

Summary: Nigeria Today

History of Nigeria's People

Nigeria is a diverse nation. Its people come from more than 250 ethnic groups. Today, about 60 percent of Nigerians belong to one of three groups: the Yoruba, the Igbo, and the Hausa. Most Yoruba live in southwestern Nigeria. Before colonial rule, Yoruba society was organized around powerful city-states. Yoruba men were farmers. The women engaged in marketing and trade. The Igbo have lived in southeastern Nigeria for thousands of years. Igbo villages choose their leaders. They are known for their weaving, metalworking, and woodcarving. The Hausa are the largest ethnic group. Most Hausa live in farming villages in northern Nigeria. Crafts such as leatherworking and weaving have been passed down through generations.

Nigeria gained independence from British rule in 1960. The Igbo people in eastern Nigeria declared their independence when oil was found there. They set up the Republic of Biafra. Civil war raged for four years. A million people died. After the war, military rulers took over. There was little freedom. In May 1999, Nigeria finally had a free election.

Nigeria's Economy

With more than 123 million people, Nigeria has the largest population in Africa. More than half of all Nigerians farm the country's fertile soil. Nigeria has rich deposits of oil and natural gas. Coal, iron ore, tin, lead, limestone, and zinc are also important to the economy. Nigeria's factories produce cars, cement, chemicals, and clothing.

Nigeria's many cultures and ethnic groups create a mix of artistic styles. Yoruban artisans make metal sculptures. Nigerians also carve wooden masks and figures, make musical instruments from gourds, and weave baskets. Nigerians are famous for their literature, which combines folktales with modern-day concerns. Art and literature are part of Nigeria's rich artistic heritage.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

heritage *noun*, what is handed down from one generation to the next

artisan *noun*, a skilled worker who makes goods by hand



After You Read

REVIEW What event prompted the Igbo people to declare independence from Nigeria? Draw a box around the sentence that tells when the Igbo people declared their independence.

REVIEW What natural resources contribute to Nigeria's economy? Circle the nine named natural resources.