

THE MAASAI: A GLIMPSE INTO LIFE, TRADITIONS AND CULTURE

A Resource for Saskatchewan Educators

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The Maasai: A Glimpse into Life, Traditions and Culture offers students an engaging introduction to Maasai life, traditions and culture in Kenya and Tanzania. Through photographs, first-hand observations and accessible text, the book explores family and community, education, language, traditional and contemporary livelihoods, arts and cultural expression, relationships with land and wildlife, conservation, and the ways culture changes over time.

The book provides opportunities for students to make connections between Maasai life and their own communities while developing a greater understanding of cultural diversity, place, environmental relationships and global perspectives.

SASKATCHEWAN CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

SOCIAL STUDIES

Grade 6 — Culture, Diversity and Indigenous Peoples (IN6.1, IN6.2)

The Maasai provides a strong resource for comparing the lives, cultural traditions and responsibilities of young people in Saskatchewan with those of young people in an Indigenous community in another part of the world.

Students can explore Maasai family and community roles, children's responsibilities, education, traditional practices, language, artistic expression and cultural values. The book also provides opportunities to consider the contributions of Indigenous peoples in different parts of the world and to compare how culture and place influence people's lives.

Grade 6 — People, Place and the Natural Environment (DR6.1, DR6.3)

The book supports comparisons of how Indigenous peoples relate to and use their natural environments.

Students can examine Maasai pastoralism, livestock and grazing, water, land use, wildlife conservation and relationships between people and the environment, and compare these with approaches to land and resource use among Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan and elsewhere.

Grade 6 — Cultural Change (IN6.4)

The book also provides opportunities to explore how cultures change over time while retaining important traditions.

Students can examine the effects of education, tourism, economic change, conservation, technology and changing opportunities on Maasai communities, and consider how young people respond to cultural change.

Grade 8 — Culture (IN8.1) The book supports inquiry into the meaning of culture and the many elements that shape people's lives.

Connections: Maasai family and community organization, the role of elders, education, spiritual beliefs, marriage, age sets, livelihoods, ceremonies, music, dance, clothing, food and other forms of cultural expression.

Grade 9 — Worldviews (IN9.2, IN9.3, IN9.4) The book provides particularly strong opportunities to explore how culture, language, place, education, gender, religion and social circumstances shape worldviews and how those worldviews are expressed in everyday life.

Connections: The Maasai relationship with land and livestock, the importance of Maa language and cultural identity, family and gender roles, education, traditional and contemporary livelihoods, cultural expression, and changing relationships with the wider world.

ARTS EDUCATION

Grade 6 — Cultural Arts Expressions (CH6.3) Students can investigate artistic expressions from another culture and consider how art communicates identity and cultural values.

Connections: Maasai beadwork, colour symbolism, clothing, pottery, music, singing and dance, and the relationship between artistic expression and culture.

Grade 7 — Artists, Culture and Place (CH7.1, CH7.2) The book can support exploration of how artists and cultural traditions are connected to place and how Indigenous cultures around the world express relationships with land.

Connections: How Maasai relationships with land, wildlife and community are reflected in visual design, music, dance and other cultural traditions.

SCIENCE

Grade 7 — Indigenous Knowledge and Ecosystems (IE7.1) The book provides a cross-cultural opportunity to consider relationships between people and their ecological environment.

Connections: Maasai pastoralism, livestock and grazing, wildlife, predators, biodiversity, human-wildlife relationships, land use and conservation, and how knowledge developed through generations of living in a particular environment contributes to understanding ecosystems.

CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Geography: Kenya and Tanzania; Maasailand; climate, vegetation, water, grazing and settlement.

Environmental Education: Wildlife conservation, biodiversity, land use, water and human-wildlife coexistence.

Language and Literacy: Maa language, multilingualism, oral traditions and the relationship between language and cultural identity.

Global and Cultural Studies: Education, economic change, tourism, cultural preservation, changing livelihoods and the relationship between tradition and contemporary life.

QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM EXPLORATION

- How does where people live influence how they live?
- How can art communicate cultural identity?
- How does language help preserve culture?
- How do people and wildlife share the same environment?
- How can a culture change while retaining important traditions?
- What similarities and differences can we identify between life in Saskatchewan and life in Maasai communities?

AN ENGAGING RESOURCE FOR THE CLASSROOM

The Maasai: A Glimpse into Life, Traditions and Culture can be used to support learning in Social Studies, Arts Education, Science, Geography, Environmental Education and global/cultural studies, particularly in Grades 6–9.

The book encourages students to look beyond their own experience, ask questions about how people live and understand the connections among culture, place, community, environment and identity.

Curriculum connections are intended as a resource for educators and do not represent formal Saskatchewan Ministry of Education curriculum approval or endorsement.