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| **LESSON 1**  **The Physical Geography of Central Africa**  **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:*How do people adapt to their environment?*** | |
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| *Central Africa is smaller than many regions, but it holds a tremendous variety of geographic features. These features include a vast rain forest–covered basin, one of the world’s greatest river systems, soaring mountains, and a deep rift valley marking the line along which Africa is splitting apart*.  **Landforms and Waterways**  ***What makes some landforms and waterways so important to the region?***  Central Africa is located in Earth’s equatorial zone—that is, the area along and near the Equator. The region consists of seven countries. The largest of these is the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). It dwarfs its neighbors, which are the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and the island country of São Tomé and Príncipe.  **Landforms**  The dominant landform of Central Africa is the watershed of the Congo River. A **watershed** is the land drained by a river and its system of tributaries. At the center of the watershed is a depression called the Congo Basin. A rolling plain spreads across the center of the basin, and high plateaus rise on most of its sides.  The region’s eastern edge runs along the Great Rift Valley, also known as the Great Rift System. Here, rugged mountain ranges soar above a broad, deep valley that holds several long, narrow lakes. Margherita Peak, which rises from a range called the Ruwenzori (ROO-un-ZO-ree), reaches the lofty height of 16,763 feet (5,109 m). Margherita Peak is the highest summit in the region and the third highest on the entire continent, ranking after Kilimanjaro and Mount Kenya. |  |

Along the Atlantic coast of Central Africa stretches a narrow lowland. Off the coast lie several important islands. Two of these islands form the country of São Tomé and Príncipe. Two other islands, called Bioko and Pagalu, belong to Equatorial Guinea. This country also includes several smaller islands, as well as a territory on the mainland known as Mbini.

**Waterways**

Six of the seven countries in Central Africa have coasts on the Atlantic Ocean. The Central African Republic is the region’s only landlocked country.

The Congo River and its tributaries account for most of Central Africa’s inland waterways. The source of the Congo lies in East Africa between Lake Tanganyika and Lake Malawi (also called Lake Nyasa). From there, the river flows about 2,900 miles (4,667 km) to its mouth on the Atlantic Ocean. Among African rivers, only the Nile is longer than the Congo. When measured by water flow, the Congo tops every river in the world except South America's Amazon.

**Difficult Navigation**

No other river system in Africa offers as many miles of navigable waterways as the Congo and its tributaries. A navigable river is one on which ships and boats can travel. The Congo River is not navigable for its entire course, however. Several series of cataracts and rapids interrupt the passage of ships on the river.

Perhaps the most significant of these interruptions occurs rather close to the mouth of the Congo River. Only about 100 miles (161 km) from the Atlantic Ocean lie cataracts that block seagoing ships from traveling farther inland. The seaport city of Matadi is found here. Downstream from Matadi, in the final part of its journey, the river widens into an **estuary**, a passage in which freshwater meets salt water.

The Congo River is important to Central Africa for several reasons. First, it provides a livelihood for people who live along its banks. They use the river’s water for agriculture and depend on its fish for food. Second, the river is a vital transportation artery. Although the cataracts and rapids prevent ships from navigating the entire river, ship traffic connects people and places along various sections of the river. Finally, dams on the river generate hydroelectric power.

***Identifying*** Give two reasons for the Congo River’s importance to Central Africa.

**Climate and Vegetation**

***What are the prevailing climates in Central Africa?***

Because Central Africa is centered on the Equator, the climate in much of the region is tropical. Temperatures are warm to hot, and rainfall is plentiful. The amount of rainfall generally decreases as distance from the Equator increases. In the northern and southern parts of the region, dry seasons alternate with wet seasons.

**Climate Zones**

The belt of Central Africa that lies along the Equator has a warm, wet climate. Because of its location, this zone experiences little seasonal variation in weather and length of daylight. The miday sun is directly or almost directly overhead every day, and daytime temperatures are always high. Rainfall is abundant throughout the year, with totals greater than 80 inches (203 cm) in some areas.

To the north and south of the region's equatorial zone lie tropical wet-and-dry climate zones. As the name suggests, these zones have both rainy and dry seasons. There is great climate variation within the zones. In the areas nearest the Equator, the dry season typically lasts about four months. In the areas farthest from the Equator, it might last as long as seven months.

**Rain Forest**

A tropical rain forest , the second largest in the world, covers more than half of Central Africa. In this rain-soaked realm, closely packed trees soar has high as 15-story buildings. The forest also holds a tremendous variety of other plants, some of which are used in traditional medicines. Scientists think that only a fraction of the plant species in the forest have been identified. Most remain to be discovered.

The trees and other plants in the rain forest compete for survival. The interwoven crowns of the trees create a dense canopy, or roof, that blocks nearly all of the sunlight, leaving the lower levels in gloom. A tree seedling or sapling can only grow tall if a mature tree dies or if wind blows down some of its branches, creating an opening in the canopy. Because of the lack of sunlight, the forest floor has few of the small plants found in other types of forests. Instead, the forest floor is covered by dead leaves that decompose rapidly in the warm, wet conditions.

**Savannas**

In the northern and southern areas of Central Africa, rain forests give way to savannas, or areas with a mixture of trees, shrubs, and grasslands. The exact mix of vegetation depends on the length of the dry seasons. Human activity over thousands of years might be responsible for an increase in the size of the savanna areas. Experts believe that the change of forestland into savanna could be the result of clearing land through **slash-and-burn** agriculture.

This form of farming involves turning forestland into cropland. Trees and shrubs are cut down and burned in order to make the soil more fertile, at least temporarily.

Within a few years, the soil becomes depleted and farmers move on. The plots of land are left so that trees and shrubs can return. Then the farmers return and repeat the process of cutting, burning, and farming. Sometimes plots remain fallow—that is, not planted—for as long as 20 years.

Slash-and-burn agriculture provides a livelihood for many people . Others,however, point out that it destroys plant and animal habitats, creates air pollution, and is causing the world's tropical forests to shrink at an alarming rate.

Those who support protecting the environment worry that activities that harm rain forests threaten biodiversity. **Biodiversity** refers to the wide variety of life on Earth. These conservationists argue that if ecosystems are wiped out, numerous valuable species will be lost forever.

***Describing*** Imagine that you live in northern Cameroon. You decide to move to a location in the Republic of the Congo very near the Equator. What changes in climate can you expect?

**Natural Resources**

***Which natural resources are important in Central Africa?***

Central Africa is rich in mineral, energy, and other resources. However, many of these resources have not yet been developed.

**Mineral Resources**

The greatest abundance of mineral resources in Central Africa is found in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Within that country, the area richest in mineral resources is a province called Katanga. Katanga holds deposits of more than a dozen minerals, including cobalt, copper, gold, and uranium. Minerals mined in other areas of the country include diamonds, iron ore, and limestone.

Gabon produces more than a tenth of the world's supply of manganese. This hard, silvery metal is used in the manufacture of iron and steel. The country also produces uranium, diamonds, and gold, and it holds reserves of high-quality iron ore.

Bauxite and cobalt are among Cameroon’s most significant mineral resources. Equatorial Guinea has deposits of uranium, gold, iron ore, and manganese. Most of these deposits have yet to be exploited. Diamond mining is an important industry in the Central African Republic. Rich deposits of uranium, gold, and other minerals could bring the country wealth in the future.

Why have the mineral resources in some parts of Central Africa remained underdeveloped? Political instability, civil conflict, and the high cost of investment have played a role. Perhaps the most important reason, however, is that the region lacks good transportation networks. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, the Congo River still serves as the major transportation artery. The landlocked Central African Republic also must use rivers for transport. It has few paved roads and no railways. Similarly, most roads in Equatorial Guinea are unpaved and there is no railway system.

**Other Resources**

The region is rich in resources other than minerals. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, rapids and waterfalls on the Congo River and its tributaries offer vast **potential** for hydroelectric power. The forest reserves of the DRC are rivaled by few countries in the world. Fish from the ocean and its fresh water systems provide another important resource.

Developing these resources, however, will affect the environment. Damming rivers for hydroelectric power results in large changes to river ecosystems. Deforestation and habitat change occur when forests are cut.

In the 1990s, large reserves of petroleum and natural gas were discovered under the seafloor off Equatorial Guinea's Atlantic Coast. The export of oil and gas products has boosted the country's economy.

Likewise, petroleum has been Cameroon’s leading export since 1980. The country also has natural gas deposits, but the high cost of development has kept them untapped. Nearly all of Cameroon's energy comes from dams that generate hydroelectricity.

***Identifying Central Issues*** What are two of the factors that have slowed development of Central Africa’s rich natural resources?

**LESSON 1 REVIEW**

**Reviewing Vocabulary**

1. Why might *slash-and-burn agriculture* be harmful to a country’s land in the long term?

**Answering the Guiding Questions**

1. ***Analyzing*** What comparisons can you make between the Congo River in Central Africa and two of the other great rivers of the world: the Nile and the Amazon?
2. ***Describing*** What conclusion can you make about the prevailing climate conditions in areas near the Equator?
3. ***Analyzing*** How would you evaluate Central Africa’s hydroelectric potential?
4. ***Argument Writing*** Write a letter to a friend to persuade him or her to invest in mineral production in Central Africa. In your letter, use some of the information you have learned in this lesson.

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| **LESSON 2**  **The History of Central Africa**  **ESSENTIAL QUESTION: *How does technology change the way people live?*** | |
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| *Central Africa’s past is a fascinating and often tragic story involving migrations, slavery, exploitation by foreign powers, and the struggle for independence, stability, and prosperity.*  **Early Settlement**  ***How did agriculture and trade develop in Central Africa?***  Through most of the prehistoric period, the people of Central Africa were hunters and gatherers who survived on wild game and wild plants. Eventually, climate changes forced the people to develop new ways of life.  **Development of Agriculture**  Around 10,000 years ago, Earth’s climate entered a dry phase. Vegetation patterns changed in response and led to the movement of people. The changes also intensified the struggle for survival. The region’s inhabitants were forced to find ways to get more food from a smaller area of their environment.  Gradually, a transformation that historians call the agricultural revolution swept through the region, beginning in the north. People began to collect plants—especially roots and tubers—on a more regular basis. They developed and refined tools such as stone hoes that were specially designed for digging. They discovered that if they planted a piece of a root or tuber in fertile soil, a new plant would grow from it. Over time, the hunters and gatherers became farmers. |  |

Cereal farming was the next agricultural development in Central Africa. In the savannas of the north, people began cultivating **millet** and sorghum, two wild grasses that produce edible seeds. Millet proved to be especially well-suited to the area's climate because the crop thrives in high temperatures and is resistant to drought.

In addition to growing crops, Central Afrcia's early farmers cultivated trees and gathered the fruit. From the fruit of oil palms they made a cooking oil that was rich in proteins and vitamins. The nutrition boost provided by the **palm oil** helped people become healthier, and improved health brought about population growth.

The increase in the food supply from the practice of agriculture meant that people could live in larger, more settled communities. The agricultural revolution laid the **foundation** for village life and also for the development of items used in daily life.

**Using Mineral Resources**

Since early times, people in Central Africa have made tools from stone. Around 3,000 years ago, they began using a new material that was far better in many ways: iron. Iron tools were expensive and could only be made by skilled artisans, but they were far more efficient and less brittle than stone tools.

In addition to iron, people in ancient Central Africa made use of other minerals, especially copper and salt. These resources played an important role in trade.

***Determining Central Ideas*** Why was the agricultural revolution so important for the development of Central Africa as a region?

**European Contact and Afterward**

***How did colonization by foreign countries affect Central Africa?***

Regular contact with Europeans, which began in the 1400s, marked the start of a new era in Central Africa’s history.

**The Slave Trade**

As European ships began reaching the Atlantic coast of Central Africa in the 1400s, the region began developing into one of the busiest hubs of the slave trade. The trade was driven because European colonizers demanded a large workforce for their huge plantations in the Americas. The slave trade would continue and grow for more than three centuries.

The first European country to become actively involved in the slave trade was Portugal. In the late 1400s, the Portuguese established a colony on the island of São Tomé in order to grow sugar. Later, this island became a staging area for the transportation of African slaves to Portugal’s main conquest in the Western Hemisphere: Brazil in South America.

Gabon served as one of the most important centers of the slave trade. Slaves were gathered in the country's interior and taken on boats to a coastal inlet called the Gabon Estuary. Some of these slaves were people who had been cast out of their own societies; others had been captured in warfare. At settlements on the estuary, the slaves were held in enclosures known as barracoons until European ships arrived to take them away.

The slave trade was part of what is sometimes called the “triangular trade," named for the triangular pattern formed by the three stages of the trade. In the first stage, ships would sail to Africa with caroges of manufactured goods such as cloth, beads, metal goods, guns, and liquor. These goods would be traded for slaves. In the second stage, known as the Middle Passage, the ships would carry their human cargo to the Americas. There, the slaves would be exchanged for goods such as rum, tobacco, molasses, and cotton that were produced on slave-labor plantations. In the third stage, the ships would return to Europe. Ships of the time were powered by wind, and each stage followed the direction of the prevailing winds.

**Adoption of New Crops**

After European countries established colonies in the Americas, they brought some of the native plants back to Europe and to Africa. Two plants in particular had an important effect on farming and diet in Central Africa. These were cassava and maize.

The **cassava** plant has thick, edible roots known as tubers. Rich in nutritious starch, the tubers are used to make flour, breads, and tapioca. The plant thrives in hot, sunny climates and is able to survive droughts and locust attacks. Historians believe that Portuguese ships brought cassava to Africa from Brazil. Today, cassava is a staple food for many of Africa's people.

Maize, often called corn, is one of the most important staple grains of the Western Hemisphere. Today it is the most widely grown grain crop in the Americas. Maize was domesticated in prehistoric times, probably in Central America. It was carried around the world by Europeans after their discovery of the Americas.

**Colonialism**

**Colonialism** is the political and economic rule of one region or country by another country, usually for profit. European countries began to practice colonialism in the 1500s and 1600s. They first founded colonies in the Americas for economic gain.

Colonialism came much later to Central Africa. Exploration and settlement by Europeans was impeded by the difficulty of transportation, the presence of tropical diseases like malaria, and other challenges. In the second half of the 19th century, however, European presence in the region began to grow sharply.

In 1884–1885, Germany hosted a landmark conference of European countries in the city of Berlin. The countries attending the conference agreed on a plan for dividing Africa into colonies that could be exploited for European profit.

King Leopold II of Belgium was among the strongest supporters of the conference. He believed that a fortune could be made from rubber plants. Rubber was one of the most plentiful and valuable natural resources of Central Africa. After 1885, King Leopold took over a vast area that came to be known as the Congo Free State. The king held the area as a personal possession, and he did indeed make a fortune.

Soon, most of Central Africa was in the hands of European colonizers. France gained control of what is now the Republic of the Congo, Gabon, and the Central African Republic. Spain colonized what is now Equatorial Guinea, while Germany ruled Cameroon. Portugal retained possession of São Tomé and Príncipe.

Europeans often justified their economic exploitation of Africa by claiming that their goal was to promote civilization and to spread Christianity. Europeans sent many **missionaries** to Africa in order to convert the native people.

At the same time, Europeans often treated the African workers under their control harshly. By the early 1900s, small revolts against French rule and the plantation-based economy were common. In the Congo Free State, the people suffered severe hardships and cruel treatment under King Leopold. Pressured by growing outrage from around the world, the Belgian parliament took over the vast area from King Leopold. It became an official colony of Belgium and was known as the Belgian Congo.

***Determining Central Ideas*** How was Central Africa affected by a conference held in Germany in the mid-1880s?

**Independent Countries**

***What effects did gaining independence have on the countries of Central Africa?***

Near the middle of the 20th century, European countries became willing to grant independence to their African colonies. All seven of Central Africa's countries gained independence in the period from 1960 to 1975.

**A Wave of Independence**

In 1960 France was the most important European colonial power in Central Africa. That year witnessed the independence of four French colonies: Gabon, the Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, and Cameroon, which France had gained from Germany during World War I. In the same year, the Democratic Republic of the Congo won independence from Belgium.

Many of these new countries experienced hard times after independence. Their people suffered through periods of ethnic conflict, harsh rule, and human rights abuses. In the Central African Republic, military officer Jean-Bédel Bokassa staged a **coup**. He ruled as a dictator and proclaimed himself the country’s emperor. He brutally punished anyone who protested against his rule.

There have also been success stories, such as Gabon. Thanks in large part to its plentiful natural resources, Gabon has become one of the wealthiest and most stable countries in Africa.

**Smaller Countries**

Equatorial Guinea won independence from Spain in 1968. The country’s first president, Francisco Macías Nguema, soon took over the government and became a ruthless dictator. In 1979, Nguema was ousted by his own nephew, who also ruled with an iron hand.

Portugal granted independence to São Tomé and Príncipe in 1975. With independence came great hope for the future. Like many of its neighbors, however, the country has been plagued by political instability and corruption.

***Identifying*** Since the countries of the region gained independence, list at least two factors that have limited their political and economic progress.

**LESSON 2 REVIEW**

**Reviewing Vocabulary**

1. Why was*millet* a suitable grain for planting in Central Africa?

**Answering the Guiding Questions**

1. ***Determining Central Ideas*** Why might tools made from iron be superior to tools made from stone?
2. ***Identifying*** What were two major motivations for the European colonization of Central Africa?
3. ***Analyzing*** In what way was the rule of Bokassa in the Central African Republic similar to the rule of Nguema in Equatorial Guinea?
4. ***Informative/Explanatory Writing*** Write a few paragraphs explaining the development of the slave trade in Central Africa.

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| **LESSON 3**  **Life in Central Africa**  **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:*What makes a culture unique?*** | |
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| *Central Africa is characterized by tremendous diversity in terms of its people, population patterns, languages, arts, and daily life.*  **The People of Central Africa**  ***What are some of the differences found among the people of Central Africa?***  Many different ethnic groups live in Central Africa. Each group is united by a shared language and culture.  **Makeup of the Population**  Central Africa is home to around 105 million people, which is roughly one-third as many as the United States has. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is by far the most populous country: It holds more than two-thirds of the region’s people. Compared to other parts of the world, Central Africa does not have a large population or a high population density. However, its countries have high population growth rates. In all seven countries, the median age is below 20, which means that children and teenagers make up about half of the population. By comparison, the median age in the United States is about 37.  Life expectancy at birth for the people of the region varies considerably. In the Central African Republic, for example, life expectancy is about 50 years, while in Equatorial Guinea and São Tomé and Príncipe, it is around 63. |  |

Hundreds of ethnic groups live in the region. Cameroon and the DRC each are home to more than 200 different groups. Some groups spread into two or more countries. One such group is called the Fang. Historians believe the Fang once dwelled on the savanna. In the late 18th century, they began a migration into the rain forests. Today the Fang live in mainland Equatorial Guinea, northern Gabon, and southern Cameroon.

Another people found in the region is the Bambuti, sometimes called the Mbuti. The Bambuti live in densely forested areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They are extremely short in stature: Adults average less than 4 feet 6 inches (137 cm) in height. They were probably the earliest inhabitants of an area known as the Ituri Forest. Historical records show that the Bambuti have lived in this area for at least 4,500 years as nomadic hunters and gatherers.

The population of Central Africa also includes many refugees. **Refugees**are displaced people who have been forced to leave their homes because of war or injustice. Between 1997 and 2003, for example, a brutal civil war devastated the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A huge number of refugees fled the conflict.

**City and Country**

Most of Central Africa’s people live in the rural areas and make their living through subsistence farming. In the DRC, for example, almost two-thirds of the people live in the country.

Large urban areas dot the region, however. More importantly, the ratio of city-dwellers to rural residents is changing rapidly. For example, every year, the DRC’s urban areas gain about 4.5 percent of the population. Many of the chief cities of the region are capitals of countries. Kinshasa, the capital of the DRC, has grown into a sprawling metropolis with around nine million inhabitants. Just across the Congo River from Kinshasa sits Brazzaville, the capital of the Republic of the Congo. Brazzaville is home to about 1.6 million people.

In a few countries in this region, more than half the people live in cities. In Gabon, for example, city-dwellers account for 86 percent of the total population. In the Central African Republic, the figure is 62 percent, and in Cameroon it is 58 percent. Cameroon’s two major cities, Douala and Yaoundé, each have populations of around 2 million, roughly the population of Houston or Philadelphia.

**Language and Religion**

Because Central Africa’s population is made up of hundreds of different ethnic groups, it is not surprising that hundreds of different languages are spoken across the region. Cameroon, which has been described as an ethnic crossroads, serves as an example of the region’s linguistic diversity. Three main language families are used in Cameroon. In the north, where Islam has been a significant influence, the languages spoken are in the Sudanic family. The Sudanic-speaking people in this part of Cameroon include the Fulani, the Sao, and the Kanuri. The Fulani are Muslims. They began migrating into Cameroon from what is now Niger more than 1,000 years ago. In the southern part of Cameroon, people speak Bantu languages. In the west are found semi-Bantu speakers, such as the Bamileke and the Tikar.

During the colonial era, people searched for common linguistic ground, especially when they traded with one another. Certain **trade languages**emerged. Because France and Belgium had the most widespread interest in the region, French became the most common trade language of Central Africa.

Central Africa is also diverse in terms of religion. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, roughly 50 percent of the people are Roman Catholic, 20 percent are Protestant, 10 percent are Muslim, and 10 percent belong to a local sect called the Kimbanguist Church. The remaining 10 percent follow traditional African religions, which are based on a core set of beliefs, including the existence of a supreme being, the presence of spirits in the natural world, and the power of ancestors and magic.

***Describing*** Where do most of Central Africa’s people live? How do they make their living?

**How People Live**

***What are some of the key aspects of daily life and culture in Central Africa?***

In Central Africa, daily life and culture reflect the variety of influences to which the region has been exposed.

**Daily Life**

Daily life in Central Africa is a blend of traditional and modern**characteristics**. This combination results mainly from the impact of colonialism. It also reflects the urban-rural division of the population.

In the countryside, most people practice subsistence farming. On small plots of land, they grow crops such as cassava, maize, and millet, and they raise livestock. They strive to grow enough crops and raise enough animals to feed themselves and their families. If any surplus remains, they may sell it for small amounts of cash. Many of them never have employment from which they earn money.

Most people in the countryside live in small houses that they have built themselves. Building materials include mud, sundried mud bricks, wood, bark, and cement. For roofs, people typically use palm fronds woven together or sheets of corrugated iron.

One of the most common methods of constructing houses is known as wattle-and-daub. Poles driven into the ground are woven with slender, flexible branches or reeds to create the wattle. The finished wattle is plastered with mud or clay, known as daub. Then, a palm-frond roof is placed on top of the house.

In much of rural Central Africa, women carry out the gathering, production, and preparation of food for the household. The men hunt, trap, and fish. In addition to growing food to eat, men and women may also grow crops to sell, such as coffee, cotton, and cocoa.

Okra, corn, and yams are staple vegetables in the diets of many Central Africans. Other important foods are cassava, sweet potatoes, rice, beans, and plantains. Game is popular, as are fish-based dishes. Peanuts, milk and poultry add protein to many dishes.

Many food-related customs of Central Africa may seem surprising. In some areas, for example, males eat in one room while females eat in another. Generosity and hospitality are so deeply ingrained in some cultures that hosts might offer guests and abundance of food while remaining hungry themselves.

In many Central African cities, traditional ways of life are yielding to contemporary lifestyles. Modernization, however, has not always come easily. Central Africa has little infrastructure, which includes the fundamental facilities and systems that serve a city, an area, or a country. In the Central African Republic, for example, only a few cities and towns have modern health care facilities. Other obstacles to modernization include poor transportation and educational systems.

**Culture and Arts**

The visual, verbal, and performing arts are important to the cultures of many ethnic groups in Central Africa. In the southwestern part of the DRC, for example, the people known as the Kongo produce wooden statues in which nails and other pieces of metal are embedded. The Yaka create highly decorative masks and figurines. The Luba people of the southeastern part of the country are known for their skillful carvings that**depict** women and motherhood. The Mangbetu people of the northeast are known internationally for their pottery and sculpture.

In the field of literature, several modern Congolese authors are internationally recognized as poets, playwrights, and novelists. They include Clémentine Madiya Faik-Nzuji, Kama Kamanda, Ntumb Diur, and Timothée Malembe.

The DRC’s capital city of Kinshasa is known around the world for its thriving music scene. The most popular style is African jazz, known as OK jazz. This style originated in the nightclubs of Kinshasa in the 1950s.

In northern Cameroon, the Fulani people decorate leather items and gourds with elaborate geometric designs. In music, the country’s southern forest region is known for its drumming. In the north, the focus is on flute music.

Equatorial Guinea was formerly a colony of Spain and Spanish influence can be tasted in the country's cuisine. In Malabo, the capital city, Spanish styles are found in the architecture. The country has produced several writers whose Spanish-language works have become known around the world.

***Determining Word Meanings*** What is the main goal of subsistence farmers?

**Regional Issues**

***What are the greatest challenges confronting Central Africa?***

Central Africa’s people and governments face many complex issues. Among the issues are the economy, the environment, political stability, and population growth.

**Growth and the Environment**

With great population growth comes the need for economic development. The economies of many countries in the region depend heavily on agriculture, logging, and mining. Central African countries such as Gabon and Equatorial Guinea export significant amounts of valuable hardwoods, including mahogany, ebony, and okoume.

In general, economic development depends on economic growth. Economic growth usually means that more resources are used and more pollution and waste are produced. In Central Africa, economic activities such as mining and logging are taking place in areas of high biodiversity.

Some conservationists fear that this biodiversity is being lost in the rush to exploit resources. The result is tension between the forces of economic growth and the forces of environmental conservation. In some areas, these tensions have at times led to conflict between local people and outside groups.

Development in Central Africa also raises other questions. Should the profits from economic activities go to foreign corporations and investors, or should they remain with the national governments. How should the profits and economic benefits be shared by the people?

***Describing*** Why are some people critical of mining and logging activities in the region?

**LESSON 3 REVIEW**

**Reviewing Vocabulary**

1. Why was the use of a *trade language* helpful in Central Africa?

**Answering the Guiding Questions**

1. ***Describing*** What are two distinctive features of the Bambuti people, who live in the rain forests of the Democratic Republic of the Congo?

1. ***Determining Central Ideas*** What are some of the customs in Central Africa related to food?
2. ***Analyzing*** Why has the lack of political stability posed major problems for development in some Central African countries?
3. ***Informative/Explanatory Writing*** Write a paragraph or two in which you explain some of the economic issues confronting Central Africa.