



# **Families of Ghana**

## **Teacher's Guide**

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## **Families of Ghana----Deborah 8 Years Old**

Its 5:30 in the morning when my brother and I get up to get ready for school.

My name is Deborah and I'm 8 years old. Deborah is my English name, but I also have a traditional name, which is Tawia. (Ta'.wia).

It's still dark when I wash my face and brush my teeth.

My brother and Mother are playing with my sister's baby.

The sun's beginning to rise when my sister and brothers go to the well for water. It takes about 5 minutes to walk to the village well. This is the dry season, so water's precious. Even though we're all careful not to waste water, it takes three trips to the well each day to get enough water for our family to cook and clean.

My sister uses a piece of cloth to make a flat surface for the pail to sit on her head. When my sister's pail is full, it weighs more than I do! As they empty their pails from their first trip, the sun is up and so is everyone else.

I live with mother and father, two brothers, two sisters, my sister's husband and baby, my grandfather and six members of my mother's family. Our house is built like a big square with rooms all around a courtyard in the center.

We have a lot to do before we get ready for school. One of my jobs is to wash last night's dishes.

While I'm working, my sister's sitting nearby, nursing her baby. Grandpa's watching my brother sharpen the machetes. Grandpa's 96 years old, and he knows how to use plants for medicine.

My brother cut himself just now, but he's learned from grandpa how to grind up a special plant and wrap it around his finger to help the cut heal.

After I finish the dishes, I sweep the food scraps into the drain. We use our courtyards for so many things that everyone sweeps them several times a day.

Mother hears the tonic truck in front of our house and sends me out to buy two bottles of tonic. She says it helps keep us healthy. People come to the house every day selling almost everything we need.

But sometimes mother goes to the village market. It's a good place to see her friends and find out what's going on in the village. A lot of the sellers are women. Mother says some have been very successful and have even opened their own stores. Our money is called cedis. (ce'dees). Each cedi is worth 100 pesewas.

Sellers don't put prices on things because each buyer and seller decide together what price they think is fair. That's called bargaining. Buying and selling has been important in this part of Africa for hundreds of years. These are palm nuts, which we use to make my favorite soup.

It's about 7:30 and time for me to get ready for school, so I'm getting water for my bath. Older girls help us fill our containers.

When I'm old enough to get married, my parents will pick a husband for me. If I like him and marry him, he will give my parents money and gifts. But if I don't like him, I don't have to marry him. My sister's friend and the man she liked ran away to get married and then came back home to live with his family.

Mom's feeding our goats. They aren't really pets...we raise them for milk and meat. And we get yams and cassavas from my father's farm. Father has another wife and 4 children, who live on the farm and take care of it. It's common here for men to have more than one wife.

Our neighbor's goat is complaining that Mother won't let him have lunch with our goats.

At 8 o'clock my friends come to my house so we can go to school together. It takes about ten minutes to walk to our village school. On the way, we buy hot corn cereal for breakfast. Most kids wear uniforms to school, but some families can't afford to buy them. My friends and I are lucky to live in Ghana, because in some African countries very few girls get to go to school.

The first thing we do when we get to school is sweep the schoolyard.

Then we wash the dishes the teachers used yesterday.

We bring firewood we've found in the forest so the school can sell it to villagers. Our teachers use the money to buy paper, rulers and pencils for the school. Sometimes at the end of the year our teachers use the wood to cook a special meal for us students.

At 8:30 we start the school day with a prayer.

Then we say the pledge of allegiance to Ghana and sing our national anthem.

Our school has grades 1-6 and each class has the same teacher for all their subjects. We're learning the metric system of measuring that uses meters, centimeters and millimeters. I'm in fourth grade.

We study most subjects in English, which is our national language. But more than 75 languages are spoken by tribes in Ghana, and these languages are often very different from each other. Besides English most schools also study the traditional language of the local area. Our language is Twi ("chwee").

This is how we cheer someone when they have a good answer.

At 10:30 my 2 best friends come home with me for lunch. We wash our right hand before we eat, because that's the hand we use to pick up our food. We're having yams that we dip in soup. When we finish eating, we wash up before we go back to school.

It's especially hot this time of day, so after lunch Mother and my sister take a rest with the baby.

When I get home from school at 1:30, I have some cocoa and bread. Cocoa comes from the seeds in the fruit of the cocoa tree. Ghana grows a lot of the world's cocoa. The fruit grows right out of the tree trunk instead of on branches. When the fruit's ripe, the farmer cuts it open and spreads the seeds out to dry. When they're dry, he takes the seeds to a factory to be made into cocoa.

After I finish my snack I wash my clothes. Then I hang them to dry.

Remember the palm nuts at the market? My sister's going to make palm nut soup from the nuts mother bought today. She's getting wood to make a fire. Mother says it's important for girls to learn to be good cooks. That's because if your husband's family doesn't like your cooking, they can ask him to divorce you. That would make your parents angry because they would have to return the money your husband gave them when he married you.

Mom gets onions and fish ready to add to the soup.

They're also making fufu, which is a mixture of cassavas and plantains. Plantains look like bananas but aren't sweet. My sisters pound the mixture for about an hour until it becomes rubbery. If a husband likes fufu, his wife makes it for him even though it's hard work and takes a long time.

While my sisters are making fufu, I change my clothes. Then my friends and I play our favorite game, ampe. Each of us tries to guess which leg the other person will kick out. Whoever guesses right, wins.

We also like to play a game where we pick up the right number of stones while we throw a stone up in the air.

Then my friend keeps me company while I wash the lunch dishes.

My sister's giving her baby a bath. Her husband named their baby Ama. He was glad the baby was a girl because girls can do a lot of work. When she marries, her husband's family will give us a gift of money, because our family won't have her help any longer. The band of blue beads on Ama is supposed to give her a nice shape when she grows up.

At about 5 o'clock Father comes home for a drink of palm wine. He owns a trucking company, which means people pay him to deliver things from one place to another. He went to Lake Volta at 6 o'clock this morning to pick up a load of fish to bring here. After he delivered the fish, he picked up a load of charcoal to take from our village to the village near his farm. Then he usually stays there with his other wife and family for 3 or 4 days.

It's 6 o'clock and time for dinner, so Mother puts fufu into dishes and

pours palm nut soup over it. Grandpa gets his food first because he's the oldest. Then we take turns eating, going from oldest to youngest. Most things work that way in Ghana, because we respect people who are older or who know more than we do. We have a proverb that says "If your elders take care of you while you are cutting your teeth, you must take care of them when they lose theirs."

While we eat, we listen to our battery radio.

Then we watch the boys in front of our house play with racing cars they made themselves.

Sometimes I watch the fruit bats in a nearby tree. They're as big as chickens. During the day they sleep hanging upside down, and at sunset they wake up to hunt for food during the night.

Before bedtime we get to watch my uncle's TV. It runs on a truck battery for about an hour.

It's dark now, and we're all ready to sleep. Goodnight!

### **Families of Ghana---Emmanuel 10 Years Old**

This is Ghana, West Africa. I live here in Accra, Ghana's capital city.

My name is Emmanuel and I'm 10 years old. It's 5:30 and Mother's waking my sister, Rebecca and me to go to school.

Our family's religion is Anglican, and praying together is the first and last thing we do every day.

People in Ghana have lots of different religions. Some like Catholics and Protestants, follow religions brought here from Europe. Some follow traditional African religions. And, especially in northern Ghana, some follow the teachings of Islam.

Rebecca and I help my aunt sweep the driveway and patio before the sun comes up and it starts to get hot outside.

Then I take a shower. It's March, which is the dry season, so we're careful not to waste water. I turn the water off while I soap myself up, and turn it on again to rinse.

The temperature today will probably reach nearly 100 degrees, and powder helps me feel less sticky. I rub oil on my skin and hair so they don't get dry.

For our breakfast Mother is making eggs with tomatoes and onions, which we'll eat with bread. Father has a cup of hot water with sugar.

My aunt uses a newspaper to make a notebook cover for Rebecca's book. Rebecca puts her name and grade on the cover, and finishes some homework before breakfast.

It's time to put on our school uniforms.

Then we eat our breakfast.

We walk about 10 minutes to school and meet our friends along the way.

Today our teacher talks about cholera. Lots of people in Africa die from that disease, so it's important to know how to avoid it.

At 10:30 we have recess. Rebecca and her friends like ampe and rhythm games. We boys play football, which Americans call soccer.

Last week our school marched in Ghana's Independence Day celebration. On the way we drove by the statue of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, who led Ghana to independence from England in 1957. Ghana was the first African colony to become independent from European rulers.

A lot of schools sent students to the Independence Day celebration, which lasted all day. We saw marching bands, and heard speeches by Ghana's leaders.

While we're at school, Father's at school, too. He talks with principals about how their schools can do a better job of teaching. Today this principal asked students to play the school's new organ for him.

On most days, Mother works with a caterer. That means she helps make food for parties and meetings.

Today Mother's having her hair curled because she and father sing in our church choir, and tomorrow the choir is singing at a funeral.

On her way home, she stops for groceries at a store near our home. Food is expensive, so she shops carefully. She's been shopping there for years, so she knows the storeowner well. The owner adds up the cost of the groceries, and Mother pays with cedis. (cee'.dees).

She's covered her food basket, because this time of year, winds from the Sahara Desert carry a lot of dust and sand.

When Mother gets home, a woman comes to the house selling yams, and she and Mother bargain on a price. Mother offers the seller 5 cedis, but she's actually willing to pay more. The seller says she wants 10 cedis, but she's really willing to take less. Finally Mother and the seller agree on 7 cedis, a price that's between the high and low prices. Both Mother and the seller are satisfied.

When we get home from school at 2:30, we have some chores to do. First I wash clothes. After rinsing them in clean water I hang them up to dry. My sister does the ironing.

A lot of families like ours hire a girl that helps with cooking and cleaning and a boy that helps with gardening, serving and washing dishes. I wish my parents would do that!

After I finish my work, I play football with a friend. He's a better player than I am, so I learn a lot when I play with him.

Then we have a lunch of rice and gravy.

After lunch I do my homework, which usually takes about a half hour.

After homework, I usually like to watch TV, but our set's broken right now.

Aunt Sarah's making fish soup. Mother cleans the fish by taking out the insides and cutting off the fins, tail, head, and scales.

Rebecca and I eat first. Then the adults eat while we get ready for bed. We need to get up early for the funeral tomorrow.

It's 9 in the morning and the funeral is just starting. It will last until late in the afternoon. I'm a server, which means I help the priest at the altar. We wear robes over our clothes, so sometimes we get pretty hot. My parents sing in the choir.

Most people are buried in coffins like these.

But some people have special coffins made. These coffins tell something about what the person did or liked before they died. One man was a fisherman, so he wanted a coffin that looks like a fish. Another always wanted to fly on an airplane, so his family had an airplane coffin made. Someone must have loved turkeys a lot, to be buried in a turkey coffin!

Mother says art collectors from Europe have bought coffins like these to put in museums. She says the people who make these coffins are artists as well as carpenters!

It's been a long day, and it's starting to get dark. Even though we're tired, we say our prayers before we go to bed. Goodnight!

## Glossary

**cassava:** A tropical plant with large thick roots from which an edible starch is obtained. Also called manioc. Also dried cassava starch is used to make tapioca.

**cedi:** The official currency of Ghana.

**cholera:** An infectious disease causing diarrhea, vomiting, muscle cramps.

**colony:** A territory distant from the country having control over it.

**Dr. Kwame Nkrumah:** The leader of Ghana's fight for independence from England. Ghana's first President.

**Lake Volta:** The largest artificial lake and the largest reservoir in the world.

**machete:** A large sword-like knife widely used in tropical countries.

**metric system:** A system of measurement based on the meter, 39.37 inches.

**pesewas:** Unit of Ghanaian currency. One hundred pesewas equal one cedi.

**Sahara Desert:** The world's largest desert, it stretches across northern Africa, covering 3\_ million square miles, almost the size of the USA.

**Twi:** A traditional language spoken by about half of the people in Ghana.

**yam:** A type of large, starchy root grown in tropical areas.

## Discussion After Viewing

- Ask each child to list some of the similarities and differences between their family and school and those in the video.
- What clues can the class give that show Ghana is always warm?
- Ask the class to divide into pairs of buyers and sellers. Each pair selects an item in the classroom and bargains until they agree on a sales price.
- Discuss why English is the official language Ghana.
- Ask the class to discuss the similarities and differences between life in the village and life in the city.
- What kinds of fruits and vegetables grow in Ghana that won't grow in North Dakota. Why?
- What clues tell us whether or not the rural family has electricity?
- Discuss ways the families and schools in Ghana re-used materials and used water and electricity carefully. (mother uses basket to shop, boy conserves water in shower, people walk instead of ride, hang laundry to dry, newspaper for notebook cover.....)

## Questions

- 1 Why do people bargain when buying and selling this in Ghana?
- 2 Why do some people have two wives?
- 3 Why do many people in Africa have dark skins?
- 4 Why do they use wood fires to cook in Ghana?
- 5 What is cholera?
- 6 Why did European countries have colonies in Africa?
- 7 How does the sands of the Sahara get to Ghana?
8. What does Ghana sell to the world?

## Answers to Questions

1 Why do people bargain when buying and selling this in Ghana?

People bargain because it is often more fun. The seller can play act his indignation at being offered a low price, the buyer can make remarks about the questionable quality of the product and both can try feign indifference. But bargaining is often necessary because the quality of products is not standard and the variability of supply can change the market price.

2 Why do some people have two wives?

Many cultures allow the men to have more than one wife if they can afford them including Muslims, the Chinese, and the Indian. In some cultures there is a requirement that there be a male heir, so if the first wife does not bear one, the man is required to acquire a secondary wife. Fewer cultures allow the wife to have more than one husband. In Tibet, it is as much due to poverty that two brothers may share a wife.

3 Why do many people in Africa have dark skins?

Skin color depends primarily on the amount of melanin present. Tanning of human skin results from an increase of melanin production under the stimulation of ultraviolet light. Melanin protects the skin from damage from the sun's rays. People in the tropics have darker skins to protect them from the sun.

4 Why do they use wood fires to cook in Ghana?

Wood fires were once the only way to make fire to cook food. It is one of the causes of deforestation as many trees are cut down for firewood.

5 What is cholera?

Cholera is an illness caused by infection of the intestine with the cholera bacteria. The infection is often mild or without symptoms, but sometimes it can cause severe diarrhea and vomiting. A person may get cholera by drinking water or eating food contaminated with the cholera bacterium. In an epidemic, the source of the contamination is usually the feces of an infected

person. The disease can spread rapidly in areas with inadequate treatment of sewage and drinking water. The cholera bacterium may also live in the environment in brackish rivers and coastal waters.

## 6 Why did European countries have colonies in Africa?

European nations had many reasons for establishing colonies in Africa. Portugal established a colony in Angola to provide slaves for its colony in Brazil. France colonized Algeria to advance French civilization, provide a market for its products, and to compete against the English. Zaire was colonized by a Belgian king without the support of the Belgian people to exploit economically its resources. In Ghana, the British came originally to trade in slaves. They then got involved in conflicts between their client states and outsiders and ended up making it a colony.

## 7 How does the sands of the Sahara get to Ghana?

The Sahara Desert is the largest desert in the world. It is almost as big as China or the United States. Strong winds blow from the northeast towards the south.

## 8. What does Ghana sell to the world?

Ghana's main exports are gold, cocoa and timber. But most people are farmers who make a living growing enough for themselves to eat and a little surplus.

## Quiz on Some Things We've Learned About Ghana

1. Why is English the official language of Ghana?
2. What is a colony?
3. Ghana is located on what continent?
4. Can you name Ghana's two seasons?
5. Who was Dr. Kwami Nkrumah?
6. What is the official currency of Ghana?
7. What is the world's largest desert and where is it located?
8. What are cassavas, fufu, and plantains?
9. What is bargaining?
10. Draw a series of pictures telling Deborah or Emmanuel's story. Try to include as much detail as you can remember from each part of the story.

Or

Make up a song about Deborah or Emmanuel's life in Ghana.

## **Introduction**

Until its independence from British colonial rule in 1957, the country of Ghana was called the "Gold Coast", a name given it by early Portuguese explorers who first set foot on the shores of the country in the fifteenth century. The name aptly described the country's wealth in gold, minerals, forests and sea life.

During various periods from the time the Portuguese discovered gold in 1471 to independence in 1957, the monarchs of several European kingdoms, notably Denmark, England, Holland, Prussia and Sweden, sent hordes of explorers and merchants to the country for its abundant wealth, both natural and human. They fought to control the land, and built forts and castles which also served as trading posts. The Europeans left behind many colonial forts and castles in Ghana.

### **The land and the climate**

Ghana lies on the west coast of Africa. The country consists of mostly plains. The most important feature of the land is Lake Volta which was formed when a dam was built on the Volta River. Along the coast are numerous lagoons, most of them formed at the mouths of small streams. Much of the land is poor in nutrients, most of the soils are heavily dependent upon the humus supplied by the vegetation cover. There is, thus, a delicate balance between vegetation and soil fertility, which may be upset by uncontrolled burning or overuse.

The weather in Ghana changes between a dry season with hot days and cool nights and a rainy season. Most times of the year it is warm during the day. It is warm and comparatively dry along southeast coast; hot and humid in southwest; hot and dry in north.

### **Plant and animal life**

Ghana has many forests including tropical forests as well as grasslands. The forests are generally to the south while the savannas are generally to the north. In these lands there are still to be found lions, leopards, hyenas, antelope, elephants, buffalo, wild hogs, chimpanzees, and many kinds of monkeys. Crocodiles, the endangered manatees, and otters are found in the rivers and lagoons. Hippopotamuses are found in the Volta River.

## **The people**

Ethnically, the people of Ghana may be said to belong to one broad group within the African family, but there is a large variety of tribal, or subethnic, units. There are 10 major tribes. The largest groups are the Akan, Mole-Dagbani, Ewe, Ga-Adangme (Ga-Adangbe), and Gurma. Despite its tribal variety, there were no serious tribal dissensions when Ghana became independent. Tribal consciousness persists in many areas, however, and at times tensions have erupted, especially in northern Ghana, into violent clashes with many fatalities. At all levels in government and in public life, an effort has been made to play down tribal differences, a policy that has been helped by the adoption of English as the official language.

Practically all the present tribes are believed to have moved into the country within the last 700 to 1,000 years in a series of migrations from the north, with the Ewe and Ga-Adangme, who occupy the southeastern corner of the country, entering from the east and southeast.

The country's population has, since 1970, maintained a high average annual growth rate of about 3 percent, with females slightly in excess of males. More than 60 percent of Ghanaians are under 25 years of age, assuring that the country's high growth rate will continue for some time. Life expectancy, which in 1960 was placed at about 46 years, has improved considerably and, at 57 years in the late 1990s, is among the highest in western Africa.

### **Daily life**

Traditionally the bonds of family life are an important factor in the social lives of Ghanaians. They still are in this predominantly rural and agricultural population. But they tend to be much less pronounced among the urban population, where the trend is toward the nuclear family, especially among the professional classes and scattered immigrant groups.

The traditional social values include respect for elders and the veneration of dead ancestor. There is even a revival in the importance of these values among the urban population and a closer identity with traditional social roots, as expressed in the institution of chieftaincy.

The same differences between the urban and rural populations are found in dress and eating habits, with the urban dwellers being distinctly more Westernized and sophisticated. The national cuisine reflects the country's agricultural wealth and varied historical connections, and Ghana is one of the few countries in tropical Africa that can be said to possess a rich indigenous cuisine.

Ghana has a rich native culture. Culturally, the peoples of Ghana share many customs but each tribal group has their own customs. In all parts of the country these customs are closely linked with religion and the institution of chieftaincy. Various festivals and customs are based around the family and the tribe. These include events such as the harvest, marriage, birth, puberty, and death.

The people in Ghana live without much class distinction. Authority is based on the tribal leaders. They are chosen after much deliberation among the people and thus their support is broad. Land is usually owned by families, so most people have a share of the land. The minimizing of class distinction in the society has been heightened by economic and social mobility, depending on education and individual enterprise.

Nearly two-thirds of the population is Christian, about one-sixth is Muslim, and one-third adheres to the traditional tribal religions. Although the indigenous religions are widespread and deep-rooted, they tend to be local. They are based, in general, in the belief in the existence of a supreme being, with a number of lesser deities associated with various natural phenomena also recognized. Dead ancestors are venerated for they are considered to be ever-present, capable of influencing the course of events for the living, and capable of serving as intermediaries between the living and the gods.

### **The arts**

Ghana's arts include dance and music, plastic art (especially pottery and wood carving), gold- and silverwork, and textiles, most notably the richly colored, handwoven *kente* cloth of the Akan and Ewe.

Indigenous art flourishes side by side with various art forms of foreign origin, especially in those areas in which the end product is intended for practical household or personal use, such as pottery, carving, gold- and silversmithing, and weaving. The increased national self-consciousness generated in Ghana and in other African countries by the independence movement and tourism has been instrumental in fostering and popularizing many art forms. Ghanaian works have

attracted world attention in the fields of popular music, painting, sculpture, and film production.

## **History**

Humans have inhabited Ghana as long as 40,000 years ago. Depending on the climate, the land that is now Ghana could have been forest, savanna or even desert. As the climate changed the Sahara was either more or less hospitable. There are many Stone Age artifacts in Ghana. A culture existed from 1700 BCE to 1500 BCE that lived by tilling the soil, fishing and herding.

The modern state of Ghana is named after the ancient African empire that flourished from the 7<sup>th</sup> century until the 13th century and was situated close to the Sahara in the western Sudan. The center of ancient Ghana lay about 500 miles to the northwest of the nearest part of the modern state. The extent of trade or migration is unknown. Written sources relate only to the period since European contact with the Gold Coast—*i.e.*, modern Ghana—began in the 15th century, or to Muslim contacts with ancient Ghana from about the 8th to the 13th century. Many modern Ghanaian peoples possess well-preserved oral traditions, but these do not reach as far back as to ancient Ghana. Little progress has so far been made in linking the surviving traditions with the available archaeological evidence.

The traditions of many of the states into which the country was divided before it came under British rule refer to their people having immigrated within the last 600 years either from the north or northwest or from the east or northeast. Such traditions link up with other evidence to suggest that the area which is now Ghana was for many centuries a meeting place where two major trans-Saharan routes met, a western one linking the headwaters of the Niger and Sénégal rivers to Morocco and a more central one linking the region between the Niger Bend and Lake Chad with Tunisia and Tripoli. Their growth was influenced by the existence of great states such as ancient Ghana and Mali, the Songhai, the Huasa states, and Bornu.

## **Contact with Europe and its effects**

A great change occurred in Ghanaian history with the establishment of direct sea trade with Europe following the arrival on the coast of Portuguese mariners in 1482. Initially Europe's main interest in the country was as a source of gold, a commodity that was readily available at the coast in exchange for such European exports as cloth, hardware, beads, metals, spirits, arms, and ammunition. This gave rise to the name Gold Coast, by which the country was known until 1957. In an

attempt to keep the trade to themselves, the Portuguese began the practice of erecting stone fortresses (Elmina Castle dating from 1482 was the first) on the coast on sites leased from the native states. In the 17th century the Portuguese monopoly, already considerably eroded, gave way completely when traders from the Netherlands, England, Denmark, Sweden, and Prussia discovered that the commercial relations developed with the Gold Coast states could be adapted to the export of slaves, then in rapidly increasing demand for the American plantations, as well as of gold. By the mid-18th century the coastal scene was dominated by the presence of about 40 forts controlled by Dutch, British, or Danish merchants. The presence of these permanent European bases on the coast had far-reaching consequences. The states north of the forest, hitherto the wealthiest and most powerful, declined in the face of new ocean-trading states farther south. Conflicts between these states due to trade drew in the involvement of the Europeans. This ended with the Gold Coast becoming a British colony in 1850.

### **Colonial period**

In the nineteenth century, the people on the Gold Coast put in place a legislative council and a supreme court. The great expansion of cocoa-growing by farmers provided the funds to create modern harbors, railways, roads and social services. These and education to the university level brought about the gradual conversion of the traditional social order, of groups bound together by kinship, into one in which individuals were linked principally by economic ties.

### **Independence**

Led by western educated professionals and businessmen, the people expressed their support for self-government. A fairly peaceful transfer of power occurred that led to the creation of Ghana, as an independent self-governing member of the Commonwealth and a member of the UN in 1960.

Inexperience at government led to corruption and large foreign debt. The military men took over in a series of coups. Eventually, in 1979, the government of the generals was overthrown by young officers and noncommissioned officers, led and inspired by an air force flight lieutenant, Jerry Rawlings. In 1992 democracy was restored.

## Ghana Country Fact



Area - comparative: slightly smaller than Oregon

Land boundaries:

*total:* 2,093 km

*border countries:* Burkina Faso 548 km, Cote d'Ivoire 668 km, Togo 877 km

Climate: tropical; warm and comparatively dry along southeast coast; hot and humid in southwest; hot and dry in north

Terrain: mostly low plains with dissected plateau in south-central area

Elevation extremes:

*lowest point:* Atlantic Ocean 0 m

*highest point:* Mount Afadjato 880 m

Natural resources: gold, timber, industrial diamonds, bauxite, manganese, fish, rubber, hydropower

Land use:

*arable land*: 12%

*permanent crops*: 7%

*permanent pastures*: 22%

*forests and woodland*: 35%

*other*: 24% (1993 est.)

Irrigated land: 60 sq km (1993 est.)

Natural hazards: dry, dusty, harmattan winds occur from January to March; droughts

Environment - current issues: recent drought in north severely affecting agricultural activities; deforestation; overgrazing; soil erosion; poaching and habitat destruction threatens wildlife populations; water pollution; inadequate supplies of potable water

Environment - international agreements:

*party to*: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Law of the Sea, Nuclear Test Ban, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Tropical Timber 83, Tropical Timber 94, Wetlands  
*signed, but not ratified*: Marine Life Conservation

Geography - note: Lake Volta is the world's largest artificial lake; northeasterly harmattan wind (January to March)

## People

Population: 19,533,560

*note*: estimates for this country explicitly take into account the effects of excess mortality due to AIDS; this can result in lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality and death rates, lower population and growth rates, and changes in the distribution of population by age and sex than would otherwise be expected (July 2000 est.)

Age structure:

*0-14 years*: 42% (male 4,120,240; female 4,063,960)

*15-64 years*: 55% (male 5,290,675; female 5,391,175)

*65 years and over*: 3% (male 318,890; female 348,620) (2000 est.)

Population growth rate: 1.87% (2000 est.)

Birth rate: 29.81 births/1,000 population (2000 est.)

Death rate: 10.22 deaths/1,000 population (2000 est.)

Net migration rate: -0.89 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2000 est.)

**Infant mortality rate:** 57.43 deaths/1,000 live births (2000 est.)

**Life expectancy at birth:**

*total population:* 57.42 years

*male:* 56.07 years

*female:* 58.82 years (2000 est.)

**Total fertility rate:** 3.95 children born/woman (2000 est.)

**Nationality:**

*noun:* Ghanaian(s)

*adjective:* Ghanaian

**Ethnic groups:** black African 99.8% (major tribes - Akan 44%, Moshi-Dagomba 16%, Ewe 13%, Ga 8%), European and other 0.2%

**Religions:** indigenous beliefs 38%, Muslim 30%, Christian 24%, other 8%

**Languages:** English (official), African languages (including Akan, Moshi-Dagomba, Ewe, and Ga)

**Literacy:**

*definition:* age 15 and over can read and write

*total population:* 64.5%

*male:* 75.9%

*female:* 53.5% (1995 est.)

## Government

*conventional long form:* Republic of Ghana

*conventional short form:* Ghana

*former:* Gold Coast

**Government type:** constitutional democracy

**Capital:** Accra

**Administrative divisions:** 10 regions; Ashanti, Brong-Ahafo, Central, Eastern, Greater Accra, Northern, Upper East, Upper West, Volta, Western

**Independence:** 6 March 1957 (from UK)

**National holiday:** Independence Day, 6 March (1957)

**Constitution:** new constitution approved 28 April 1992

**Legal system:** based on English common law and customary law; has not accepted compulsory ICJ jurisdiction

**Legislative branch:** unicameral Parliament (200 seats; members are elected by direct popular vote to serve four-year terms)

**Judicial branch:** Supreme Court

**Diplomatic representation in the US:**

*chancery:* 3512 International Drive NW, Washington, DC 20008

*telephone:* [1] (202) 686-4520

*FAX:* [1] (202) 686-4527

*consulate(s) general:* New York

**Diplomatic representation from the US:**

*embassy:* Ring Road East, East of Danquah Circle, Accra

*mailing address:* P. O. Box 194, Accra

*telephone:* [233] (21) 775348

*FAX:* [233] (21) 776008

## **Economy**

**Economy - overview:** Well endowed with natural resources, Ghana has twice the per capita output of the poorer countries in West Africa. Even so, Ghana remains heavily dependent on international financial and technical assistance. Gold, timber, and cocoa production are major sources of foreign exchange. The domestic economy continues to revolve around subsistence agriculture, which accounts for 40% of GDP and employs 60% of the work force, mainly small landholders. In 1995-97, Ghana made mixed progress under a three-year structural adjustment program in cooperation with the IMF. On the minus side, public sector wage increases and regional peacekeeping commitments have led to continued inflationary deficit financing, depreciation of the cedi, and rising public discontent with Ghana's austerity measures. A rebound in gold prices is likely to push growth over 5% in 2000-01.

**GDP:** purchasing power parity - \$35.5 billion (1999 est.)

**GDP - real growth rate:** 4.3% (1999 est.)

**GDP - per capita:** purchasing power parity - \$1,900 (1999 est.)

**GDP - composition by sector:**

*agriculture: 40%*

*industry: 30%*

*services: 30% (1999 est.)*

**Population below poverty line: 31.4% (1992 est.)**

**Household income or consumption by percentage share:**

*lowest 10%: 3.4%*

*highest 10%: 27.3% (1992)*

**Inflation rate (consumer prices): 12.8% (1999 est.)**

**Labor force: 4 million**

**Labor force - by occupation: agriculture 60%, industry 15%, services 25% (1999)**

**Unemployment rate: 20% (1997 est.)**

**Budget:**

*revenues: \$1.39 billion*

*expenditures: \$1.47 billion, including capital expenditures of \$370 million (1996 est.)*

**Industries: mining, lumbering, light manufacturing, aluminum smelting, food processing**

**Industrial production growth rate: 4.2% (1996 est.)**

**Electricity - production: 6.206 billion kWh (1998)**

**Electricity - production by source:**

*hydro: 99.9% (1998)*

**Electricity - consumption: 5.437 billion kWh (1998)**

**Electricity - exports: 400 million kWh (1998)**

**Electricity - imports: 65 million kWh (1998)**

**Agriculture - products: cocoa, rice, coffee, cassava (tapioca), peanuts, corn, shea nuts, bananas; timber**

**Exports: \$1.7 billion (f.o.b., 1999)**

**Exports - commodities:** gold, cocoa, timber, tuna, bauxite, aluminum, manganese ore, diamonds

**Exports - partners:** Togo, UK, Italy, Netherlands, Germany, US, France (1998)

**Imports:** \$2.5 billion (f.o.b., 1999)

**Imports - commodities:** capital equipment, petroleum, foodstuffs

**Imports - partners:** UK, Nigeria, US, Germany, Italy, Spain (1998)

**Debt - external:** \$6 billion (1998 est.)

**Economic aid - recipient:** \$477.3 million (1995)

**Currency:** 1 new cedi (C) = 100 pesewas

**Exchange rates:** new cedis per US\$1 - 3,466.60 (December 1999), 2,647.32 (1999), 2,314.15 (1998), 2,050.17 (1997), 1,637.23 (1996), 1,200.43 (1995)

## **Communications and Transportation**

**Telephones - main lines in use:** 200,000 (1998 est.)

**Telephones - mobile cellular:** 30,000 (yearend 1998)

**Telephone system:** poor to fair system; Internet accessible; many rural communities not yet connected; expansion of services is underway  
*domestic:* primarily microwave radio relay; wireless local loop has been installed  
*international:* satellite earth stations - 4 Intelsat (Atlantic Ocean); microwave radio relay link to Panaftel system connects Ghana to its neighbors

**Radio broadcast stations:** AM 0, FM 18, shortwave 3 (1999)

**Radios:** 4.4 million (1997)

**Television broadcast stations:** 11 (1999)

**Televisions:** 1.73 million (1997)

### **Railways:**

*total:* 953 km (undergoing major rehabilitation)

*narrow gauge:* 953 km 1.067-m gauge (32 km double track) (1997 est.)

**Highways:**

*total:* 39,409 km

*paved:* 11,653 km (including 30 km of expressways)

**Waterways:** Volta, Ankobra, and Tano Rivers provide 168 km of perennial navigation for launches and lighters; Lake Volta provides 1,125 km of arterial and feeder waterways

**Pipelines:** 0 km

**Ports and harbors:** Takoradi, Tema

**Merchant marine:**

*total:* 6 ships (1,000 GRT or over) totaling 13,484 GRT/18,583 DWT

**Airports:** 12 (1999 est.)

**Airports - with paved runways:** 6

**Airports - with unpaved runways:** 6

## **Military**

**Military branches:** Army, Navy, Air Force, National Police Force, Palace Guard, Civil Defense

## **The Flag**

The Ghanaian flag was designed by Mrs Theodosia Okoh, a Ghanaian, to replace the flag of the United Kingdom upon attainment of independence in 1957.

The flag of Ghana consists of the colors Red, Gold and Green in horizontal stripes with a five pointed star in the center of the gold stripe.

RED represents the blood of those who died in the country's struggle for independence.

GOLD represents the mineral wealth of the country

GREEN symbolizes the country's rich forest

BLACK Star stands for the lodestar of African freedom.

## Internet links for Ghana

<http://www.ghananewsroom.com/ghnewsroom/>

<http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/>

<http://www.africaonline.com.gh/>

<http://www.ghana.com/>

## Recipes from Ghana

### YAM FOOFOO

Note: Foofoo is a ubiquitous and much-beloved staple through most of West Africa, whether topped with a fiery Palava sauce (or Shoko) or served as the bland accompaniment to a main dish. Foofoo is traditionally made with cassava (aka yucca and/or manioc), but it can be prepared as well with everything from rice, yams, and plantains to instant mashed potatoes! It is also somewhat harder to make than it would seem. In any case, this version of yam foofoo -- traditionally made by pounding and beating the yams in a mortar with a wooden spoon -- has been adapted for a food processor.

2 lb yams 1/4 tsp black pepper 1/4 tsp salt 1 tsp butter

1. Place the yams in cold, unsalted water, bring to a full boil, and cook 25 minutes, or until soft.
2. Remove the yams, cook, and peel. Mash with the other ingredients.
3. Place in a food processor, and run briefly to remove lumps. DO NOT PUREE! (If a processor is not available, go directly to step 4.)
4. Remove foofoo to a bowl, and beat with a wooden spoon or wire whisk until smooth. The foofoo should have a sticky, slightly resilient consistency.
5. Shape the foofoo into balls with your hands, and serve warm.

## Activities

Kente cloth with paper

### Materials Needed

Assorted construction paper ( 3 sheets the same size, plus black)

Child safety scissors

Transparent tape

### Instructions

1. Fold black paper in half
2. Starting at the fold cut a zigzag slit across the paper stopping about 1” from the edge. Repeat other zigzag slits, each about an inch below the previous line. Lay the paper flat
3. Cut assorted colored papers into strips. Weave the strips of paper in and out of the slits – first over one slit and then under the next slit. Tape the ends of the strips to keep them in place
4. Weave the next strip, starting under the slit, then going over the slit. Alternate each strip until the black paper is completely woven