For centuries, Europeans did not penetrate the interior of Africa and showed little interest in colonizing. Then, about 1885, the powers of Europe began a scramble to gain colonies. By 1914, only two African states were in fact independent: Liberia and Ethiopia. The story of this change focuses on Europe, because it was the Europeans who drew the maps of Africa. The Africans did resist, but were, with one exception, unable to stop the march of European soldiers and their machine guns.

The first major European colony was a private venture. King Leopold of Belgium decided to take over the Congo River basin. He hired David Stanley, a famous explorer, to trek through the area persuading African chiefs to sign treaties selling their land to Leopold. It did not matter much that some who signed were not in fact chiefs or that African cultures did not recognize land as property that could be sold. Once Leopold got his claim to the land, he began a program of forcing the Africans to collect rubber from the rubber trees in the forest. When his brutal methods became known, he was forced to give up his private rubber plantation. The Congo became a colony of Belgium. Leopold had actually lost money on the venture, so the Belgian Congo started with a debt.

The French were the most successful of the colonial powers. They controlled the most area. Unfortunately, much of it was Sahara Desert. The French tried to control a band running from west to east. They were blocked by the British and got only a tiny colony, French Somaliland, on the east side of Africa. They had better luck moving south into French Equatorial Africa.

The Italians were a weak power in Europe and got the least valuable lands: Libya, Eritrea, and Somaliland. They tried to take over Ethiopia, but in 1896, the Ethiopians defeated them. Ethiopia remained an independent country until 1935.

The Portuguese had been the first Europeans to explore the African coast. When the scramble began, they established claims to Portuguese Guinea, Angola, and Mozambique. Spain got a small bit of land in North Africa.

The British were the most enthusiastic colonizers. They took over the Gold Coast and Nigeria, but their most dramatic project was a line of colonies running from Capetown to Cairo. They were opposed by Africans, Germans, and Boers. The British had gained control of Egypt in an effort to protect their investment in the Suez Canal. The British government maintained the fiction that the Egyptians were self-governing and Britain was simply protecting them. This protectorate was the base for a push south into the Sudan. A Muslim leader known as the Mahdi started a rebellion against Egypt. The British sent troops to put down the rebellion. The man sent to pacify the Sudan was Charles "Chinese" Gordon, who had made a reputation for dealing with rebels in China. Gordon was the British Custer. He marched to Khartoum, and the Mahdi surrounded him. Word reached the British that Gordon was trapped, but the relief expedition arrived too late. Khartoum fell, and Gordon was killed. The British relief force proceeded to subdue the Sudan.
On the Capetown end of the Capetown-to-Cairo line, Cecil Rhodes was the driving personality. He was enthusiastic about pushing north to link up with Sudan, Uganda, and Kenya. His efforts were blocked by the Germans, who took German East Africa and were trying to link with the Kamerun (Cameroons) and German Southwest Africa. Rhodes was also blocked by the Boers. The Boers were a rarity in Africa: European settlers.

The ancestors of the Boers had come to the Cape of Good Hope as Dutch settlers in the 1600's. They had settled down and become farmers. Boer is the Dutch word for farmer. In 1815, the Cape had become a British colony. A few years later, the British abolished slavery in their empire. The Boers deeply resented this. They set out on a great trek to move farther inland and found their own republics, the Orange Free State and Transvaal. The Boers wanted to be left alone, but the discovery of gold and diamonds in their land brought swarms of adventurers - mostly British. The Boers hated these foreigners, and eventually the British and Boers fought a war, the Boer War (1899-1902). The Boers had horses, modern weapons, and a fierce resentment of the British. They could hit hard, run away, and hit again. The British found this the most difficult of their colonial wars.

Eventually the Boers were defeated, and their republics became part of the Union of South Africa. By 1910, the Union of South Africa was self-governing within the British Empire. The white settlers of South Africa were the only people represented in the government.

During the war, the German government supported the Boers. This stirred anger in Britain. The Germans showed a knack for stirring up other powers. In 1905 and 1911, the Germans made attempts to shake the French claim on Morocco. All they succeeded in doing was irritating the French.

One other African country besides Ethiopia kept its independence. This was Liberia. Liberia was a protectorate of the United States. It had been founded as a homeland for American slaves who were freed and wanted to return to Africa. Liberia developed a unique population. The returned ex-slaves became the ruling class over the other Africans.

For other Europeans, the scramble for Africa was a glorious time. They built empires, spread Christianity, railroads, and European-style education. In French colonies, the African students studied textbooks that taught them the history of "our ancestors, the Gauls."
African Colonies, 1914
African Colonies, 1914 (Map Instructions)

Label and color neatly. The borders on the map should be appropriate to the time period. You do NOT need to attach these instructions to your notebook (you can throw this paper away when you are finished).

1. Label the following countries or colonies on your map:
   Morocco, Rio de Oro, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, French West Africa, Gambia, Portuguese Guine, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Gold Coast, Togoland, Nigeria, Kamerun (Cameroons), Rio Muni, French Equatorial Africa, Madagascar, Canary Islands, Zanzibar, Eritrea, Somaliland (British, French, Italian), Abyssinia (Ethiopia), Uganda, British East Africa (Kenya), German East Africa (Tanganyika), Belgian Congo, Angola, Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia, German Southwest Africa, Mozambique (Portuguese East Africa), Walfish Bay, Bechuanaland, Transvaal, Orange Free State, Swaziland, Basutoland, Cape Colony, Union of South Africa, Madeira Islands

2. With a blue pencil, lightly shade the bodies of water, and in dark blue label the following:
   Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea
   Indian Ocean, Atlantic Ocean
   Lake Chad, Lake Victoria

3. Label the following points and underline them:
   Suez Canal, Cairo, Khartoum, Addis Ababa, Nairobi, Dar-es-Salaam, Pretoria, Johannesburg, Capetown, Leopoldville (Kinshasa), Brazzaville, Timbuktu, Dakar, Tripoli

4. With a red pencil, shade British colonies.
5. With an orange pencil, shade French colonies.
6. With a green pencil, shade Belgian colonies.
7. With a blue pencil, shade German colonies with horizontal stripes.
8. With a yellow pencil, shade Portuguese colonies.
9. With a purple pencil, shade Italian colonies.
10. With a brown pencil, print the word "free" on the countries not ruled by a European power.