



The election of Barack Obama was widely celebrated all over the world—and especially in Kenya, his father’s birthplace. At this remarkable moment in history, your students may find it instructive to trace some of the connections between our new President and the continent of Africa.

■ Obama Roots and Branches

- The African branch of President Obama’s family is reported to have been traced back 12 generations. According to family legend, an ancestor named Owinry was a powerful leader of the Luo tribe, which is said to have moved into Kenya about 400 years ago.
- Obama’s father, Barack Obama Sr., was originally from the village of Nyang’omo Kogelo, in western Kenya. He met and married Barack’s mother in Hawaii. The Obama family broke up when young Barack was 2, and his father eventually returned to Kenya. Today, President Obama has a total of seven half brothers and sisters living in Africa. There is so much extended family that bumper stickers have sprouted on cars there: “Obama First Cousin.”
- The matriarch of the family is Sarah Obama, the President’s stepgrandmother, who was 86 at the time of his election. She still lives in Nyang’omo Kogelo, which only recently got electricity and running water. Sarah was able to attend her grandson’s inauguration, bringing him an oxtail fly whisk—a symbol of power in Kenya.
- Obama’s election has inspired many signs of hopeful economic opportunity throughout this impoverished country. These include the Yes-We-Can Hair Salon and the Mi-Obama cell phone, inscribed with the famous campaign logo. The Kenyan government is also counting on an infusion of tourist money to aid the country’s struggling economy. One Kenyan company, Intrepid Travel, has already organized an eight-day Roots of Obama tour that includes Nyang’omo Kogelo.

■ Word to Know

- **hallmark:** distinguishing characteristic or trait.

■ Content-Area Questions

CULTURE/SOCIAL STUDIES


1. Why do many Kenyans feel proud that Barack

Obama was elected President? (because he had an African father, and he has roots and family in Kenya)

2. Has a local politician ever inspired pride in your hometown when he or she was elected to a statewide or nationwide office? What about a local musician or an actor who gained fame? Why might such an occurrence instill pride in the people of a town or city? Is this a positive thing? Would you find it embarrassing if you were the famous person? Explain. (Answers will vary.)

GEOGRAPHY

1. What are Kenya’s three main geographic regions? (low-lying coastal area, dry central plains, and highlands)
2. Which city lies at 0°, 35°E? (Kisumu)

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News: A Watery Invasion (p. 3)

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Science, technology, & society

As new plants and animals emerge this spring, among them will be intruders—species that are not native to an area, but thrive in it. (One reason they thrive is the lack of natural predators.) This article looks at some of the problems caused by invasive species.

■ Word to Know

● **biotech** (short for *biotechnology*): the use of scientific methods (such as genetic engineering) to manipulate living organisms or biological systems to produce useful products or resolve certain problems.

■ Discussion Questions

- What are some of the ways in

which non-native animals and plants arrive in a new location?

- Does it matter whether invasive species were introduced to an area accidentally or on purpose? Why or why not?
- If you were in charge of the Fish & Wildlife Service or other federal agency dealing with invasive species, what would you propose as a solution to the program?

■ Look It Up

Many countries have rules about traveling with pets, including requiring a set length of time in *quarantine*. What is quarantine? How does it help protect plants and animals native to an area?

■ Activities

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) offers a list of classroom and laboratory activities that teachers can use to help their students learn more about invasive species. Go to fws.gov/invasives/pdfs/SWSP-080608.pdf.

WEB LINKS

- Information and images of invasive and exotic species: invasive.org
- National Invasive Species Information Center: invasivespeciesinfo.gov
- The Nature Conservancy: Invasive Species: nature.org/initiatives/invasivespecies



World History: Beyond Endurance (pp. 13-15)

► NCCS STANDARD

People, places, & environments

Antarctica is the only continent that is uninhabited (not counting researchers), and for good reason: Its climate and terrain are unforgiving and extreme. All the more reason, then, that we remember the courage and determination of the 28 survivors of one of the most harrowing adventures ever.

■ Backstory

In the early part of the 20th century, the North and South poles were the focus of intense competition. (See *the Skills Reproducible on p. T-7 for a polar-exploration chronology.*) The North Pole was first reached in 1909, and the South Pole in 1911. As planned by Sir Ernest

Shackleton, the British Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, which began in 1914, would have explored Antarctica by crossing it, on foot and by dog sled, from its Atlantic coast to the Pacific.

■ Rapid Review

- What was the original goal of the Shackleton expedition? (to cross Antarctica on foot, from the Atlantic side to the Pacific)
- Why was Ernest Shackleton knighted? (for his leadership of an earlier expedition to Antarctica)

■ What's in a Name?

Shackleton named his ship after his family motto: *Fortitudine Vincimus*,

which means “by endurance we conquer.” (A *motto* is a phrase or brief statement that expresses a basic principle, goal, or ideal.)

WEB LINKS

- The *Endurance*: details and diary excerpts: antarcticconnection.com/antarctic/shackleton
- Excerpts from a survivor's diary: pbs.org/wgbh/nova/shackleton/1914/diary.html
- Images by expedition photographer Frank Hurley, with an interactive map: www.kodak.com/US/en/corp/features/endurance
- Photos by Frank Hurley: shackleton-endurance.com