SIMHISTORY · LESSON PLAN · FOR THE TEACHER

Holding the Highlands: Ethiopia, 1895–1896

How did Ethiopia defeat Italy and stay independent during the Scramble for Africa?

Grades 9–12
and AP World History

Three parts
lesson 55 min · game one period · debrief 30 min

World History
imperialism and resistance

Two ways to run it
Plan A free · Plan B Teacher Plus

Choose one plan

Plan A (free): every student plays the solo game on their own device, leading the whole coalition against a computer-run Italy. Nothing to set up and no accounts. **Plan B (Teacher Plus):** the live class game. The class is one coalition: each province is a team, and each student holds a job (Commander, Ras, and in Complex mode Steward and Diplomat). You run the clock and the projector.

Simplified or Complex

Both fit one period. **Simplified** shows battle odds and has fewer jobs; it suits most CP classes. **Complex** hides the odds, adds scout reports, raids, the conquered south and the peace terms; it suits AP classes and CP classes with time to discuss harder questions, above all: *in what ways was Ethiopia both resisting imperialism and practicing it?*

Materials (all free)

Lessons (lessons.html): the lesson before the game (33 slides, 15 marked ✎ Take notes) and the debrief (14 slides, 3 marked ✎ Take notes), with polls, sorting, putting events in order and labelling maps. Students answer at simhistory.org/highlands with a code (no names). Press N for your notes: each slide lists its standards, and the **AP World** switch adds the AP topics and notes. Slides marked ✎ Take notes match the worksheet. **Vocabulary and notes worksheet** (notes-worksheet.pdf): 20 words and guided notes. **Debrief worksheet** (debrief-worksheet.pdf). **The quiz** (optional): 10 questions at the end of the game; the answer key is below. In the class game, turn it off in the setup ("End-of-game quiz"); each student's answers go in their PDF. For solo play, give students the link *solo.html?quiz=0* to leave it out.

Objectives

Four big ideas run through the game: **sovereignty** (what independence means when a European power claims to speak for you abroad), **political unity** (holding regional rulers with their own interests together), **logistics** (why supply can matter as much as strength in battle) and **occupation versus control** (why taking land is not the same as ruling it).

- Explain how the dispute over Article 17 of the Treaty of Wuchale became a question of sovereignty, and why the war was about more than a mistranslation.

- Explain why Ethiopia, almost alone in Africa, kept its independence in the Scramble for Africa (diplomacy and the arms trade, a coalition of regional rulers held together under pressure, supply and famine, and Italian mistakes).
- Analyze multiple causes of the Ethiopian victory at Adwa and weigh which mattered most.
- Explain how Ethiopia resisted European imperialism while expanding its own empire by conquest in the south (Complex mode).
- Explain why supply lines and food decided the campaign as much as battles did.
- Explain why holding territory is not the same as controlling its people (occupied Tigray, raids and reprisals).
- Use one event from the game and one historical fact to support a claim.
- Define and use the key terms of the unit (imperialism, protectorate, sovereignty, coalition, siege, supply line and others) in speaking and writing.
- Locate the colonial powers in Africa and describe how Ethiopia was surrounded between 1880 and 1896.

Standards

AP World History Topic 6.1	Rationales for imperialism from 1750 to 1900: how ideologies contributed to the development of imperialism
AP World History Topic 6.2	State expansion from 1750 to 1900: how and why states expanded their empires
AP World History Topic 6.3	Indigenous responses to state expansion from 1750 to 1900: resistance and the creation of new states
AP World History Topic 6.8	Causation in the imperial age
CA HSS 10.4.1	The rise of industrial economies and their link to imperialism and colonialism (strategic advantage, Social Darwinism, the missionary impulse, land, resources and technology)
CA HSS 10.4.2	The locations of the colonial rule of such nations as England, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Russia, Spain, Portugal and the United States
CA HSS 10.4.3	Imperialism from the perspective of the colonizers and the colonized, and the varied responses of the people under colonial rule
CA HSS HI 3	Interpret past events and issues within the context in which an event unfolded rather than solely in terms of present-day norms and values
C3 D2.His.14.9-12	Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past
C3 D2.His.16.9-12	Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past

Summaries. Official text: AP World History: Modern Course and Exam Description (College Board); California History–Social Science Content Standards; California History–Social Science Analysis Skills, grades 9–12; C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards (NCSS).

History to know before you play

In 1889 Emperor Menelik II and Italy signed the Treaty of Wuchale. Article 17 said, in the Amharic text, that Ethiopia *may* use Italy's diplomats; in the Italian text, that it *must*. Italy claimed a protectorate. Menelik rejected it, bought rifles through French Djibouti, and in 1895 called the provinces to war. Italy held northern Tigray. Ethiopian forces overran Italy's outpost at Amba Alagi (December 1895) and took the fort at Mekele by cutting its water (January 1896). On 1 March 1896 Italy's General Baratieri, pressed by Rome, attacked at Adwa with four brigades after a night march and was routed. In October 1896 the Treaty of Addis Ababa annulled Wuchale and recognized Ethiopia's independence; Italy kept Eritrea.

Plan A · Free: everyone plays solo

Day 1 · The lesson (about 55 min; split it over two days if you need to)

1. **Before class.** Open lessons.html ("Before the game"). Print the vocabulary and notes worksheet. Press Start a class session if students have devices (optional).
2. **Why Europe took Africa (15 min).** Slides 1–9: the warm-up poll; the Scramble; why Europeans wanted Africa (students sort first, then take notes on the three causes: nationalism set up the competition, economics made it urgent, the missionary spirit gave the moral justification); the Rhodes cartoon; Livingstone and the explorers; what colonial rule built and what it cost (the Congo); and a quick write weighing the two.
3. **Closing in on Ethiopia (8 min).** Slides 10–15: Africa in 1914, Italy the latecomer, and the Horn of Africa in 1880, 1886, 1890 and 1896.
4. **Ethiopia, Italy and the road to war (15 min).** Slides 16–25: Ethiopia in 1889, Menelik and Crispi, Italy at the Red Sea, Article 17 and the check question, the quick write, 1893–1895, the road to war (put in order), the coalition and the provinces (label the map).
5. **Words for the game (10 min).** Slides 26–29: two vocabulary slides (Next shows each meaning; students write their own), stronger or weaker (sort), what to do at a fort.
6. **Exit (5 min).** Slides 30–33: the jobs, each month's history score, the prediction poll, the exit ticket.

Day 2 · The game (one period)

1. **Case file (5 min).** Project the solo page (play/holding-the-highlands/solo.html) and read the case file aloud. Point out the two words in Article 17.
2. **Set up (3 min).** Students open the solo page, choose the mode you name (Simplified for most classes) and Italy: Historical, and keep "Show me how to play" on. No timer, or the timer if you want the pace kept.
3. **Play (30 min).** Six rounds. Circulate; ask students to read the "What happened, and why" notices aloud to a partner when something goes wrong.
4. **Wrap-up (10 min).** Each month's news showed "What really happened" and a history score; students note the month their war differed most. At the end each student takes the 10-question quiz on screen and starts the debrief worksheet.

Day 3 · The debrief (30 min)

1. Open lessons.html ("After the game"). Poll: how did your war end? Then 1 March 1896, how Europe saw it, and the war in order.

2. Quick write: which month differed most from history? Then the peace, Africa in 1914, resisting or building an empire (sort), and the claim about Adwa.
3. What Adwa meant, the quick review (6 questions; on devices with a class session, or aloud), and the exit ticket. Collect the debrief worksheet.

Plan B · Teacher Plus: the class game

Day 1 · The lesson (about 55 min)

1. **Before class.** Open lessons.html ("Before the game") and print the vocabulary and notes worksheet. Start a class session: students join at simhistory.org/highlands with the code on the projector.
2. **Teach the lesson (50 min).** Slides 1–29, timed as in Plan A: why Europe took Africa, closing in, Ethiopia and the road to war, the coalition and the words for the game. Students answer the polls, sorting, ordering and map labels on their devices; Next shows how the class did.
3. **Jobs and exit (5 min).** Slides 30–33: the jobs, each month's history score, the prediction poll, the exit ticket. Tell students their province and job for tomorrow.

Day 2 · The class game (one period)

1. **Once a year: set up your classes.** On class.html choose how many class periods you teach and press Create. Each period gets its own code for the whole year; your settings and your edited lessons are shared by every period. Press **Save my setup** to keep a file for another computer or next year.
2. **Before class.** Open class.html, open your period's game (or play once without a setup), choose Simplified or Complex, Italy: Historical, seats by province code, computer plays empty seats, the Emperor (a student, you, or the computer), Timing: One period (Council 60 s, then 3 minutes a month; round 1 gets a minute more), round-1 guide on. For two days choose Two periods and use Save game at the end of day 1. Seat each province's students together if you can.
3. **Join and case file (5 min).** Students join at simhistory.org/highlands with their province's code and choose a job while you read the case file aloud.
4. **Round 1 (8 min).** Press Start: Italy moves first. Every month has the same four steps on every screen: 1. News, 2. Council (the Emperor sets goals; everyone else answers them), 3. each job's work, 4. Report (notes and map flags to the Emperor, then "I'm finished"). Your panel shows how many students are on each step. The Council has its own short clock; when it ends (or you press the button) the month's clock starts.
5. **Rounds 2–6 (5–6 min each).** Each round: reveal the battles on the projector (the dice roll for each), discuss for a minute, start the clock, end the round when everyone is finished. In round 3 Italy's secret letter reaches Tigray's Ras: only that student and you see it.
6. **Peace (Complex, 4 min).** The rases and the Court choose the terms; you send them to Italy and the table shows what really happened.
7. **Ending (10 min).** The projector shows the outcome, what really happened in February and March 1896, and the history score. On their devices students take the 10-question quiz and answer the debrief questions, then download one PDF (the certificate, then the quiz and their answers). Use Save game if you run out of time.

Day 3 · The debrief (30 min)

1. Open lessons.html ("After the game") from the class screen so the lesson uses the class's code. Run the polls, the war in order, the quick write and the sorting on devices.
2. The quick review is a timed competition on devices (faster right answers score more; seats show as place names). It is practice, not a grade.
3. Collect the PDFs and the debrief worksheet.

Debrief: back to Article 17

Ask: *Was this war fundamentally about a mistranslated treaty, about imperial expansion, or both?* Students should see that Article 17 gave Italy its claim (a protectorate), but that Italy's colony in Eritrea, the Scramble for Africa and Rome's politics drove the war; Menelik rejected the treaty in 1893 and armed for it. The Treaty of Addis Ababa (October 1896) annulled Wuchale.

Answer key (what students should notice)

- **Why Ethiopia won:** numbers and modern rifles (bought through Djibouti) mattered, but so did keeping the provinces loyal, feeding a huge army, and Italy's choices: split brigades, a night march on poor maps, and pressure from Rome to attack.
- **Supply:** armies cut off from the capitals go hungry; Italy's best plan was to wait (the Harder setting), and Menelik's army really was short of food by March 1896.
- **Coalition:** heavy taxes and lost battles push a ras toward Italy; Italy courted Ras Mengesha of Tigray. Two defections end the war.
- **Peace:** Menelik did not push Italy out of Eritrea: his army was short of food, Italy was sending reinforcements, and he chose a peace he could hold.
- **Complexity (Complex mode):** the conquered south (lands Shewa took in the 1870s–80s, Harar in 1887) supplied men and grain under pressure; Ethiopia defended its independence while ruling lands it had conquered.

Each month: what really happened

At the start of each month the News shows what really happened that month in 1895–96, beside how this game went, with a mark: ahead of history (3), as in history (2), a little behind (1) or behind (0). History itself scores 12 of 18. The history score is for discussion only. It is never the grade.

Answer key: lesson activities

- **Why did Europeans want Africa?** Nationalism: racing rivals for land, an empire as proof of a great power, ports and coaling stations. Economics: raw materials for Industrial Revolution factories, new customers. Missionary spirit: spreading Christianity, a real wish to end the slave trade and help, paternalism, Social Darwinism.
- **The road to war:** Berlin Conference (1884–85), Massawa (1885), Dogali (1887), Wuchale (1889), Eritrea (1890), Menelik rejects the treaty (1893), Coatit (January 1895), the kitet (September 1895).
- **Stronger or weaker?** Stronger: dug in on an amba, high morale, rested on supplied ground, modern rifles. Weaker: cut off, hungry, storming a finished fort.

- **The war in order:** kitet (17 Sept. 1895), Debra Ailà (9 Oct.), Amba Alagi (7 Dec.), Mekele surrenders (20 Jan. 1896), Menelik at Adwa (14 Feb.), Adwa (1 Mar.), Crispi falls (10 Mar.), Treaty of Addis Ababa (26 Oct.).
- **Resisting or building an empire?** Resisting: rejected Article 17, rifles through Djibouti, the kitet. Building: conquests to the south and southeast, Addis Ababa as the centre of a bigger state.

Answer key: vocabulary and notes worksheet

- **Scramble:** 1881; tenth; Berlin; Africans; Ethiopia, Liberia. **Three causes:** nationalism set up the competition (examples: racing rivals, prestige, naval ports); economics made it urgent (raw materials, customers for factories); the missionary spirit gave the moral justification (good: spreading Christianity, ending the slave trade, schools and hospitals; bad: paternalism, Social Darwinism). **Explorers:** Livingstone; Commerce; slave; Stanley; Leopold II. **Colonial rule:** built railways, ports, roads, telegraphs, some schools and hospitals, mostly to move raw materials and to run the colonies; cost: land taken, forced labour, taxes, the Congo atrocities, the Herero and Nama genocide; rubber; 10. **Italy:** 1861; great power; Crispi; Horn. **Africa in 1914:** Britain, France; Eritrea.
- **Closing in:** Eritrea, Italy; Djibouti, France; Somaliland, Britain; Somalia, Italy; Kenya and Uganda, Britain; Sudan, the Mahdist state.
- **Ethiopia in 1889:** rases; Menelik II; Addis Ababa; Djibouti; south (and southeast). **Red Sea:** Massawa; Dogali; Wuchale; Eritrea. **Article 17:** can (may); must; protectorate; dealings with other countries (foreign affairs). **Road to war:** rejected; Mengesha; Mekele; kitet.
- **Coalition:** Shewa, Menelik II and Empress Taytu, far south (the capital); Harar, Ras Makonnen, east near Djibouti; Tigray, Ras Mengesha and Ras Alula, north on the front line; Gojjam, Negus Tekle Haymanot, west; Wollo, Ras Mikael, the middle.
- **After the game:** brigades; 6,000; 56. Addis Ababa; independent; Eritrea. Addis Ababa; Mussolini; 1941.
- **Words:** accept any accurate meaning in the student's own words; the "in the game" column should match the slide.

Answer key: the quiz (10 questions)

1. What was the main cause of the war between Italy and Ethiopia? **Italy claimed the Treaty of Wuchale made Ethiopia its protectorate**. Italy read Article 17 as making Ethiopia a protectorate. Menelik rejected the treaty in 1893.
2. Why did the two versions of Article 17 matter? **The Italian text said Ethiopia must use Italy for foreign affairs; the Amharic text said it could**. "Must" against "could": the difference between a protectorate and a free choice.
3. What was the kitet? **Menelik's call to arms to every province**. Menelik proclaimed it on 17 September 1895.
4. Where did Menelik get many of his modern rifles? **From traders through French Djibouti**. The arms road ran from Djibouti through Harar to Shewa.
5. How did the Ethiopian armies take the fort at Mekele in January 1896? **They cut off its water until the garrison surrendered**. Assaults failed; cutting the water (credited to Empress Taytu) made the garrison surrender on terms.
6. Why did Baratieri attack at Adwa on 1 March 1896? **His food was running out and Rome was pressing him for a victory**. Both armies were short of food; Rome's telegrams and his coming replacement pushed him to act.
7. What went wrong for the Italian brigades at Adwa? **They lost touch with each other on a night march and were beaten one by one**. Bad maps and narrow tracks split the columns.
8. What did the Treaty of Addis Ababa (October 1896) do? **Cancelled Wuchale and recognized Ethiopia's independence; Italy kept Eritrea**. Ethiopia stayed independent; the border was set on the Mareb, Belesa and Muna

rivers.

9. By 1914, which two African states were still independent? **Ethiopia and Liberia**. Everywhere else in Africa was under European rule.
10. Which best explains why the coalition held together in 1895–96? **The provinces saw Italy as a common threat to their own power and lands**. Even rivals like Mengesha of Tigray joined; chiefs who had sided with Italy came back before Adwa.

Rubric for the written answer

4	A clear claim about why Ethiopia won or lost; one specific moment from the game and one accurate fact from 1895–1896; explains how the evidence supports the claim; weighs at least two causes.
3	A claim with game and historical evidence; explains the link, but weighs only one cause.
2	A claim with only game evidence or only historical evidence, or evidence without explanation.
1	Retells what happened without a claim.

Sources

- The month-by-month history, the lessons and the quiz: McLachlan, *Armies of the Adowa Campaign 1896* (2011); Strayer, *Ways of the World*; Britannica; World History Encyclopedia; New World Encyclopedia; History.com (after Jonas, *The Battle of Adwa*); listed in full in the lessons' Works Cited and the game's Sources.
- Forces, battles and the treaty: see the game's Sources button (Wikipedia articles on Adwa, Amba Alagi, the Siege of Mekelle and the Treaty of Addis Ababa, after McLachlan; Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia*). Borders, resources and loyalty numbers are approximate and marked so in the game.
- Standards: California Department of Education; National Council for the Social Studies (C3 Framework); College Board (AP World History: Modern). Linked above.

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