

SECTION
3

Reading for Understanding

▶ Key Ideas

BEFORE, YOU LEARNED

As some African nations won political freedom from colonial powers, they fell under dictatorships or military rule.

NOW YOU WILL LEARN

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is still struggling with setting up a true democracy.

▶ Vocabulary

TERMS & NAMES

Congo River Africa's second-longest river

Pygmy a member of a people with an average height of less than five feet

hunter-gatherer a person who hunts animals and gathers plants for food

Kongo a member of a people living along the lower Congo River; a Bantu-speaking kingdom of the Congo River region arising in the 1300s

Leopold II King of Belgium, who was forced to give up his private ownership of the Congo Free State

Mobutu Sese Seko dictator of the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 1965 to 1997

Zaire name of the Democratic Republic of the Congo between 1971 and 1997

BACKGROUND VOCABULARY

quota a target amount for production

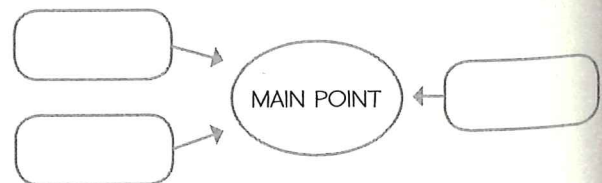
▶ Reading Strategy

Re-create the diagram shown at right. As you read and respond to the **KEY QUESTIONS**, use the diagram to help you make generalizations about the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



Skillbuilder Handbook, page R12

MAKE GENERALIZATIONS



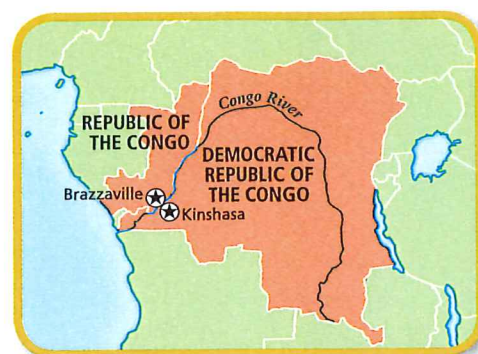
GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

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Democratic Republic of the Congo

Connecting to Your World

Have you ever known two classmates with the same first name? To avoid confusion, did people add last names or initials when talking about them? Two African countries, both called Congo, lie along the Congo River. The capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is Kinshasa; the Republic of the Congo's capital is Brazzaville. In this section you'll learn about the larger of the two, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, also called Congo (Kinshasa).



A River Culture


KEY QUESTION What groups have controlled what is now Congo?

The **Congo River**, the continent's second-longest, rises near the country's southeast corner and flows in a giant counterclockwise circle before draining into the Atlantic Ocean. The river's name comes from the Kongo kingdom that arose here in the 1300s. This mighty river flows through Congo (Kinshasa), and along the border with Congo (Brazzaville). Four deep lakes, including Lake Tanganyika, line Congo's eastern border.

Congo River The Congo and its tributaries form Africa's largest river system.

Animated GEOGRAPHY

Bantu Migrations 1000 B.C.–A.D. 1100

 [Click here](#) to learn about Bantu migrations and see modern Bantu speakers today @ [ClassZone.com](#)




CONNECT Geography & History

Movement Based on what you have learned about Africa, why didn't Bantu speakers migrate northward?

Early History Congo's earliest inhabitants were **Pygmies**, very short people who still live as hunter-gatherers. **Hunter-gatherers** hunt animals and collect wild food instead of practicing agriculture and herding. The Bantu migrations brought Bantu-speaking peoples into the region between the 900s and 1300s. They established several important kingdoms, including Luba, Lunda, and **Kongo**. The Kongo kingdom ruled the coast. Kongo traded with Portugal, and members of the Kongo royal family became Catholic. But Portugal came to view Kongo as a source for slaves.

Belgian Control European enslavement of Kongo's people continued through the 1800s. In 1885, Belgium's King **Leopold II** convinced other European leaders to let him rule his own personal colony, to be called the Congo Free State. Instead of telling the truth—that he wanted to get richer—Leopold promised to bring Christianity and progress to Africa and end slavery. After forcing Africans to build a railroad, the king's agents cruelly punished those who failed to produce their **quota** of rubber. Protests from the United States and Britain led the Belgian government to take control of the Congo Free State in 1908, slightly improving living conditions.

Independence and Afterward When Belgian Congo suddenly won independence in 1960, its leaders were unprepared to govern. During the 1960s, Congolese troops rebelled against their Belgian officers, leaving behind a dangerous, undisciplined army. The inexperienced government couldn't unify the country, and several of Congo's provinces left or threatened to secede. A coup in 1965 gave Joseph Mobutu the presidency. President Mobutu tried to reduce ethnic divisions and instill pride in the country's heritage. He changed his own name to **Mobutu Sese Seko** and the country's name to **Zaire**. But Mobutu was a corrupt dictator who made himself rich at his country's expense. He was overthrown in 1997. The new leader, Laurent Kabila, renamed the country the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Kabila's 2001 assassination left his son Joseph in power.

 **SEQUENCE EVENTS** Name the powers who controlled the Congo region from its earliest history to 1960.

Culture and Life in Congo

KEY QUESTION What are Congo's four national languages?

As in many other African nations created by colonial powers, ethnic conflicts have plagued Congo (Kinshasa). Central Africa's largest country is home to more than 200 different languages.

A Land of Diversity Most of today's Congolese people descend from Bantu speakers who migrated to Congo centuries ago. Of the country's many local languages, almost all belong to the Bantu group and are closely related. French, the country's official language, is used in government and taught in school. Many Congolese also speak Swahili or another of the country's national languages, Kikongo, Lingala, or Tshiluba.

About four out of five Congolese are Christians. Most of these are Roman Catholic. Ten percent of Congolese are Muslims, and a similar number follow African religions.

Daily Life More than a dozen cities in Congo have at least 100,000 people. Kinshasa's population has grown to more than six million since independence. Still, most of Congo's 62.5 million people live in villages containing a few dozen to a few hundred people. These villagers live in mud brick or dried mud-and-stick houses with thatched roofs. A wealthy family might install a metal roof.

Following independence, many Congolese businessmen traded Western-style dress for a national outfit of pants and a collarless jacket worn without shirt or tie. Women typically wear long, one-piece cotton dresses or a long skirt and blouse. Most Congolese meals feature porridge made of corn, rice, or cassava meal, topped with a spicy sauce. People who can afford meat or fish add it to the porridge. But many poor Congolese suffer malnutrition from a lack of protein.

Congolese Arts Centuries ago, enslaved Africans brought their musical styles to the Caribbean. Modern Congolese music takes those Afro-Caribbean rhythms and mixes them with African sounds. *Soukous*, a popular guitar-based musical style, developed in Kinshasa. The name comes from the French word *secouer*, or "to shake."

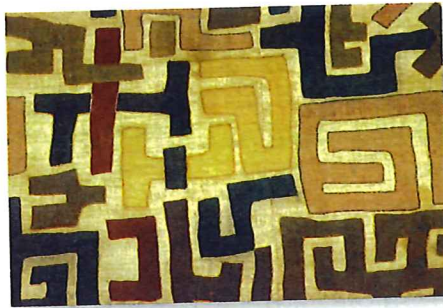


Congolese Music Boys from the Bodjaba tribe play a Mokoto drum.

African Textiles Woven textiles play important roles in many African cultures. A design may symbolize a culture's myths, or say something about the social status of the person wearing it.



Adinkra cloth originated with West Africa's Ashanti and Gyaman peoples. Patterns and symbols are stamped onto the cloth using dyes.



Kuba cloth comes from the Congo region. Weavers make the basic cloth from a palm fiber called raffia, then designs are sewn into it.



Kente cloth, also made by the Ashanti people, uses colored threads in the weaving process. Only royalty could wear certain kente patterns.

CRITICAL THINKING

Compare and Contrast What are some of the differences in the way these textiles are created?

Congolese art styles differ from region to region. In the southwest, the Kongo people make statues studded with stones and nails. The Kuba people craft statues of their royal leaders. Luba artists make small statues of mothers. Mangbetu sculptors of the north specialize in long, stylized heads.

SUMMARIZE Explain how the Congolese communicate when more than 200 languages are spoken in the country.

Economics and Government

KEY QUESTION What social effects have resulted from Congo's long dictatorship and frequent wars?

Congo's rich deposits of copper, industrial diamonds, and petroleum make it a potentially strong economy. But decades of dictatorship and wars have hurt the country. Ongoing violence has scared off investors, reduced production, driven up the debt, and killed millions.

Despite Congo's resources, most Congolese live as subsistence farmers. Their chief food crops include bananas, cassava, corn, rice, and peanuts, which Africans call "groundnuts." A few farmers also grow cash crops of cocoa, coffee, cotton, and tea. But years of war and government neglect have damaged the country's few paved roads and

made some railroads unusable. As a result, Congolese farmers continue to transport their goods on the Congo River. Fertile soil along the riverbanks remains largely unused for large-scale agriculture.

The country's chief economic activity is diamond mining. Congo also has petroleum reserves off the country's small coastline, as well as cadmium, cobalt, gold, manganese, iron ore, and copper. There's more potential wealth in Congo's forests, which cover more than half the country. Its rushing rivers teem with fish and could provide half of Africa's electric power needs.

Congo's current government consists of a president, four vice presidents, and a 300-member assembly appointed by the president. In 2006 Congolese voters held the first general elections under a new constitution. The future will show whether Congo's new government will be strong enough to overcome continuing regional unrest.



New Constitution

A woman in Kinshasa celebrates the Democratic Republic of the Congo's new constitution in 2006.

UNDERSTAND EFFECTS Describe how dictatorship and civil war have hurt Congo.

Section 3 Assessment

ONLINE QUIZ
For test practice, go to
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TERMS & NAMES

1. Explain the importance of

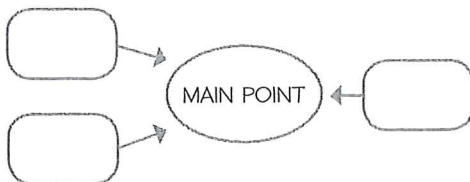
- Kongo
- Leopold II
- Mobutu Sese Seko
- Zaire

USE YOUR READING NOTES

2. Make Generalizations

Use your completed graphic organizer to answer the following question:

How could Congo's resources help its economy?



KEY IDEAS

- Who were Kongo's earliest inhabitants?
- Where do most Congolese live?
- What is Congo's main product?

CRITICAL THINKING

- Make Inferences** Why might Congolese business people have rejected Western dress shortly after independence?
- Summarize** Why is the Congo River so important to the Congolese people?
- CONNECT to Today** In 2006, the Congolese elected a new government. What steps might the new leadership take to improve the Democratic Republic of the Congo's economy?
- GEOGRAPHY** **Map Congo's Resources** Sketch a map of Congo (Kinshasa). Label your map with the country's major regional resources, using a symbol for each resource that you explain in a key.