

AROUND THE WORLD



IDRIS TAKES INITIATIVE



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WELCOME TO SUDAN





Sudan, situated in northeastern Africa, offers a landscape of striking contrasts.

From the Sahara Desert in the north to the temperate climate in the south, its physical beauty spans mountains, fertile lands, and swamps. It even has a long coastline along the Red Sea.

Two major rivers, the White Nile and the Blue Nile, meet in Sudan's capital city, Khartoum, to form the Nile River, which continues into Egypt.

The country is culturally rich, with most people speaking Arabic and practicing Islam, while many Christians and followers of traditional African religions inhabit the rural areas where food and water can be scarce.



Terrorism

The use of violence or threats of violence by individuals or groups to create fear in order to achieve their political, ideological, or religious objectives.

Religious Extremism

Actions of individuals or groups who hold radical interpretations of a particular religion and are willing to use violence or force to impose their views on others.

Genocide

The deliberate and systematic destruction of a specific racial, ethnic, religious, or national group, carried out with the intention to eliminate them entirely.

Resource Scarcity

A problem that arises when there is not enough of something people need for survival, like water or food.

Sudan used to be the biggest country in Africa, but it split in 2011 after years of conflict, creating the new Republic of South Sudan.

Despite its beauty and rich culture, Sudan has a difficult history filled with **terrorism**, military uprisings, **religious extremism**, harsh poverty, and even **genocide**. These problems continue today, making peace hard to achieve.

While a variety of causes are to blame for Sudan's violent instability, decades of extreme Islamic political rule and the ongoing challenge of **resource scarcity** for all its people have arguably had the greatest impact.



Interesting Facts

Size of population:
49.2 million

Size of country:
728,215 square miles

(about three times the size of Texas!)

Official languages:
Arabic and English

Religion:
97% Islam

The name "Sudan" derives from the Arabic *bilād as-sūdān* (بلاد السودان), or "The Land of the Blacks"

Sudan is home to over **200 pyramids**, more than the number found in Egypt.



Meet Idris

This is Idris. He has always been an independent, curious kid with an endless supply of questions about the world around him. Because of this, he prefers talking to adults over playing with other kids his age. When he was in school, his teachers were happy to spend extra time with him, discussing more advanced topics. School is one of many things he misses from his old life.

Until a few months ago, Idris and his family lived in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan. Violence in the capital forced them to flee, and after a 500-mile bus ride that took almost two whole days, they arrived with many other refugees in a town called Port Sudan, at the edge of the Red Sea. In some ways, Port Sudan is a lot like Khartoum—it has tall buildings, restaurants, and hotels. Some things are very different, though.

Before arriving in Port Sudan, Idris had never seen a cargo ship. Now he marvels at the giant vessels, constantly coming and going, and wonders how such massive metal ships can even stay afloat! He also enjoys the new experience of splashing around in the salty waters of the Red Sea.

The hardest adjustment for Idris has been learning to live without the food and shelter he was used to in Khartoum. He and his family haven't eaten a real meal in days, and they sleep in a tent made of blankets with the crowd of other refugees outside of the harbor. It's so hot during the day that it's sometimes hard to breathe, and there's never enough clean water to drink.



Resource Scarcity

The few resources that are available are getting harder and harder to split amongst the growing number of people that need them.

Following years of political instability and violence, tens of thousands of people like Idris and his family fled their homes all over Sudan and poured into Port Sudan in search of an escape from the constant fighting.

Idris watched as, day after day, more buses arrived carrying more families. And then more. And still more. Soon the hotels were full, the restaurants ran out of food, and everything cost ten times as much as before—all because Port Sudan was never built to handle so many people. Nobody seems to have any answers, and it feels like everyone is just waiting for someone else to come to the rescue.

The scarcity of essential resources like food and water is a major concern for the Sudanese. It's estimated that as many as 17.3 million people in Sudan, including half the schools, lack access to clean water. This results in a constant struggle for hydration and sanitation. The lack of drinking water, bathrooms, and places to wash, leads to severe sickness, especially in children.

Some villages in Sudan are lucky to live above huge underground freshwater reservoirs called **aquifers**. With the careful use of wells and pumps, they are able to bring the water up to the surface and use it for drinking and crop irrigation. The overwhelmed town of Port Sudan must find other solutions, though, and quickly.

Idris feels helpless. He hates living next to a sea of salty water that he cannot drink.



Aquifer

A large underground area that holds water that has seeped into the soil and become trapped. Aquifers are an important source of water for drinking and for crop irrigation all over the world.



Looking to Escape

Idris likes to watch the harbor in the evening, when the temperature is cool enough that he can walk around comfortably. Night after night, he stands at a fence where he can smell the heavy diesel fumes that ride in on the hot sea breeze as thousands of men, women, and children line up to board the enormous ships waiting to take them to their new lives. Everyone he's talked to in the last few months is also in Port Sudan because they had fled the violence in cities like Khartoum. Now many are leaving the country completely to start over somewhere else. Idris's parents, however, insist that Sudan is their home and that things will eventually change for the better.

Sometimes Idris feels intensely jealous of the kids who get to leave Sudan, especially when he watches them walk up the long ramp to their waiting ship. It doesn't seem fair that those other kids get to move to places with food and water and safety.

He waves as the ships push away from the harbor, carrying those lucky families to their new lives. His eyes follow as they drift further and further toward the horizon. When they finally disappear from view, Idris turns and walks back to his family's tent, feeling trapped and upset that he'll likely never get to walk up that ramp himself—that he'll never know what it feels like to be carried away from the heat, the thirst, the hunger, and the violence that seems ever-present in Sudan.

If only his family would stop waiting for solutions and look for an escape instead. They had already run from Khartoum, so why couldn't they keep running?





Last Days in Khartoum

Idris remembers the ups and downs of life in the capital. It seems like turmoil has been around him all his life, but in Khartoum, people fought about politics and religion, not just resources. The best part of living in Khartoum was being close to Uncle Youssef, who had served in the National Assembly of Sudan, a group of elected officials who used to help govern the country. He firmly believed in democracy and saw it as the key to solving Sudan's problems. Idris loved visiting his uncle and having deep discussions over cups of cinnamon tea.

Despite experiencing so much of Sudan's tumultuous history, Uncle Youssef dedicated himself to finding solutions. He shared with Idris his observations about Sudan's poor leadership and a government that was more inclined to wage war on its own people over religious differences than to protect them. He admitted that progress toward reform was often slow, if it happened at all.

A few years ago, when protests swept through Sudan, Idris ran to his uncle's house, knowing he would have an explanation. Uncle Youssef described how the people were tired of high food prices, racial injustice, and government corruption. With a glimmer of hope, he revealed that this public outcry had led to the removal of the president. Perhaps change was finally at hand.





Idris recalls how the new interim government, the Transitional Legislative Council, promised to be the dawn of an era of **representative government**. But as the days turned into years, the government that the people were desperate for never came. Power struggles, internal strife, and a military that refused to let go of control spelled the demise of the hopeful transition.

Eventually, the streets of Khartoum turned into a battlefield as the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a **paramilitary** group, clashed with their old allies, the Sudanese military. The echoes of gunfire and the rumbling of tank engines became a terrifying soundtrack to Idris's life during his last few weeks in the capital.

The local hospital was reduced to ashes, and the city became a permanent warzone. Violence spread like wildfire, reducing buildings to rubble and barring medical aid to the injured. Despite international pleas for a ceasefire and peace, the conflict raged on. Agreements of truce were followed by the renewed sound of gunfire. The chaos grew so intense that even diplomats and aid workers were forced to retreat.

Idris often thinks of the last night before he and his family fled Khartoum. Uncle Youssef came to say goodbye and promised that he would keep doing everything he could to improve things for their country. Somehow he still had hope.

Even though he feels safer now in Port Sudan, Idris has new problems to worry about and no one to turn to for answers.

Representative Government

A system of governance in which elected officials represent and make decisions on behalf of the people, ensuring that the views and interests of the citizens are considered and reflected in the decision-making process.

Paramilitary

An organization that acts like a professional military but is not part of a country's official armed forces. They are usually comprised of civilians who take up arms in defense of their land or carry out duties the official military cannot.



The Council

Idris hears about a local council of community representatives called “**sheikhs**” who hold meetings to discuss the most urgent problems and brainstorm potential solutions. He decides to start attending occasionally and observes quietly as the representatives debate. Even though there is no cinnamon tea, the council meetings remind Idris of his chats with Uncle Youssef, and he’s beginning to learn a lot.

The sheikhs are concerned, for example, that a small rebel group has blocked a major road between Port Sudan and Khartoum, interrupting the normal flow of goods from the port to the capital. The sheikhs say these protests could last up to a week and may force the port to stop all work as cargo stacks up inside the port, leaving nowhere to offload the ships.

As Idris listens, he realizes that his new home city is dealing with a number of major problems he’d never even considered. He feels excited to watch leadership in action and relieved to know there are people taking steps for improvement.

On top of this newfound optimism, Idris has just received the most exciting news: Uncle Youssef is coming to Port Sudan!



Sheikh

A respected leader or elder in an Islamic community, often used to refer to a religious leader or the head of a tribe.



An Old Friend with a New Proposal

After the joy of reuniting with Uncle Youssef, Idris is surprised to learn that his uncle did not flee Khartoum as a refugee. Rather, he has journeyed to Port Sudan to help and will meet with an old friend about possible solutions to the issue of resource scarcity. Despite everything the country is going through, Uncle Youssef still has hope. Idris is impressed and a little inspired. He agrees immediately when his uncle invites him to come along to the meeting.

Uncle Youssef introduces Idris to Shmuel, a representative from Israel. The two had met during the days of the National Assembly of Sudan and had stayed in touch ever since. As they walk along the harbor and look out at the sparkling Red Sea, they discuss Sudan's water crisis.

As Idris listens and nods along, Uncle Youssef reveals that Sudan's lack of access to clean water affects nearly everyone in the country. In fact, 80% of Sudan's labor force works in agriculture, and they depend on having access to clean and abundant water sources. But with clean water in such short supply, Sudan's agricultural production is significantly smaller than it could be, leaving much of the country without adequate food supplies.

Shmuel explains that technological solutions already exist and could potentially increase access to clean water across all parts of Sudan, resulting in much larger harvests, more sanitary living, less disease, and a better quality of life for everyone. Shmuel has seen for himself that, given enough water, Sudan could possibly produce enough food to combat food shortages nationwide.

One such technology, **desalination**, has revolutionized Shmuel's home country of Israel over the past decade and erased their water crisis entirely.

Desalination

The process of removing salt and other minerals from seawater to make it safe and clean to drink or use for irrigation.





Turning Water Into Water

Across the Mediterranean Sea, Israel once faced resource scarcity in their own homeland. With limited access to fresh drinking water and with rain falling mainly during the winter, Israel's leaders knew they had to take drastic measures to guarantee their country's survival and growth.

Beginning in the late 1990s, Israel began turning salt water into drinking water using an innovative process called reverse osmosis desalination. This process uses high pressure to force saltwater through tiny hair-like membranes, filtering out impurities (including salt) and leaving pure drinking water.

Reverse osmosis desalination proved so successful that Israel ramped up their efforts. Beginning in 2002, they began construction on five enormous saltwater desalination plants that now operate around the clock, supplying 85% of Israel's drinking water. After such amazing results, Israel began sharing its knowledge with the world, helping other countries find solutions to their water shortages.

Sudan has 500 miles of coastline along the Red Sea. The high average water temperature of the Red and Mediterranean Seas means the surface water evaporates quickly, giving both bodies of water a higher salt concentration than is found in normal salt water. Idris figured drinking water from the Red Sea wasn't even an option, but Shmuel says the desalination technology could take the salty sea water and make it drinkable in about 90 minutes.

Shmuel wants to share Israel's desalination technology with the leaders of Sudan. He explains how large-scale desalination plants, like the ones in Israel, could be built along the Red Sea, filtering the water to make it drinkable. With such technology, it's possible that Sudan, like Israel, might one day have enough clean water to make resource scarcity a thing of the past.





Looking for Solutions

Excited by the potential future that desalination could bring to Sudan, Idris invites Uncle Youssef and Shmuel to attend that evening's council meeting with him. The sheikhs listen to everything the visitors have to say. They ask many questions and spend hours discussing the possibilities.

Everyone wants to see the desalination plants built as soon as possible, but after much deliberation, it becomes clear that such a project requires funds and stability that Sudan just doesn't have at the moment. For that to happen, the political and military leaders in charge of Sudan would need to stop fighting each other and apply their country's resources toward improving the lives of their citizens.

Idris is frustrated by the council's conclusion. After such a compelling proposal from Uncle Youssef and Shmuel and a passionate debate from the sheikhs, how could they just leave without a solution? Of course, they all hope to eventually see the dream of desalination technology in their harbor become a reality, but Port Sudan needs to address its resource scarcity *now*.

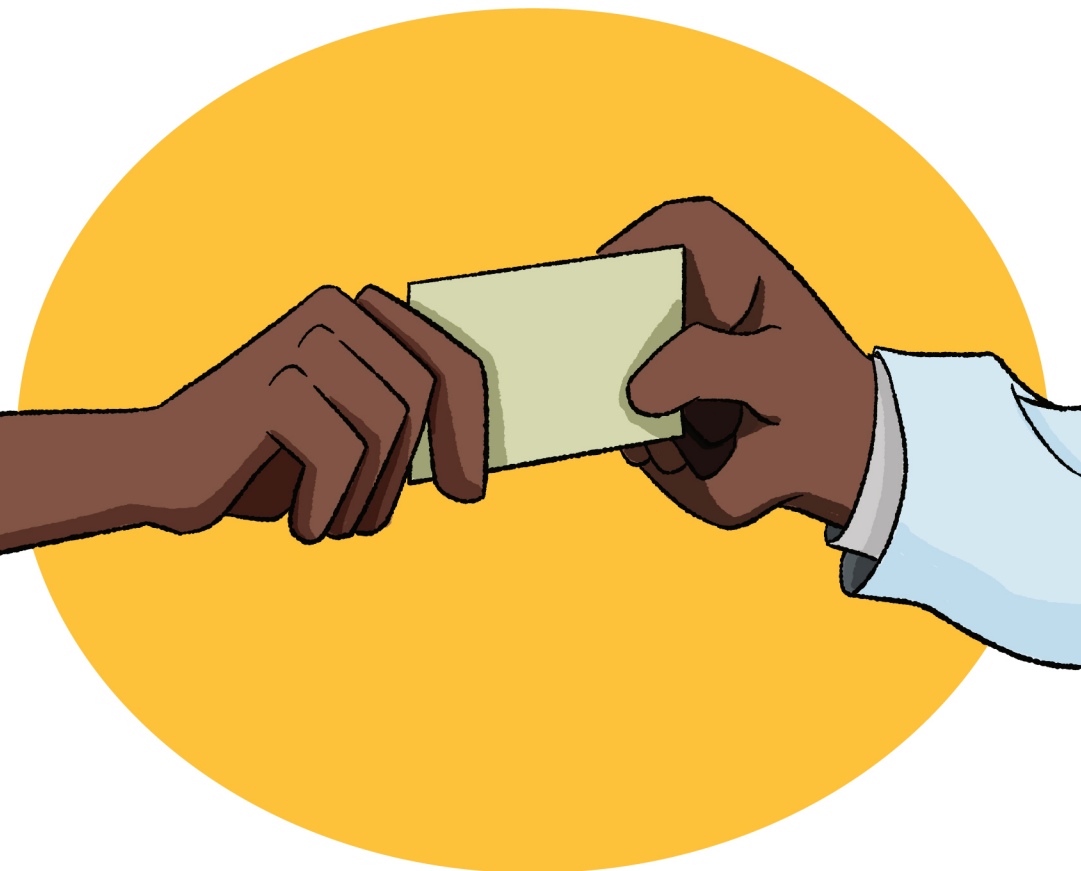
As they leave the meeting, Idris shares his thoughts with Uncle Youssef and Shmuel. He is grateful that Israel wants to help Sudan but wants to know if there is a more immediate option than the desalination plants.



Uncle Youssef smiles proudly and commends his nephew. Instead of looking for an escape, Idris is looking for solutions.

Even though Uncle Youssef and Shmuel have other obligations the next day, they come up with an idea. Shmuel has connections to a variety of **Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)**, such as **non-profit groups** and **faith-based charities**, that raise money or collect donated items specifically to aid the crisis in Sudan. Organizations like these are important because they help people in need, protect the environment, fight for fairness, and give a voice to those who might not be heard. They are able to operate with the creativity, efficiency, accountability, and compassion that a government organization is often unable to match.

Many left the country when the fighting broke out recently, but Shmuel knows of one faith-based charity that still has a representative in Port Sudan. He writes down the representative's name and address, but it is up to Idris to go meet him.



Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)

A private, voluntary, and independent organization that operates without direct government control, often working on social, humanitarian, environmental, or advocacy issues to address specific needs or promote positive change within society.

Non-Profit Group

A type of organization that operates for purposes other than making money. Instead, it is dedicated to serving the public or pursuing a specific mission, such as education, health, or charity.

Faith-Based Charity

An organization rooted in and guided by religious beliefs and principles. It operates with the primary purpose of advancing religious, spiritual, or moral values and often engages in activities such as providing religious services, promoting religious teachings, offering charitable assistance, serving the needy, and participating in community outreach based on its specific faith tradition.



Idris Takes The Initiative

The next day, Idris walks across the city to the address Shmuel gave him and is relieved to find the small, busy makeshift office of the faith-based charity. The representative is there and immediately sits down with Idris to discuss the charity's work and Port Sudan's needs.

Idris is excited by the possibilities as he learns that NGOs like this one use the money they raise from donations to offer aid in many forms, including livestock, trees, education, healthcare, and even hand-pump wells across Sudan. He explains that the most urgent need of his family and the other refugees in his camp is clean water. Idris describes the plan to build desalination plants with Israel's help someday, but he asks if there's anything the charity can do for his community in the meantime.

The representative is impressed that a young person has such knowledge of the situation, and Idris realizes the value of all his talks with Uncle Youssef and all his time spent listening to the council of sheikhs. For the first time, he feels confident instead of helpless.

After a long, promising conversation, the representative ends their meeting by saying a quick prayer. Idris feels his heart swell with hope. He grew up viewing religion as the source of extremism and terror, but now someone is offering to help him *because* of their faith? It seems that the more he dedicates himself to looking for solutions to his problems, the more exciting things he learns.





Hope Fulfilled

Saying goodbye to Uncle Youssef was bittersweet, but now Idris understands why his uncle chooses to return to Khartoum and work toward change. There is so much to fix and so many countries and organizations willing to help—the capital is lucky to have people like Uncle Youssef dedicated to improving things.

Thanks to Idris’s own dedication, things are improving in his camp as well. A few weeks after their meeting, the representative from the faith-based charity showed up at the camp with good news. They had secured the funding and equipment to begin trucking in fresh water once a day.

Now, every morning, a water truck arrives at the camp and uses a long hose to pump fresh, clean water into an underground tank—enough water for the 3000 people now living there to share. Additional above-ground water tanks are also being installed and filled with drinking water for everyone.

Impressed by his initiative, the sheikhs have asked Idris to be a regular part of their meetings going forward. He is excited to keep working on solutions, first for his immediate community and maybe someday for his whole country.

Idris no longer feels jealous as he watches the ships full of people push away from the dock. His place is here now, in Port Sudan. He’s already improved the world around him once, and he knows he can do it again.





Sip Some Sudanese Cinnamon Tea

All across Sudan, people enjoy this sweet, simple tea recipe that uses only four ingredients and is ready in just minutes!

You'll need:

- 1 Tea Bag of Black Tea (have a parent make sure it's decaffeinated)
- 1 Cinnamon Stick
- 8 oz Water
- 1 teaspoon of Sugar

Instructions:

- 1 Have a parent help you boil a pot of water. If you have a tea kettle, use that!
- 2 Add a decaffeinated tea bag, a cinnamon stick, and a teaspoon of sugar to your favorite mug.
- 3 Pour the boiling water into the mug and let the tea, cinnamon, and sugar steep for 5 minutes.
- 4 Remove the tea bag and cinnamon stick, stir, and enjoy!



Writing Activity

Inspired by Idris's story, outline one initiative or project you'd like to undertake in your community. Describe the steps you'd take, the challenges you anticipate, and the impact you hope to achieve.

Color the Jalabiya & Toob

Draw their happy faces, and use your favorite colors to color in these traditional Sudanese clothing for men and women

Jalabiya:

Often white, but feel free to add decorative patterns or colors on the trim.



Toob:

This can be vibrant! Reds, blues, yellows, and greens with patterns and stripes.



DIY Water Purification

Objective:

Understand the basics of water purification by creating a simple filtration system.

Materials:

- A clear plastic bottle (cut)
- Sand
- Gravel
- Cotton balls or cloth
- Dirty water (you can make this by adding dirt or food coloring to water)
- Optional: activated charcoal (available at pet stores in the fish section)

Filtering Process:

Slowly pour the dirty water into the funnel and watch as the water drips through the layers into the bottom half of the bottle.

The gravel, sand, and charcoal layers will help filter out larger and finer impurities from the water.

Observe:

Notice the difference in the water before and after it went through your filter. While the filtered water will be clearer, remember it's not safe to drink!

Prepare the Bottle:

Take the upper half of the plastic bottle and turn it upside down (like a funnel). The cap should be removed.

1

Ask an adult to help cut off the bottom of the bottle.

Layering the Filter:

5

Lastly, add a layer of gravel on top of the sand.

4

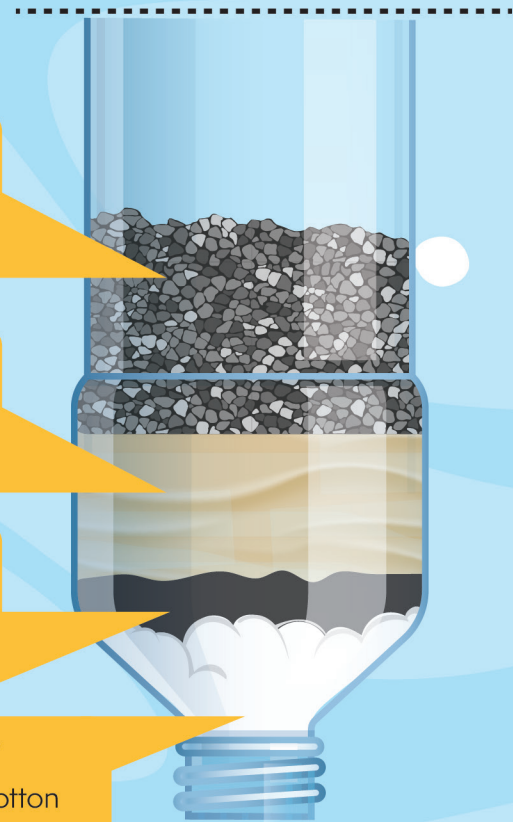
Pour a layer of sand on top of the charcoal or cotton balls.

3

Add a layer of activated charcoal on top of the cotton balls (if you have it).

2

Place a piece of cloth or a few cotton balls at the bottom (this will be the top of your funnel).



Crafting a Nubian Pyramid

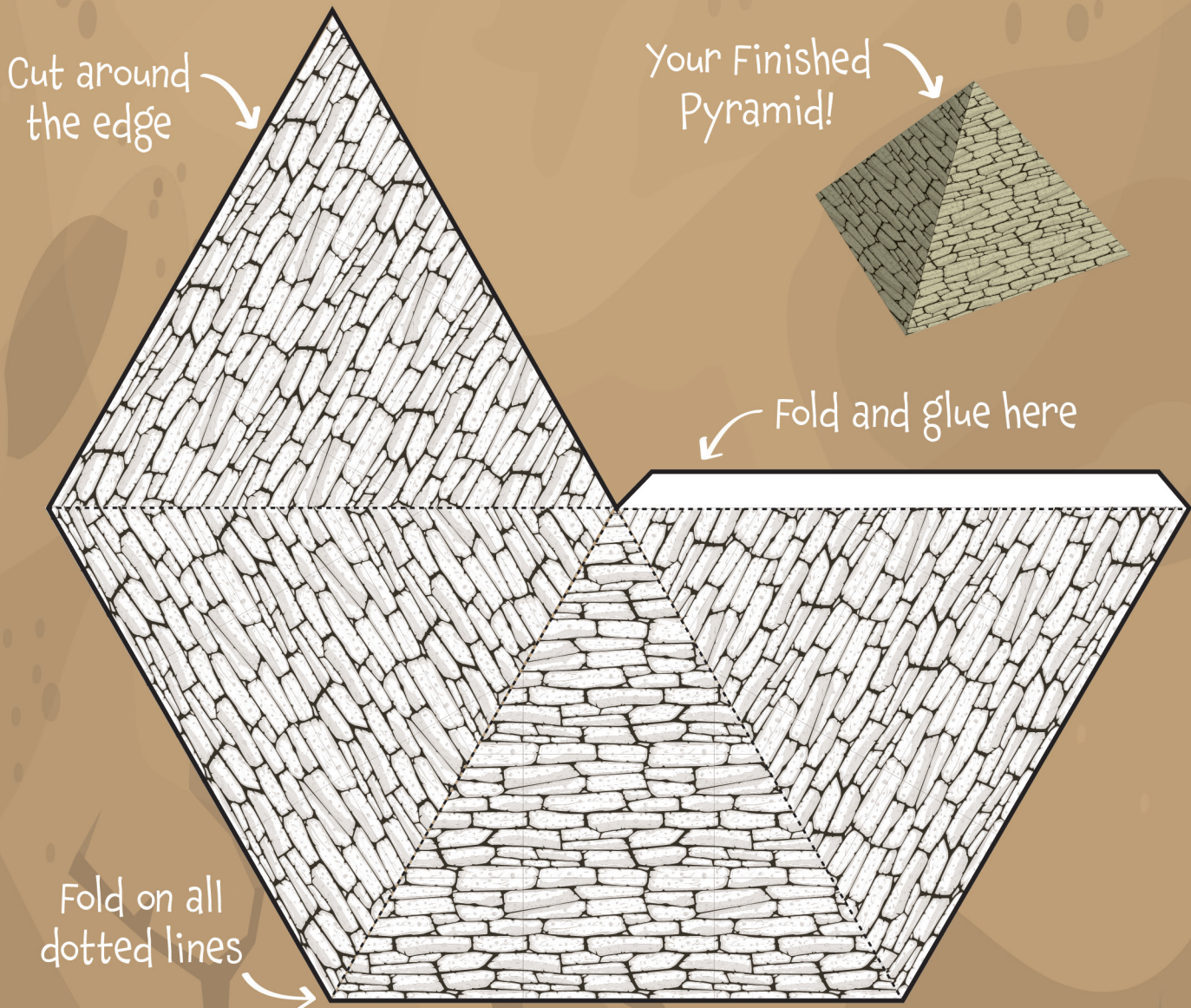
Color & Decorate:

Before cutting, color your pyramid. Add patterns, symbols, or hieroglyphs to make it unique.

Cut & Fold:

Using scissors, cut out the template along the solid lines. Then fold along the dotted lines to create your 3D Nubian pyramid.

The Kingdom of Kush, an ancient civilization that once ruled Sudan, left behind numerous pyramids and archaeological sites, shedding light on Africa's rich history.





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An illustration of five diverse cartoon characters standing in front of a world map. From left to right: a man in a dark military uniform with a peaked cap and medals; a boy in a blue and white soccer jersey with the number 30, holding an orange basketball; a girl with long brown hair in a blue top and yellow skirt; a girl with dark skin and braided hair in a yellow top and patterned skirt; and a boy in an orange t-shirt and dark shorts. The background is a blue world map with white outlines of continents.

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