



Georgina Williams of Ghana

From the Children of Other Lands Series

Teacher's Guide Written by
Barri Golbus

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Colman Communications Corp.

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Children of Other Lands:

Georgina Williams of Ghana

Time: 15:43

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

As the video opens, viewers are taken on a brief tour of Akropong, Ghana, after which they are introduced to the program's profile subject, Georgina Williams. It is festival time, and Georgina is seen buying a colorful *kente* cloth dress with her Uncle Kwame. She then goes to her friend Anita's house, where she plays several games — *Bamba Bambariya* and *Ampe* — at a festival party. Afterwards, viewers see a typical Ghanaian compound as Georgina, Anita, and another friend wash the party dishes. The narrator explains that in Ghana, aunts, uncles, cousins, parents and grandparents normally live together in compounds. The following day, Georgina awakens early and starts her daily chores, sweeping the Williams' family compound, ironing, and fixing a breakfast of corn meal porridge. Meanwhile, cousin Helen takes the family goats out to pasture. Georgina then goes to school with her cousin, Esther. There, she studies arithmetic, physical education,

geography and other subjects. At break time, she eats beans, fried yams and *kenke*, a dumpling made of corn meal. After school, she, her mother and Esther go shopping at Akropong’s outdoor market and later, with the help of her cousin Eric, fix a traditional Ghanaian meal « palm nut soup and *fufu*, which is made from plantain and cassava. Georgina’s French tutor, Mr. Anom, comes to give her a lesson, and then stays for dinner. Georgina is seen setting the table for Mr. Anom and Uncle Kwame, who in the traditional Ghanaian manner, do not eat with the women and children.



On Fridays, Georgina attends a three-hour prayer meeting. The narrator explains that most people in Ghana are Christians, but there are also many Moslems and people who follow traditional beliefs. Finally, it’s

festival day, and Georgina and Uncle Kwame go to a nearby town to witness the colorful *Odwira* Festival which is held to honor the chiefs of the Akuapem Kingdom of Ghana, where Georgina lives.

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

After viewing this video and participating in the suggested activities, students should be able to do the following:

- (1) Locate Ghana on a map of Africa or on a globe.
- (2) Briefly review the living patterns of a Ghanaian child, including food preparation, schooling, leisure activities and eating habits.
- (3) Compare and contrast their lives with the life of Georgina Williams.
- (4) Explain what a “compound” is and describe the extended family structure typically found in Ghana.

- (5) Briefly describe the traditional belief system of many Ghanaians.
- (6) Tell about the *Odwira* Festival Georgina attends.

SUGGESTED LESSON PLAN

Introduction

Locate Ghana on your classroom map or globe. Ask the class if anyone knows anything about the country. Note that Ghana is located near the equator. Explain that countries near the equator have hot, rainy weather all year long. What would it be like to live in a country near the equator? Would it be different from living here? Would a person live in a different kind of house? Eat different foods? Wear different kinds of clothing? Go to a different kind of school? See different things on the street? Would the plant life be different?

Pre-Viewing Activities

Tell the class they will now see a video entitled “Georgina Williams of Ghana.” Explain that the program will tell not only about Georgina and her family, but also about the town and country where she lives. Ask the class to pay close attention to how the town and countryside look, and the different activities of the people who live there. Explain that after everyone sees the video, you’ll want to compare how Georgina lives and how they live.

Post-Viewing Activities

Ask the class which portion of the program they found most interesting. Was it the festival? The games Georgina and her friends played? Discuss the role of the tropical weather in

Georgina's life. How does it affect her diet? Then turn the discussion toward Georgina's chores. Why might she have so many of them? Note that there is no electricity in Georgina's home. Would that have any effect on her chores? In what ways? On the chalkboard, write three categories, "My Life," "Georgina's Life," and "Similar or Different?" Discuss schooling, recreation, nutrition, religious beliefs, home, and neighborhood. As the class discusses each of these aspects of Georgina's and their own lives, write their comments on the chalkboard.

Your class may be interested to know more about Georgina's family. Eric and Helen are Uncle Kwame's children. Uncle



Kwame, whose wife died about a year ago, has another son, three-year-old Isaac, not seen in the video. Georgina's father, a teacher, is studying for his Master's Degree in education in the United States and will return to Ghana in about six months. Georgina's grandfather was also a

teacher and was educated in both Ghana and in England. People who live in the Akropong area are typically well educated. An important Ghanaian institution, the Presbyterian Training College, is located in the town.

If your students find the reference to the Akuapem Kingdom of Ghana confusing, you may want to explain that Ghanaian kingdoms are somewhat like states in the United States. The rulers of the kingdom share power with the rulers of the country. The major difference is that people within the Ghanaian kingdoms are generally of the same ethnic group. Georgina's family belongs the Akan ethnic group.

TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

For many, it's a typical October afternoon in Akropong, Ghana.

Children play, adults gossip, laborers work, women stroll to market, and towering clouds billow upward, signaling the approach of a midday downpour.

Soon, however, the rain ends and all resume their work.

Just a typical October afternoon in Akropong.

But not for nine-year-old Georgina Williams. Today, she and her Uncle Kwame (who heads the Williams household while Georgina's father studies in the United States) are on an important shopping trip.

They're about to buy Georgina's first *kente* cloth, which will be made into a beautiful dress.

Kente cloths, often worn by tribal chiefs and their wives in Ghana, are known for their bright, elaborate patterns, each of which has a special name.

Later in the week, Georgina will wear the dress to her first festival. In Ghana, festival time is when people travel to their relatives' homes. It's also when parties are given. In fact, Georgina attends one those get-togethers later in the day, at her friend Anita Owusu's house.

When children attend parties in Ghana, they play games — just as they do here. But the games are different. This one is called *Bamba Bambahariya*. As you can see, a handkerchief is dropped behind a player who then picks it up and chases the person who's dropped it.

Another favorite, a jumping game called *Ampe*, requires quick and skillful foot movement!

After the get-together, Georgina and another friend, Frieda (in the pink dress), volunteer to help Anita wash the party dishes in the courtyard of the Owusu family "compound." A compound is a group of homes.

In Ghana, compounds usually have an open kitchen on one side of a central courtyard and houses on the three other sides.

There, aunts, uncles, cousins, parents and grandparents all live together.

Later, after Frieda has left, Georgina helps Anita with some chores. One of them is stoking the fire in the kitchen.

Another is weeding the Owusu family garden.

Children in Ghana have many responsibilities. They're kept busy all day long, almost from the first sign of daybreak.

Georgina is no exception. Early each morning, as the tropical sun burns away the mist, she's already hard at work, sweeping debris from her family's compound.

Others in the household, including her cousin Helen, have their own chores. Every morning, she takes the family's goats out to pasture.

At the same time, Georgina's mother places hot coals into the iron Georgina uses to press her school uniform.

Georgina's grandmother is about the only person who doesn't have a morning chore. As a respected elder, she's earned the right to sit in the shade while everyone else goes about their tasks.

The final chore before school is cooking breakfast — a hot corn meal porridge eaten with bread.

Then, at about 7:30, Georgina's on the way to school with many of the other children in town who attend the Akuapem Elementary School.

She usually walks there with her seven-year-old cousin, Esther (in the red sweatshirt).

Every morning, the students at Akuapem School sweep inside and outside the classrooms before they line up for announcements.

Georgina's first class is arithmetic. Her teacher, Mr. Sifa, picks up where he left off yesterday, discussing the commutative properties of addition and multiplication.

Every correct answer in Mr. Sifa's class is rewarded with a short, syncopated burst of applause.

Meanwhile, outside, a cook gets ready for the morning break by frying a batch plantain, a banana-like fruit popular in Ghana.

Other fruits — and nuts — will be available, too, as well as meat pies and biscuits.

So when it's break time, at about nine o'clock, there are many choices for the children.

The food isn't expensive — only a few cedi, or pennies.

Georgina decides on three items — beans, fried yams and kenke, a dumpling made of corn meal.

After the break, it's time for physical education. First, the class warms up by running laps.

Then they play a game called "shakey-shakey," which helps the children develop flexible hip muscles!

Next, Mr. Ofosua, the gym teacher, drills the class in some basic soccer techniques.

After physical education, it's time to head back to the classroom, where Mr. Sifa continues his geography unit on Western Africa, the region where Georgina and her fellow students live.

So far, they've learned that Western Africa lies next to the Atlantic Ocean and is made up of 18 countries. It's also close to the equator, which is why it's so hot and rainy there. Ghana is in the south-central part of the region.

Their town, Akropong, is located about 20 miles from Accra, Ghana's capital city.

Today, the class will cover the geography and cultures in the different areas of their country.

They also will study — later today, and on other days — home economics, agriculture, science, music, traditional arts and English.

As you've probably already noticed, English is written and spoken in Ghana. That's because England once ruled the country. However, most citizens of southern Ghana also speak *Twi*, their native tongue.

School is over at two o'clock. Georgina usually waits for her cousin Esther so the two can walk home together. Today, they're eager to get

home because it's a shopping day at Akropong's outdoor market.

It's a treat for the girls accompany Mrs. Williams on this twice-a-week shopping excursion because the Akropong market is alive with activity!

Moreover, there are so many foods and other items on display there — all just waiting to be bought!

Today, Mrs. Williams starts with some fish. Next come some red peppers.

Not everything at the market is sold at a stall. Bread, for example, is peddled by a woman who wanders through the marketplace, her wares on her head.

When the vendor opens her crate, she has a ready-made display counter for her goods.

Later, when Mrs. Williams' basket is full, the three shoppers head home.

Once in a while, Mrs. Williams shops at a general store near the market for things such as soap, which, in Ghana, comes in large, green bars.

There is a number of small stores in town that sell other items, too — as well as provide jobs for the town's residents.

Besides working in stores, many Akropong citizens earn their living by working in craft occupations. Among other activities, they sew, make bricks, and weave.

Back home, Georgina's cousin, Eric, has his own work to do. He's been chopping palm nuts from their stalk — the first step in making palm nut soup for dinner.

After the nuts are cooked, Georgina, who's returned from market, pounds them into a mash.

Later, Mrs. Williams strains that mash into a broth.

Finally, smoked fish, eggplant, okra, garlic and pepper are added.

In addition to palm nut soup, the Williams will have *fufu*, for dinner. A popular dish in Ghana, its ingredients include cassava root, which Mrs. Williams peels and cuts, and plantain.

Cousin Eric pounds them together until they're soft and doughy.

Then they're formed into large dumplings that are boiled in hot water.

While Eric and Mrs. Williams make *the fufu*, Georgina does some of her housekeeping chores, after which the French tutor, Mr. Anom, stops by to give her a lesson.

Because French is spoken in many West African nations, it's not uncommon for Ghanaians to speak that language, also.

After her French lesson, Georgina sets the table for Uncle Kwame and Mr. Anom, who has been invited for dinner.

Setting the dinner table is still another of her many chores. A bowl of water is set on a stool next to the table so the two men can wash their hands before eating.

In Ghana, men eat before the women and children. And there's little or no table conversation during meals. Instead, people talk to each other while preparing the food. There are also no eating utensils. Ghanaians merely use their fingers.

It's Friday evening, and as she always does at that time of the week, Georgina goes to a three-hour prayer meeting. The worshippers there are either Presbyterian, Methodist or some other Christian denomination.

Songs and prayers are important parts of the evening's activities, and so are Bible discussions.

Georgina, a prayer leader, often presides over them. Ghanaians are very religious. Most are Christian, but there are many Moslems there, too.

Also, a large number follow traditional beliefs. Many of the Akan people of southern Ghana, for example, pray to several gods, to their ancestors and to spirits found in mountains, trees and rivers.

Traditional beliefs often play an important role in festivals, where officials may pour wine over an alter as they ask their ancestors and spirits to protect and bless the rulers of the kingdom, as well as their wives and families.

Besides being a time for blessings, festivals are, of course, a time for celebration!

That's something Georgina has quickly discovered! Festival day has arrived, and there's lots of music and dancing and marching in the streets of Asutsuare, the nearby town where the festival is being held to honor the chiefs of the Akuapem kingdom of Ghana, where Georgina lives.

As the musicians beat their drums, and dignitaries watch nearby, the chiefs are carried through the main street of the town. It's a colorful, exciting adventure Georgina won't soon forget! Her first festival!

Later that evening, the Williams family gathers to hear all about the event. And rest assured, Georgina has plenty to say!

But then again, she would have a lot to tell her relatives on almost any other day, too — about all her chores, about her lessons at school, about her religious activities and her play time.

And so, when the day ends, and the moon shines brightly above the west African highlands of Ghana, Georgina Williams, now fast asleep, will soon embrace another busy day in Akropong, Ghana.