Africa: A brief description

Africa is the World’s second-largest and second most-populous continent with 1,072 million people last recorded living in 2012. Africa (including its islands) is about 11.7 million square miles. Africa covers 6% of the Earth’s total surface area and has a total of 61 territories. There are 54 countries in Africa, including Madagascar and the rest of the island groups. Africa is considered the place where humans originated. The earliest known Homo Sapiens (humans) were found in Ethiopia 200,000 years ago.

The continent is accompanied by four large bodies of water; the Mediterranean Sea to the north, the Red Sea is along the Northeastern side, the Indian Ocean on the South & Southeastern side, and the Atlantic Ocean to the West. There are two famous water bodies, the Nile and Mozambique Channel. The Nile is a north-flowing river, generally known as the second longest river in the world. This river is 6,650 km (4,130 miles) long and splits in two as you travel south. The Nile is an important water resource that is shared by ten countries; Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, South Sudan, Sudan and the Arab Republic of Egypt. The Nile has two major tributary rivers, the White Nile and Blue Nile. Lastly the Mozambique Channel is an arm of the Indian Ocean between Madagascar and the mainland of southeast Africa, this channel is a strait between Mozambique and Madagascar its length is about 1600 km (1000 miles) and width is about 400 km (250 miles).

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

Languages

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

1. **The Afro-Asiatic languages** are a language family that consists of 240 languages and 285 million people from the Horn of Africa, North Africa, the Sahel and Southwest Asia.
2. **The Nilo-Saharan language** family consists of more than a hundred languages spoken by 30 million people. Nilo-Saharan languages are spoken by Nilotic ethnic groups in Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Uganda, and northern Tanzania.
3. **The Niger-Congo language** covers much of Sub-Saharan Africa and is possibly the largest language family in the world.
4. **The Khoisan languages** number about fifty and are spoken in Southern Africa by over 120,000 people. The Khoi and San peoples are considered the original inhabitants of this part of Africa.

Following the end of colonialism, nearly all African countries adopted official languages that originated outside the continent. Several countries granted legal recognition to
indigenous languages (such as Kiswahili, Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa). In numerous countries English and French are used for communication in the public sphere (government, education, commerce and media).

**Ancient Egypt**

Egypt is located in the northeastern part of Africa. Around 5000 BC farmers first settled in Egypt along the Nile River which flows north into the Mediterranean Sea. This region receives very little rainfall and without the Nile, society couldn’t have survived. Before technological advancements of dams and bridges the Nile would flood every year and farmers would have to acclimate to these conditions. Ancient Egypt’s History spans the period from the early presynaptic settlements of the northern Nile Valley to 30 BC. The Pharaonic Period is dated from around 3200 BC, when Lower and Upper Egypt became unified, until the country collapsed in 332 BC. The Lower Kingdom wore a red crown and the Upper Kingdom wore a white crown. Near 3200 BC, the pharaoh of the north conquered the south and united the crowns colors to reflect the joining of kingdoms. However, the pharaoh allowed both kingdoms to coexist and worship their separate deities.

Not many people were literate and able to read and write; the few that were literate often were scribes. Scribes would record information about the high priests and royalty as well as letters, registries, ledgers, poems and stories. The main form of writing was called hieroglyphics (Holy Word) and was written with paint like ink/dye on limestone fragments, walls, papyrus and pottery. Hieroglyphs are a written language in the form of pictures and symbols, resembling what the people of the time saw and/or worshipped. One category that the Ancient Egyptians worshipped was death and reincarnation. At the time both death and reincarnation always went hand in hand, making it one category. This way of life played a very prominent role in the culture of ancient Egyptians. Death was absolutely sacred and was driven by the belief that there was an afterlife. The ancient Egyptians had rules they had to follow in order to be welcomed in the afterlife; these rules were subscribed in the Book of the Dead.

The Egyptian Book of the Dead was known to the Egyptians as “Reu Nu pert Em hru,” in translation that means “The Chapters of coming forth by day.” This book is an assembly of illustrations and writings recorded on papyrus. These papyri were commissioned by the deceased before their death. This collection of afterlife instructions began to appear in Egyptian tombs around 1600 BC. It can be thought of as the deceased's guidebook to a prosperous afterlife. The book was to be read by the deceased during their journey into the Underworld. It enabled the deceased to overcome obstacles and to stay on their Godly path to a prosperous afterlife.

The legendary scholar of the healing arts and the “Book of the Dead” was Imhotep. He was the world’s first doctor, the “Father of medicine, and healing”. Imhotep lived in the court of Pharaoh Djoser of the 3rd dynasty around 2980 BC. His accomplishments were well known in
Egypt, Ghana, and in some parts of Greece and Rome. Imhotep was a skilled surgeon, dentist and diagnostician and treated over 200 diseases. He recorded more than 90 anatomical terms and 48 injuries. Beyond these triumphs, he also invented the step pyramid and helped design the pharaoh’s tombs. He was greatly admired as the as the first” Multi-Genius” and was revered by all for at least 3,000 years.

Citations -- URL: [http://www.mce.k12tn.net/ancient_egypt/facts.htm](http://www.mce.k12tn.net/ancient_egypt/facts.htm) (Introduction, hieroglyphs, Rosetta stone, culture-daily life)  
[http://www.chiddingstone.kent.sch.uk/homework/egypt/writing.htm](http://www.chiddingstone.kent.sch.uk/homework/egypt/writing.htm)  

**The Old Empire of Ghana**

Ancient Ghana Empire was located about 400 miles northwest of the modern day Ghana. When the modern day country of Ghana won its independence, it took the name of a famous nearby ancient Empire Ghana, also known as Wagadugu. This region was rich in gold and thus dubbed the name “Gold Coast” by Europeans. Most of what we know about ancient Ghana is based on written documentation from Arab travelers who came in contact with the people of the empire. The king of the Ancient Empire of Ghana served as the commander in chief of a strong army, the controller of all trade activities, and the head administrator of justice.

The occupation of ancient Ghana is believed to date back to the 400AD but is officially dated at 800AD. It wasn’t until several hundred years later that ancient Ghana became established as a nation by an ethnic group known as the Soninke, whose leaders have been credited with the early strengthening of the Wagadugu state and the expansion of its territories. By 1000 AD, the nation had undergone deliberate expansion and taken control of a large area of land between the upper Niger and Senegal Rivers. Its attainment of territory meant that Ghana would become a leading force in the trans-Saharan trade network.

Due to jealousy of their wealth, neighboring kingdoms of Wagadugu enforced a multitude of attacks on the empire over the years. By 1240 AD, the ancient Empire of Ghana had fallen weak and was absorbed into the modern day empire of Mali.

Citations: [http://www.ushistory.org/civ/7a.asp](http://www.ushistory.org/civ/7a.asp)  
[http://egyptianhistory.150m.com/africapart22.html](http://egyptianhistory.150m.com/africapart22.html)  
**Black Holocaust (Maafa)**

Domestic Servitude was practiced in Africa between the seventh and twentieth century’s. Between the fifteenth and the nineteenth centuries, the Atlantic slave trade took 7-12 million African natives to the New World, North America. In West Africa, the decline of the Atlantic slave trade in 1820 caused dramatic economic shifts. Between 1808 and 1860, the British West Africa Squadron seized approximately 1,600 slave ships and freed 150,000 Africans who were captured aboard.

**Ethnic Groups**

The official population count of the various ethnic groups in Africa has, in some instances, been controversial because certain groups believe populations are fixed to give other ethnicities numerical superiority (as in the case of Nigeria's Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo people). The following ethnic groups number 10 million people or more:

**Northern Africa**

- Arab, up to ca. 100 million, see Demographics of the Arab League
- Berber ca. 65 million

**Western Africa**

- Hausa in Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Ivory Coast and Sudan (ca. 30 million)
- Fula in Guinea, Nigeria, Cameroon, Senegal, Mali, Sierra Leone, Central African Republic, Burkina Faso, Benin, Niger, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Chad, Sudan, Togo and Ivory Coast (ca. 27 million)
- Mandinka in The Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Guinea Bissau, Niger, Mauritania, Chad (ca. 13 million)
- Igbo in Nigeria, Cameroon, Sierra Leone and Equatorial Guinea (ca. 30 million)
- Yoruba in Nigeria and Benin (ca. 30 million)
- Oromo in Ethiopia and Kenya (ca. 30 million)
- Akan in Akanland and Ivory Coast (ca. 20 million)
- Ijaw in Nigeria (ca. 14 million)
Horn of Africa

- Amhara in Ethiopia (ca. 20 million)
- Somali in Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya (ca. 15-17 million)

Central Africa

- Luba in Democratic Republic of the Congo (ca. 13 million)
- Mongo in Democratic Republic of the Congo (ca. 12 million)
- Kongo in Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola and Republic of the Congo (ca. 10 million)

Eastern Africa

- Hutu in Rwanda, Burundi, DR Congo (ca. 16 million)

Southern Africa

- Shona in Zimbabwe and Mozambique (ca. 10 million)
- Zulu in South Africa (ca. 10 million)