

## Lesson 5

### Southern Africa

**\*Note:** Southern Africa is the region discussed in this lesson. South Africa is a country within this region. A large part of this lesson will be dedicated to the country of South Africa because of its strong influence on the other countries of the region.

#### Location and Climate

The location, climate, and abundant natural resources of Southern Africa have allowed this region to enjoy the highest income per person on the African continent. The countries making up this region are the Republic of South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi, Angola, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The Republic of South Africa is the wealthiest, most highly developed nation in Africa today. The other nations are often overshadowed by South Africa. Lesotho and Swaziland are dependent on the economy of South Africa. Namibia was once a colony of South Africa.

The region of Southern Africa shares coastlines on the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. The landscape is mostly a high plateau made up of grasslands. The plateau is generally dry, although some spots receive enough rainfall to support crops like corn and fruits. Since the region is south of the Equator, its seasons are opposite those of the Northern Hemisphere. The coolest winter month is July and the hottest summer month is January.

The climate of Southern Africa is mild. Rainfall in the region varies. The southeast has more rain than the west because of the Atlantic Ocean and the location of the mountains to the east. Great downpours occur often and erode the soil. Other times, long droughts can occur.

## People and Cultures

Until recently, Southern Africa was controlled politically and economically by a minority of white people whose European ancestors came to the region because of its mineral wealth. Over time, the whites came to control two-thirds of the land in the region and hold most of the highly paid jobs. The whites owned the gold and diamond mines, as well as the industries used to manufacture the minerals into goods. They also owned the best farmland in Southern Africa. As a result, the minority of white South Africans held the majority of the wealth. Through a system of racial segregation called **apartheid**, enforced by the National Party government of South Africa between 1948 and 1994, the rights of the majority non-white inhabitants of South Africa were curtailed and minority rule by white people was maintained. The large native African population was not allowed to participate in the government. Nor did they share in the economic and social well being of their white counterparts. Apartheid sparked significant internal resistance and violence, as well as a long trade **embargo** against South Africa by the United States and Europe. A series of popular uprisings and protests were met with the banning of opposition and imprisoning of anti-apartheid leaders. As unrest spread and became more violent, state organizations responded with increasing repression and state-sponsored violence. After years of protest and violence, native South Africans have become equal citizens in their country.

## Economy and Resources

Recent economic growth in Southern Africa is largely due to the newly formed democratic government of South Africa. The other countries in Southern Africa have been greatly impacted by the political and economic development in the country of South Africa. Political equality and stability have allowed this region to diversify its economy. For example, many migrant workers from the neighboring country of Malawi work on labor contracts in South Africa. This brings employment and money to the people of this crowded nation.

Like much of Africa, Southern Africa depends heavily on agriculture for its economy. Agriculture is the main economy of the region. Cattle, corn, fruit, potatoes, and wheat are just some of the crops raised in Southern Africa. Although the soil is fertile, periods of extreme drought frequently interrupt food production. Farmers have used extensive irrigation systems

to try to increase crop production in spite of nature. The issue of land ownership has also slowed the economic progress of most people in Southern Africans. Until recently, white farmers owned most of the land, a problem which caused unequal distribution of wealth.

South Africa is rich in minerals like gold, diamonds, uranium, copper, and platinum. These resources have created a profitable mining industry that employs many people. Railroads link South Africa with Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho, and Swaziland. This infrastructure helps carry goods to major ports along the coasts of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. In addition, hydroelectric dams have been constructed along rivers like the Zambezi.



## Southern Africa Activity

**Directions:** Answer the following questions based on what you learned in this lesson.

1. Describe the climate of Southern Africa.

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2. Define apartheid and explain the reason why it was started.

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3. How did the United States and Europe help bring an end to apartheid?

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4. What are the most important resources in this region?

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5. What makes South Africa the wealthiest, mostly highly developed nation in Africa?

Discuss the location, government, and economy of the country.

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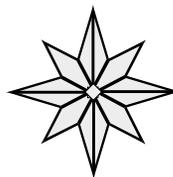
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**End of Lesson 5**