

“Ethiopia – a diverse country” presentation text

Slide 1 This assembly is going to tell you more about the country of Ethiopia - about what it looks like, its animals, its religions, its history - and some strange facts about time.

Slide 2 A reminder of the geography of Ethiopia (the red dots show the locations of all the schools Link Ethiopia works with). It is in the Horn of Africa on the eastern side of the continent and is one of the most impoverished countries on earth. It is surrounded by a number of countries where there are all sorts of political and social problems. The largest of these is Sudan to the west of Ethiopia and then, working clockwise, we have Eritrea and Djibouti in the north, Somalia to the east, and Kenya to the south. Many people associate the name of Ethiopia with nothing more than poverty, hunger and warfare. But in this assembly you will see that the real Ethiopia is very different.

Slide 3 Africa is a huge continent and has an enormous valley or rift in its surface that cuts right across the continent. It is called the Great Rift Valley. A significant part of this Rift is in Ethiopia.

Slide 4 There are lots of lakes in the Great Rift Valley where both children and fishermen catch fish to eat.

Slide 5 There is another huge lake in the North of Ethiopia, called Lake Tana. These waterfalls are called the Tississat Falls, meaning ‘the water that smokes’. They are where the Blue Nile topples off the escarpment out of Lake Tana at the start of its long journey to the Mediterranean.

Slide 6 As you have seen before, Ethiopia has high mountains, big lakes and dry deserts, but this is what most of the countryside looks like. It’s fairly dry but there are lots of growing things and it is very beautiful. The trees you see in this photo are all eucalyptus trees. They were widely planted in Ethiopia at the end of the 19th century in a large programme of tree replacement.

Slide 7 These are coffee beans growing on a tree. Coffee was first discovered in the Kaffa area of Ethiopia and today Ethiopia sells more coffee to the rest of the world than any other product. It is their most important export.

Slide 8 Now for some of Ethiopia’s special animals. This animal cannot be found in any other country in the world – it is one of the endemic animals of Ethiopia. It is called the Walia Ibex and climbs about on mountain ridges with an enviable sure-footedness.

Slide 9 These attractive creatures are also only found in Ethiopia. They are sometimes called Ethiopian wolves or Abyssinian wolves, but they look more like foxes to us.

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They eat little mice and voles that they chase through the grass.

Slide 10 And here is a wonderful animal that again cannot be found anywhere but Ethiopia. It is the Gelada Baboon and, despite those fearsome teeth, it only eats grass! It lives in well-organised family groups and can be seen in very large numbers in the Simien Mountains, grazing steadily across the grasslands.

Slide 11 You may remember seeing this picture of a church which has been carved out of the rock – no bricks or separate stones have been used. It is the church of Kidus Giorgis (St George), who is the patron saint of Ethiopia as he is for England. It is in a village called Lalibela.

Slide 12 Here are some priests and other worshippers inside the church.

Slide 13 And there are more churches carved into the rock throughout the country. This church is in the Tigray region of the country.

Slide 14 This is a picture of Axum, in the very north of Ethiopia. All these huge standing stones – called stelae - were carved and erected well over two thousand years ago. The biggest of these stones, which fell over soon after it was erected, before the birth of Christ, would actually be the tallest single carved stone in the world, larger than any in Ancient Egypt.

Slide 15 In the same small town, the priests believe that they are guarding the Ark of the Covenant, the box that God told Moses to have built to contain the stones of the Ten Commandments.

Slide 16 As you have already seen, Ethiopian churches are decorated with pictures from the Bible. Here is the Devil sitting amid bright red flames.

Slide 17 And here is a priest in his special clothes, holding a very beautiful cross.

Slide 18 This is a walled city in the east of Ethiopia called Harar. It is considered by Muslims to be the fourth holiest place in the world. It has over 90 mosques in a city of less than one square mile – the highest concentration in the world. Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism and all sorts of animist religions exist very happily side by side in Ethiopia.

Slide 19 Outside of Harar lives a man who feeds hyenas by hand! Tourists turn up to see him do this, and this is how he earns his money every night.

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- Slide 20 Traditional Ethiopian clothes are often very beautiful, though many Ethiopians wear Western clothes except for special occasions. They love the colour white, but add all sorts of other bright colours. This woman is spinning cotton to make some more clothes.
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- Slide 21 This woman is one of the Mursi tribe who live in the south of Ethiopia. She wears a decorative lip-plate in her bottom lip. It is considered a thing of great beauty by the Mursi men.
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- Slide 22 Ethiopians love music and they love to dance. These men are playing a one-stringed violin-like instrument. It is called the masinko. Their dancing is a very energetic affair, with movement of the neck and shoulders much more important than that of the feet.
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- Slide 23 Here are some interesting facts about time. This photo was taken during Ethiopia’s Millennium celebrations. But that was only a few years ago because their calendar is 7 years behind ours.
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- Slide 24 If you can see the words on this tourist poster, you will see that Ethiopia has thirteen months. They have twelve months of exactly thirty days each and then a short month with the extra few days necessary to make up the year. Ethiopian New Year starts on our September 11th and their Christmas Day is on January 7th. This is because they have continued to follow the Julian calendar rather than the Gregorian calendar which every other country changed to about 350 years ago.
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- Slide 25 When an Ethiopian looks at his or her watch in the middle of the day, it says that it is 6 o’clock. This is because they start counting the hours from when the sun comes up, at the time that we call 6 o’clock in the morning. They use a system that has a 12-hour day and a 12-hour night. So that is why the middle of the day is 6 o’clock!
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- Slide 26 And now some history. This is one of the oldest skeletons ever discovered on Earth. It was discovered in Ethiopia in the Hadar region of the Rift Valley. Archeologists have called this person Lucy and she is believed to have lived over 3.5 million years ago.
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- Slide 27 Here is a man who was king of Ethiopia in the 19th century. His name was Tewodros (usually called Teddy in Ethiopia). He is famous because he decided to capture some English people and imprison them in his palace. After several letters of protest, Queen Victoria sent troops to rescue the English people. But when King Tewodros heard that the troops from England were approaching, rather than be captured by his enemies ...

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Slide 28 he killed himself with his own pistol.

Slide 29 This was another very great Ethiopian king. His name was Menelik and he was the man who brought electricity and hospitals, trains and a postal service to Ethiopia. The programme of planting eucalyptus trees that we mentioned earlier also happened during his reign.

Slide 30 The most famous modern king (or Emperor) of Ethiopia was Haile Selassie. He ruled for nearly 50 years and was a great friend of the royal family in Britain. When the Italians under Mussolini invaded Ethiopia in 1936, his people insisted he leave the country and he stayed in the UK, in the city of Bath, as a guest of the British royal family.

Slide (36) A military leader called Mengistu took over in a military coup from Haile Selassie at the start of the 1970s and Ethiopia became a strict Communist state for nineteen years. Mengistu was eventually driven out in 1991 and replaced by the present democratic leader

Slide (37) whose name is Meles Zenawi. He is the Prime Minister of what is now called the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Slide (44) That’s all for now!