



**AFRICA SOUTH OF THE SAHARA**

**History and Geography Activity 6**

**UNIT 6**

**The Changing Face of a Continent**

A modern map of Africa shows a patchwork of more than 50 countries; some small, some large. If you look at a map of Africa from 1910, it would look considerably different. Instead of the names of countries and the lines that mark their borders, you would see whole areas of the map marked with names like French West Africa, Belgian Congo, and British East Africa.

In fact, in 1910 every country in Africa, except Ethiopia and Liberia, was controlled by a foreign power. Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Great Britain had divided the continent among themselves.

People from these countries came to Africa in search of raw materials such as diamonds, gold, and spices. They viewed the continent as a source of wealth for themselves and their countries. They also wanted the land to improve their positions against their European neighbors. They set up colonies to govern the native peoples. The colonists forced their culture, language, and religion on the peoples of these colonies.

Although the colonial powers built roads, factories, and established communication systems, they often sought to benefit themselves, not the native peoples. (The diagram shown here lists the present-day countries of Africa under their former colonial rulers.)

The map of Africa changed rapidly after World War II. The war weakened many European nations. In addition, the native peoples wanted to govern themselves. All over the continent, wars were fought for independence. By 1990 all of the countries were independent.

