General World Cultures

Chapter 12- The Sahel and Central Africa

**desertification**- a process by which dry grassland turns into desert

**overpopulated**- having more people in a given area than the resources can support

**hydroelectric power**- electricity made by machines that are operated by rushing river water

**swamp**- an area that has shallow standing water

**tsetse fly**- a bloodsucking African fly that often carries deadly parasites to humans, animals, and plants

**ivory**- a valuable white bone that comes mainly from elephant tusks

**The Growing Desert**

\* The Sahel lies just south of the Sahara. It runs from the Atlantic coast almost to the Red Sea. The word *Sahel* means “shore” or “border” in Arabic. Ancient Arabic traders thought of the Sahara as a sea of sand. The Sahel is not as dry as the Sahara, but it is much drier than the savanna.

\* Farming in the Sahel is difficult. Even in good years, there is barely enough rain. Throughout history, this region has been hit by droughts. During these droughts, the grass thins out in the Sahel. The bare dirt turns to dust. Eventually, the land becomes desert. This is a process called **desertification**.

\* Another cause of desertification is the way people use the land. For one thing, farmers overwork the soil. Because they cannot get enough food from one crop, they plant another as soon as the crop is harvested. Soil that never rests loses its nutrients. After a time, nothing will grow in the soil.

\* Many people in the Sahel keep cattle, sheep, or goats. These animals eat scattered clumps of grass. However, because there is so little of it, the animals eat the grass down to the ground. Then, their hooves pound at the delicate root systems. As a result, the grass dies. This is called **overgrazing**.

\* Water wells add to the problem. Machines are used to dig deep wells, which tap into the water that lies far underground. Extra water allows a community to grow larger. In this way, wells add to desertification because they allow areas to become overpopulated.

*Complete the Africa Map Study on page 163*

Trees can be a solution to keep soil in place. Trees, as you may recall, have been removed at alarming rates. Desertification is a problem around the world. The Sahara is the largest desert in the world, and it is also the fastest spreading.

\* Many people in the savanna are herders who let their animals graze on open land. They also need to farm to make ends meet. The herd needs to travel to find more food. The crops need to stay in one place. This creates a problem for people there.

\* This causes family problems. The men travel with the herd and the wives stay in the village to tend to crops. The men can be gone for months at a time. Many Africans cannot afford to eat their cattle. Instead, they must drink the milk or drink small amounts of the animal’s blood for vitamins and minerals.

**The Tropics of Central Africa**

\* Central Africa is very warm- the equator passes right through it. One part of this region receives 35 FEET of rain each year. As a result, much of Central Africa is covered with a tropical rain forest.

\* The rain feeds the Zaire, one of the world’s longest rivers. In one place, the river forms the border between the countries of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Congo, where it is called the Congo River. This river empties into the Atlantic Ocean.

\* The Congo River provides food in the form of fish, and throughout history the people have used the river for travel. People cannot travel the whole length of the river because of **rapids**. Rapids are where water rushes and crashes down on rocky slopes. Fast-moving water is not all bad. It can be used to create electricity called **hydroelectric power**. There is a hydroelectric plant on the Congo River.

\* Heavy rains wash nutrients out of the soil. For this reason, Central Africa is a poor place to grow crops. People still try and grow crops for money and food.

\* Central Africa also has valuable minerals such as cobalt, copper, and diamonds. Cobalt is a very hard metal that is used to make tools for cutting and drilling. Mining these minerals provides jobs for Central Africa. Rubber comes from the rain forest, and hardwood trees are cut down for lumber and other products.

**Diseases of the Tropics**

\* The climate of Central Africa contributes to health problems. Bacteria grow quickly in heat and moisture (rain). Think about a bathtub/shower. People use vents and cleaning products to keep mold/bacteria contained. Bacteria and mold can cause things to rot. Insects are attracted to the rot and can spread diseases contained in the bacteria. Rain also causes **swamps**.

\* Three of the most dangerous tropical diseases in Africa are caused by parasites. These diseases are **malaria**, **sleeping sickness**, and **river blindness**. Malaria is passed by mosquitoes. One million die from malaria each year. Sleeping sickness is passed by the **tsetse fly**. It can kill people, animals, and plants. It can kill whole herds of cattle. How can this be a problem to the people of Africa? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

River blindness is caused by a worm that lives in water. Once inside a person, it spreads (multiplies) until the whole body is infected.

\* Disease limited population until the mid-1900s. Since then, medicine has been created to fight diseases. Many poor people can not afford the cost.

How can trying to fight disease lead to more problems?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Overpopulation is one effect. Soil erosion occurred from burning grasslands. Poisons spread on crops got people sick. Draining swamps is one way to control mosquito growth.

**The Democratic Republic of the Congo**

\* Once known as Zaire, this country is 3 times larger than Nigeria with a population of 48 million. (much less than Nigeria). The capital is Kinshasa, located on the Congo. Kinshasa is set up like a modern city.

\* Factories in the city make candles, soap, cloth, steel, and many other goods. A railroad moves goods to and from the coast.

\* Copper is mined. There are about 250 ethnic groups, which have different ways of life and speak many different languages. The Bambuti live in the rainforest. They are less than 5 feet tall. and live entirely by hunting and gathering food. They hunt pigs and use spears and bows and arrows, sometimes rubbing poisonous plants on the tips.

\* The Democratic Republic of the Congo became independent in 1960. Before that, it was called the Belgian Congo. Belgian people took rubber, copper, diamonds, gold, palm oil, and **ivory** from their colony. Today, the country is very poor.

*Complete Global Issues Medical Epidemics on page 171*