____

4. Latter _____

5. Solitary _____

6. Mute _____

7. Evoking _____

8. Infinite _____

9. Migratory _____

10. Ngorongoro _____

11. Fortunate _____

12. Migration _____

13. Dispersed _____

14. Ecstatic _____

15. Primary _____

16. Wafting _____

Name: _____

Context Clues Worksheet

Use context clues to figure out the meaning of the underlined words.
Write the meaning on the line below the sentence.

1. Even though a pygmy hippopotamus is smaller version of a regular hippopotamus, it is still a very large animal.

2. Like cotton surrounding a precious jewel, the clouds enveloped Mount Kilimanjaro's peak.

3. The old Maasai told us stories that teach many things about life and death, bravery and fear, vengeance and forgiveness.

4. To think that the past does not matter is an illusion, a false and sometimes dangerous belief.

5. We had to avoid the escarpment, the steep cliff that separated the plateaus.

6. Nigeria is Africa's most populous nation. More than 121 million people live there.

7. The Maasai are one of 100 ethnic groups that make up Tanzania.

The Maligned Wolf

Reprinted from Don't Laugh At Me - Operation Respect,
Inc. and Education for Social Responsibility, <http://www.dontlaugh.org/>, 2004

The forest was my home. I lived there and I cared about it. I tried to keep it neat and clean. Then one day, while I was cleaning up some garbage someone had left behind, I heard some footsteps. I leaped behind a tree and saw a little girl coming down the trail carrying a basket. I was suspicious of her right away because she was dressed strangely all in red, and with her head covered up so it seemed as if she didn't want people to know who she was. Naturally, I stopped to check her out. I asked who she was, where she was going, and where she had come from, and all that. She turned up her nose and told me in a snooty way that she was going to her grandmother's house. As she walked down the path, she took a candy bar out of her basket and started to eat it, throwing the wrapper on the ground. Imagine that! Bad enough that she had come into my forest without permission and had been rude to me. Now she was littering my home. I decided to teach her a lesson.

I ran ahead to her grandmother's house. When I saw the old woman, I realized that I knew her. Years before, I had helped her get rid of some rats in her house. When I explained what had happened, she agreed to help me teach her granddaughter a lesson. She agreed to hide under the bed until I called her.

When the girl arrived, I invited her into the bedroom where I was in the bed dressed like her grandmother. The girl came in and the first thing she did was to say something nasty about my big ears. I've been insulted before so I made the best of it by suggesting that my big ears would help me to hear her better. Then she made another remark, this time about my bulging eyes. Since I always try to stay cool, I ignored her insult and told her my big eyes help me see better. But her next insult really got me. She said something about my big teeth. At that point, I lost it. I knew I should have been able to handle the situation, but I just couldn't control my anger any longer. I jumped from the bed and growled at her, "My teeth will help me eat you better."

No wolf would ever eat a little girl, I certainly didn't intend to eat her. (She probably would have tasted bad anyway.) All I wanted to do was to scare her a bit. But the crazy kid started running around the house screaming. I started chasing her, thinking that if I could catch her I might be able to calm her down.

All of a sudden, the door came crashing open and a big lumberjack was standing there with an ax. I knew I was in trouble so I jumped out the window and got out of there as fast as I could. And that's not the end of it. The grandmother never did tell my side of the story. Before long, word got around that I was mean and nasty. Now everyone avoids me. Maybe the little girl lived happily ever after, but I haven't.

A Vicarious Journey – Part 2

By Menkeli Kanaa, 2003

We spent the majority of the time interacting with the students and teachers of Olchoki Primary School. We saw and experienced how different their lives were from ours. Each of us stayed with a different family, therefore we each experienced a different version of life in Arusha. The food we ate, the family members we interacted with, the distance we traveled to get to school every morning, and the type of houses we stayed in varied from family to family. And that, in turn has given each of us a unique experience. But we all learned the same basics about the history and culture of Tanzania, and picked up very interesting tidbits of information here and there – about cultural norms of the Maasai tribe.

The Maasai people are semi-nomadic, who move their herds in search of grazing land. But because of urbanization, or the movement of people from rural areas into the cities, there are quite a few who now live in cities or villages. They live under a communal system, and in a polygamous family structure, where men have as many wives as they can afford. Each wife has her own dwelling that she is responsible for building.

Livestock such as cattle, goats and sheep are the primary source of their income. Livestock is involved in a lot of social aspects with the Maasai. Their diet relies on meat, milk and blood from cattle, their wealth is measured by the number of cattle they own, and it is used for establishing various types of close community ties. (For example, when a man wants a wife, he gives cattle to a woman's family – in other words he has to pay in order to get a wife.) "Meishoo iyiook enkai inkishu o-nkera"- is a Maasai prayer saying, "May the Creator give us cattle and children," because children are also an asset to the Maasai. (We found it very interesting that people who have had children are addressed as mother or father of their first child. For example, if a woman's first child is named Sam, people would address her as "Mother of Sam", instead of using her actual name.)

The language of the Maasai is called "Maa", and it is a spoken, not written language. Their history is remembered through storytelling, so storytelling and proverbs are a very important aspect of their culture.

One fascinating story we heard was how a great Maasai spiritual leader foretold the coming of Europeans. He said that a flock of white birds was destined for their land, and that it would bring devastation to the Maasai people, destroying them along with their cattle. For much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Maasai remembered this prophecy and dreaded its fulfillment.

In 1884 the first European adventures crossed Maasailand on the caravan routes to the interior. Five years later, European powers met in Berlin to divide Africa among themselves. The Europeans then colonized most of Africa, including

Maasailand which they partitioned into British Kenya and German Tanganyika. After Germany's defeat in World War I, Great Britain took control of Tanzania. (The name Tanzania comes from the union of Tanganyika, which won independence in 1961, and the island of Zanzibar, which won independence in 1963.)

Today, the Maasai people are found both in Kenya and Tanzania because, like most other African countries, they were divided by political boundaries that were drawn by the Europeans. When the two countries attained independence in the early 1960's, they kept the colonial borders. They also kept some policies from their colonial predecessors that do not favor the Maasai tradition and way of life. The Maasai complain that in trying to please tourists, the governments of both countries are driving them off their traditional lands. They blame this on economic development, irresponsible tourism, large-scale farming, and other activities that destroy wildlife habitat. By losing some of their traditional land they feel that they are also losing their culture.

Experiencing a totally different family structure, ways of interacting and addressing each other, and the warmth that came with their hospitality gave our trip a flavor that we would not have had if we had visited Tanzania like all other tourists who mostly go there to see the incredibly beautiful landscape, and the variety of wild animals.

A Maasai Story

By Niki Davis, Student at Hamilton International Middle School, Seattle, WA, 2003

"Kinder ol-le-'pe kindoki Ol-le ngeno." (In the beginning we are foolish, but with experience we become wise.) said Grandfather.

I tried my hardest to smile. I knew he was trying, but it wasn't any use to me. I felt as though my life was going to end in a matter of seconds. I had only to close my eyes and the world I knew would disappear. I only hoped it would take me with it.

He looked at me for what seemed to be forever, like he was trying to draw me out of the state I had been in for months. I know he thinks that I'm young, but I am not. I am old enough to start my own family. I have started one now, a month ago, but I fear I'm not ready. My husband is very caring. He is kind and young like me. He, too, is new at this. I am only his first wife, but the world is changing. I fear that when I'm ready to be as old as I feel, it will not be a place for my children. With all these thoughts spinning in my head, Grandfather's gentle voice seemed distant. I looked up at his kind smile and grinned.

"It will be all right, Maya," he said to me. My grin melted, and I could feel tears welling up in my eyes.

"Will it?" I asked him.

He enclosed me in his arms. Through my tears I looked at the landscape over his shoulder. The trees were bare and the sun was shining down on the cattle. The women were carrying water to their small homes in the shade of the trees. My life had changed so much. This was the world I knew. Did it really have to change again?

Did the warriors' time in training really need to be cut short? Was it something we as people had done to the Europeans to make them take our land? They know we find cattle sacred, that we have believed since we first settled on this land. Is it right to be punished for harming the animals that attack them? What do we do to keep our beliefs and all that we trust safe?

While these thoughts whizzed through my brain, I was interrupted by the sound of screaming. Pulling away from my grandfather, I saw Mama Ngena with her son (Ngena) and the four co-wives, who are all very close to her. She was kneeling next to a wounded bull, speaking quickly in Maa. I rushed to her side, to comfort her. Grandfather looked at the bull. It was obvious what had happened. While grazing, the bull had been attacked by a lion.

Once Mama Ngena was calm, Grandfather bandaged the bull and walked her into her hut. When the sound of her whimpering faded, I ran home. I saw my husband

and started telling him what had happened. He stood in silence and listened. When I finished, he said, " The lion must be hunted and killed." I looked worriedly at him, I admired his bravery, but I didn't want to let him risk his life in that way.

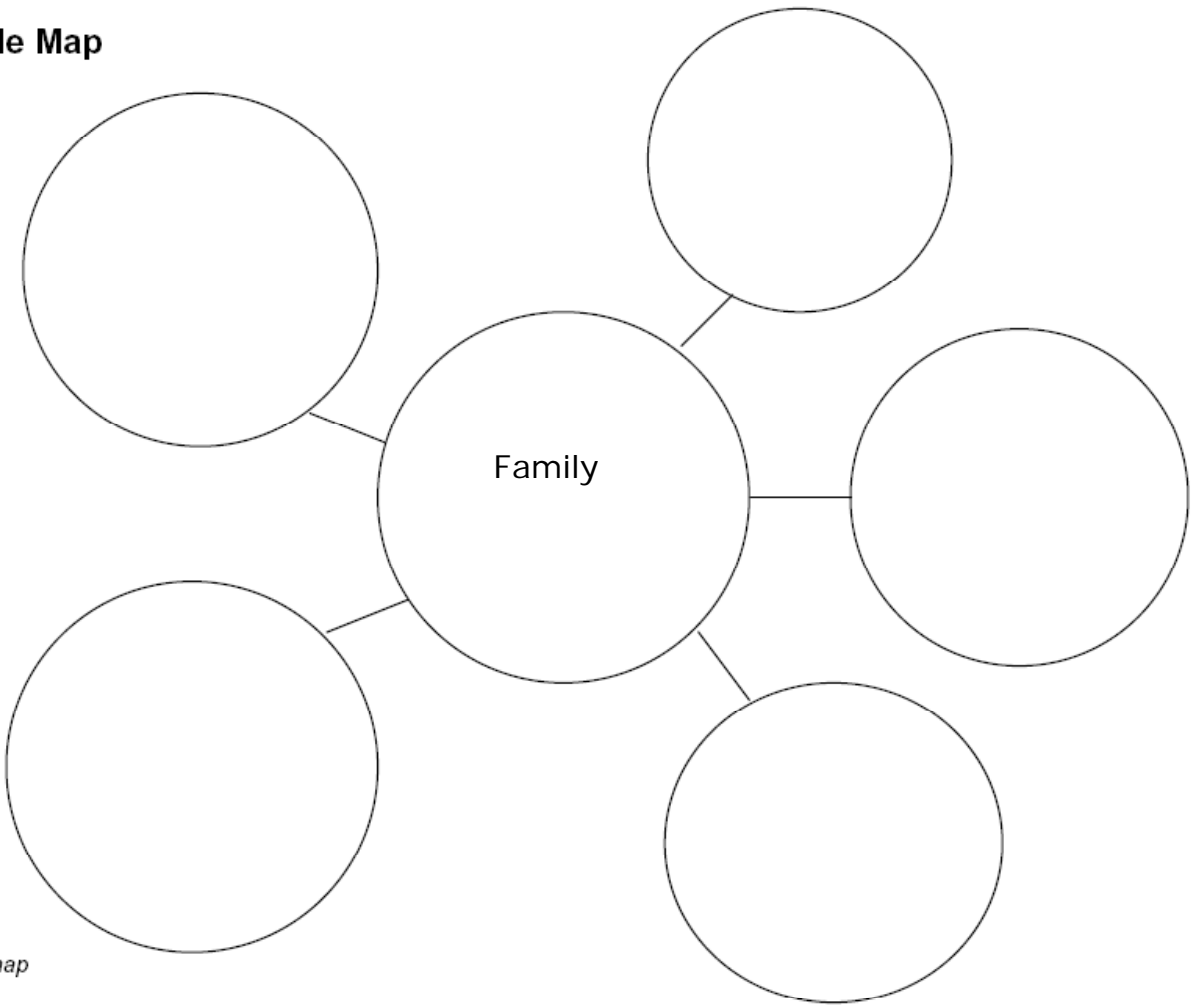
He is a man of courage and honesty and refuses to see such tragedy fall upon the elders. He said he would call together a hunt and they would depart that evening. Unsure he was making the right choice, I nodded and walked slowly back out on the road, pondering his decision.

That night I saw him off, and although I feared for him I did not show it until later that evening when I cried myself to sleep. Three days passed with no sign of the hunters. I began to worry. On the fourth day, the elders thought it best to send out a search party. I was not aware of the return of the search party until I was visited by Mama Ngena. She told me that they had discovered that my husband and one other person in his group had been captured by the Europeans for hunting a lion. They had been held captive until they escaped that afternoon. However when trying to escape he had been wounded and was not able to make the journey back to our village. Mama Ngena reassured me that he was being helped by two elder chiefs who had joined in the search.

I cried the rest of the night. Mama Ngena's gentle words were echoing in my head. "Erisyo laikin o kaa." (Defeat and death are the same thing.) Was that true now?

Bubble Map

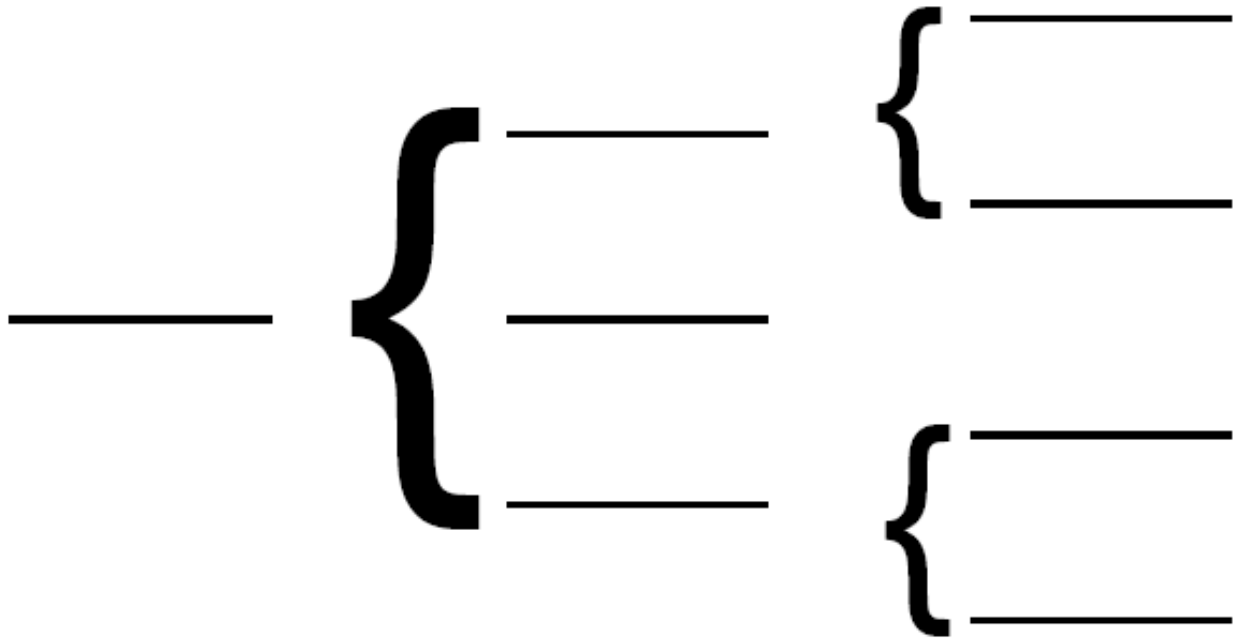
Bubble Map



bubble map

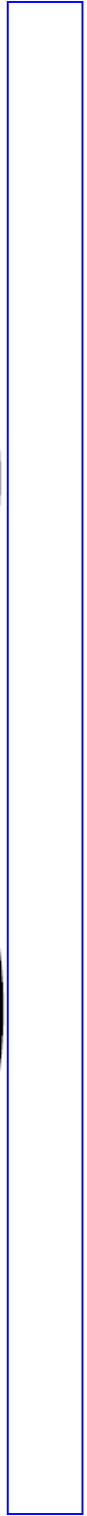
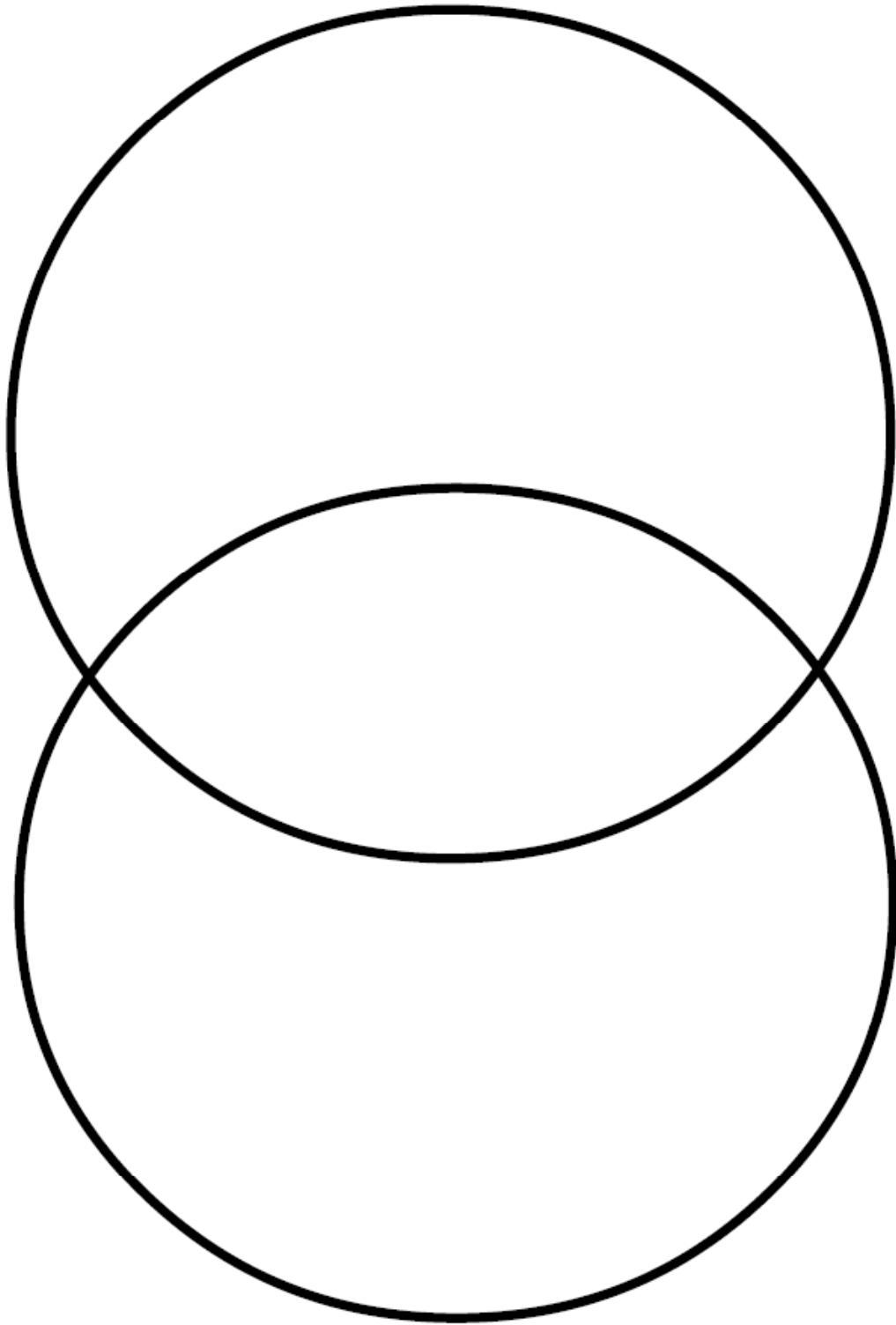
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Bracket Map



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Venn Diagram



Name: _____

Character Profile Sheet

This story is about (name of main character) _____
who (action or behavior of character related to plot) _____

Character Profile

Name _____

Age _____

Family

Habitat

Wishes

Fears

Character Traits

Other Information

From *Writing as Learning* by Evelyn Rothstein & Gerald Lauber, SkyLight,