Some countries, such as France and Japan, have a dominant culture and a clear national identity. In contrast, a national identity is hard to find in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country. Nigeria was granted full independence from Great Britain in 1960. After enduring years of harsh and corrupt military rule, Nigerians adopted a new constitution in 1999. That same year, an elected civilian government came to power. Although Nigeria's government is becoming more democratic, ethnic conflicts are still a major challenge.

To understand the country's politics, we must study Nigeria's diverse people and cultures. Nigeria has 36 states and more than 250 ethnic groups. Each group has unique customs, languages, and traditions. A strong Muslim presence dominates the north. The Hausa and Fulani together are the largest Muslim groups. Other major ethnic groups of the north include the Kanuri. Christian influence is strong in the south. The Yoruba people dominate the southwest. About half of them are Christian, but half are Muslim. The mainly Roman Catholic Igbo (Ibo) are the largest ethnic group in the southeast. The Ibibio and other peoples also live there in large numbers.

Some ethnic groups in the country want regional independence and a larger share of local wealth. Yet Nigeria's leaders fear that granting these requests would divide the country. Religious conflict has also appeared. For example, some northern states want to apply Islamic law to criminal offenses. Islamic law, called sharia, has long been used as the basis of family law in northern Nigeria. Sharia bans alcohol and allows severe punishments, such as cutting off a hand, for certain crimes. While officials say sharia would apply only to Muslims, many Christians are concerned.

Since military rule ended, hundreds of Nigerians have died in ethnic and religious fighting, particularly in the cities. Many more people have fled the violence by returning to their ethnic or religious homelands.

The previous military government might have stepped in to end the conflicts. Some observers say the military could use the ethnic clashes as an excuse to retake power. Others say that the army is now too weak and that most Nigerians would fight to defend democracy. Because no easy solution to the conflicts exists, Nigerians are finding they must learn to live with their differences.

**Applying What You Know**

1. **Summarizing** Why is Nigeria unstable even though its military government has been replaced by a democratically elected government?

2. **Making Predictions** Do you think Nigeria will eventually split into several countries? Why or why not? How might democracy help Nigeria's diverse peoples live with their differences?
The Region Today

READ TO DISCOVER
1. How economically developed are West and Central African countries?
2. What major challenges do the countries face today?

Reading Strategy
DEVELOPING VOCABULARY Find unfamiliar words in this section. On a sheet of paper, write down what you think each word means. Use context clues to help figure out the meaning. Look each word up in a dictionary to verify its meaning. Then, write an explanation of how the words relate to the section’s topics.

Level of Development
West and Central Africa is a region of developing countries. On average, people here earn less and live shorter lives than people in other parts of the world. They also have lower levels of education. (See the unit Fast Facts table.) Some countries are better off than others. For example, Gabon is one of the richest countries in Africa because of its oil reserves. In contrast, landlocked Mali is among the poorest countries in the world. It lies in the Sahel region and has few resources.

The countries of West and Central Africa have dual economies. In a dual economy, some goods are produced for export to wealthy countries. Meanwhile, another part of the economy produces goods and services for local people. For example, cash crops like rubber and cocoa or minerals like diamonds and bauxite might be produced and exported. On the other hand, subsistence farmers produce food for their own use. Street vendors and local markets sell clothing, food, and services to passersby.

Agriculture In the Sahel grasslands, farmers raise cattle and goats and move their herds in search of grazing lands. In tropical rain forest areas, cassava, millet, and yams are all staples. Farmers there have long planted several different crops in a single field. This kind of farming works well in tropical environments. If one crop is damaged by disease, other crops provide enough food for people to survive. Because different crops mature at different times, farmers do not have to harvest all their crops at once or keep food in storage.

The development of market economies under colonialism affected traditional farming. Plantations and ranches made it hard for herders to move their animals around to different grazing lands. Thus, herders have been forced to stay in one place. This leads to overgrazing and soil erosion. In turn, herders cannot keep as much livestock as in the past. As a result, they either have to migrate to more fertile areas or to the cities.

✓ READING CHECK: Human Systems How has the development of market economies affected agriculture in the region?

In a dual economy, goods like rubber are produced for export (above), while other goods are produced for local people (below).
Economic Activities and Global Trade  Most of the region's countries export primary rather than secondary goods. For example, Côte d'Ivoire exports cocoa beans, but the manufacture of chocolate often takes place in the developed countries. Similarly, Guinea exports bauxite, but the manufacture of aluminum takes place elsewhere.

Many countries in the region depend heavily on only a few main exports. This practice has two major disadvantages. First, it makes economies vulnerable to changes in the price of their main exports. For example, about 95 percent of Nigeria's export earnings come from selling oil. When the price of oil drops, the Nigerian economy suffers. Likewise, if the price of cocoa falls, the economy of Côte d'Ivoire can be hurt. Second, the export of primary goods is less profitable than the export of manufactured goods. For example, it is more profitable to sell peanuts processed into peanut butter and oil than to sell raw peanuts. Manufacturing does take place in some areas. However, most West and Central African countries do not have adequate facilities to process their primary products. As a result, they miss out on much of the wealth their raw materials create.

Cities  In the early 1960s there were very few large cities in West and Central Africa. Only a handful of cities had populations greater than 300,000. After independence, however, cities grew very rapidly. For example, Lagos, Nigeria, grew from 760,000 people in 1960 to 4.5 million by 1980. Today some 13 million people live there. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kinshasa, which had a population of 450,000 in 1960, has about 5 million people today. Other large cities include Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire, Accra in Ghana, and Douala in Cameroon.

This rapid urban population growth has caused housing shortages. Many people live in crowded shantytowns without electricity or running water. In sharp contrast to the poor shantytowns are more prosperous downtown areas. These areas often look similar to the downtown areas of European cities. They...
have busy roads full of cars and buses. Tall buildings dominate the central city. Neon signs and billboards advertise international products like soft drinks and electronics.

**READING CHECK: Places and Regions** What types of goods are West and Central Africa’s most important exports?

## Issues and Challenges

The countries of West and Central Africa face many challenges. Economic development is probably the most important challenge. Issues like population growth, health care, political problems, and protecting the environment all affect development.

The region’s population is growing rapidly. This rapid growth has caused many problems. Since independence, agricultural production has not kept pace with population growth. In some places, food production has even declined. Food shortages and malnutrition have become more common.

Recently, many countries have suffered wars and conflicts. In the past 10 years alone, civil wars have been fought in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. Thousands of people have been killed in these civil wars.

 Destruction of the natural environment is a serious problem. Lumber companies harvest tropical rain forests for timber. Grasslands are cleared for farming. Such clearing has led to the extinction of some plants and animals. In the Sahel, desertification has degraded the land. As a result, people have migrated southward in search of farmland and food.

One of the most serious problems facing the region is disease. Malaria has long been a problem. In addition, HIV—the virus that causes AIDS—has spread rapidly. There is no cure for HIV infection, and treatments are very expensive. Poor, malnourished, and poorly educated people are particularly vulnerable to the disease.

**READING CHECK: Places and Regions** What challenges does the region face?

---

## Review

**Define** dual economies

**Working with Sketch Maps**

On the map you created in Section 2, label Lagos, Kinshasa, Abidjan, Accra, and Douala. Which city has grown to about 13 million people today?

**Reading for the Main Idea**

1. **Places and Regions** What level of development do all the countries share?

2. **Human Systems** What disadvantages do West and Central Africa’s countries face when they depend on just a few exports?

**Critical Thinking**

3. **Supporting a Point of View** Who do you think benefits the most from a dual economy?

4. **Analyzing** How is economic development in West and Central Africa tied to population growth, health care, political problems, and environmental change? How might rapid urbanization make some of these problems worse?

---

**Homework Practice Online**

Keyword: SW3 HP22

**Organizing What You Know**

5. Copy the chart below. Use it to list some major challenges the countries of West and Central Africa face. In addition, suggest some possible solutions to these challenges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Possible solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---
The Tuareg: A Nomadic Way of Life

Human Systems
How hard would it be to give up a way of life that your family has treasured for generations? This is the question facing many Tuareg (twareg), a nomadic people of North and West Africa. For more than 1,000 years they have raised camels, goats, and sheep in the Sahara. However, climate and politics are threatening to end the Tuareg’s traditional way of life.

The “Blue Men” of the Sahara
As many as 1 million Tuareg live in Africa. Countries with Tuareg populations include Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Mali, and Niger. Over the centuries, many have settled in towns in the Sahel. However, many others still live in the desert. These Tuareg graze their herds on sparse desert plants. When the plants in one area are gone, they move to a new area. Generally, the Tuareg spend only about two weeks in one place. “My father was a nomad, his father was a nomad, I am a nomad,” one herder explains. “This is the life that we know. We like it.” Fiercely independent, the Tuareg call their ancient way of life adima, meaning “far from town.”

The Tuareg’s independent spirit can also be seen in the arrangement of their desert camps. Tuareg travel together in small groups of relatives and friends. In camp, however, group members live apart. Each family’s tent is several hundred yards away from the others. Visiting is common, but Tuareg generally do not share food or care for another family’s livestock. Their diet consists mainly of fruits and grains people get through trade or from other Tuareg who farm in oases. Goat milk and cheese provide protein. On special occasions, a sheep or goat is slaughtered to provide meat.

Tents are made from goat skins that are sewn together and stretched over a rectangular frame. Inside, family members sleep on carpets or mats. A sheepskin blanket provides warmth on chilly desert nights. Family tents belong to Tuareg women. When a woman marries, she receives a tent made by her female relatives.

Tuareg men wear cloth veils wrapped around the face and head. Because these veils are traditionally dyed blue, Tuareg are sometimes called the Blue Men. The veils help protect against windblown desert dust. Long robes are also practical in the desert. They keep sweat from evaporating too quickly, which helps protect against dehydration.

Class divisions are important in Tuareg society. A family’s position is passed down from father to son. Many Tuareg oasis dwellers are members of the servant classes. Their role is to provide food and other items needed by the upper-class herders of the desert.

These Tuareg boys are making toy camels. Camels have long been an important part of the Tuareg’s nomadic way of life.
Living as a nomad is a sign of high status among the Tuareg and is their preferred way of life.

**A Changing Way of Life**

In recent years it has become harder for the Tuareg to maintain their nomadic lifestyle. Some governments in the region have limited movement across their borders because of warfare and unrest. As a result, some Tuareg cannot travel to much-needed grazing lands.

Environmental changes have also disrupted the Tuareg's way of life. For example, rainfall in the Sahara has decreased in recent decades. Since the 1960s two major droughts have dried up already scarce water resources and reduced grazing areas. The lack of water has nearly wiped out the herds of many Tuareg. Some nomads have been forced to settle near towns. They survive by gardening and selling crafts and camel rides to tourists. However, for many Tuareg the lure of their traditional life never dies. "Each time I earn a little money I buy a goat or a sheep," says one former nomad. "I save up so that I can have enough animals to return to the desert."

Still, others fear that the old ways are gone forever. This fear has weakened the Tuareg's resistance to government education for their children. For generations the Tuareg viewed schools as a government program designed to limit their movement. Now, however, many believe that education will free their children from a way of life they fear has no future. Some nomadic groups even let government teachers travel with them in the desert. Schools have also been set up at water sources in the desert. Even so, many Tuareg children still refuse to accept that they will not live as their parents and grandparents did. "I like taking care of camels," one 15-year-old insists. "I don't know the world. The world is where I am."

**Applying What You Know**

1. **Summarizing** How is the Tuareg's traditional nomadic life changing? What is causing these changes?

2. **Analyzing Information** Why do you think some Tuareg are determined to maintain their traditional way of life?
Building Vocabulary
On a separate sheet of paper, explain the following terms by using them correctly in sentences.

desertification  
sorghum
staple  
dual economies
millet

Locating Key Places
On a separate sheet of paper, match the letters on the map with their correct labels.

El Djouf  
Tombouctou
Niger River  
Lagos
Congo Basin  
Kinshasa
Congo River  
Abidjan

Thinking Critically
1. Supporting a Point of View  What evidence do you think geographers may have used to support their theory that the Congo and Niger Rivers once flowed into large inland lakes? What tools might geographers use to study this theory?

2. Making Generalizations  How might being landlocked affect economic development, settlement, and population distribution in some countries in the region? How might it influence political conditions in a country?

3. Analyzing Information  How did the colonial history of West and Central Africa affect cultural, economic, and political characteristics of the countries there?

Using the Geographer’s Tools
1. Analyzing Maps  Look at the map of Empires of Africa in Section 2. How are the names of these empires related to countries in the region today?

2. Interpreting Diagrams  Analyze the cacao diagram in Section 3. Why do you think the manufacture of chocolate from cacao takes place in countries outside this region?

3. Preparing Tables  Use the pie graph of world cacao production in Section 3 to create a table that ranks the leading producers of cacao in Africa from highest to lowest. In which part of Africa are these countries found?

Writing about Geography
Imagine that you are a researcher studying how farmers in the Sahel might adapt best to the difficult climate conditions. Compare techniques that farmers use in other semiarid regions of the world. Which might be useful in the Sahel? Why? Write a short report for a research journal explaining your suggestions. When you are finished with your report, proofread it to make sure you have used standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation.

Understanding the Main Ideas

Section 1
1. Places and Regions  In which latitudes are the countries of West and Central Africa located? How does this affect the region’s climates?

2. Physical Systems  What is the environment of the Sahel like?

Section 2
3. The Uses of Geography  How did Islam spread into West and Central Africa?

4. Places and Regions  In which part of West and Central Africa is Arabic spoken?

Section 3
5. Places and Regions  How has rapid population growth affected cities in West and Central Africa?
Interpreting Maps
Use the transportation map below to answer the questions that follow.

Transportation Map of Côte d'Ivoire

1. According to the map, what transportation facilities does the country's capital have?
   a. airport, railroad, roads
   b. seaport, railroad, roads
   c. airport and seaport only
   d. road and airport only

2. Which city do you think may be the country's busiest transportation center? Why?

Building Vocabulary
To build your vocabulary skills, answer the following questions.

3. Millet is:
   a. a type of hammer used to build homes in the region.
   b. an army unit stationed only in capitals of the region.
   c. a drought-resistant grain grown in the Sahel.
   d. a state in Nigeria.

4. Some people in the region grow only a few staple crops, such as yams or corn. In which sentence does staple have the same meaning as it does in the sentence above?
   a. The staple of this cotton is not fine enough.
   b. Milk is a staple in the production of chocolate.
   c. Please staple together the reports on crops grown in Central Africa.
   d. The starch from cassava, a staple in West Africa, is used to make bread.

Alternative Assessment

Portfolio Activity

Learning about Your Local Geography

Individual Project: Research
Research imported food crops in your area. First, look at what major food crops are produced in your area. Then list common foods that must be imported from other places. A trip to a local grocery store may help you figure out what these imports are. Often, the produce sections in grocery stores give the origin of imported foods. Once you have your list of imported foods, research where these items are produced. Do they come from other regions, states, or countries? Are some foods imported from great distances? Why do you think these foods are imported and not grown locally?

Internet Activity: go.hrw.com

Keyword: SW3 GT22
Access the Internet through the HRW Go site to research the impact of political and ethnic conflict, economic development, and human migration on the Congo Basin. Then write a report in which you describe how the above factors have affected the people as well as the ecosystem in the region. Use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation.