

Fierce Fighters, Resilient People

My Tribe is Ashanti

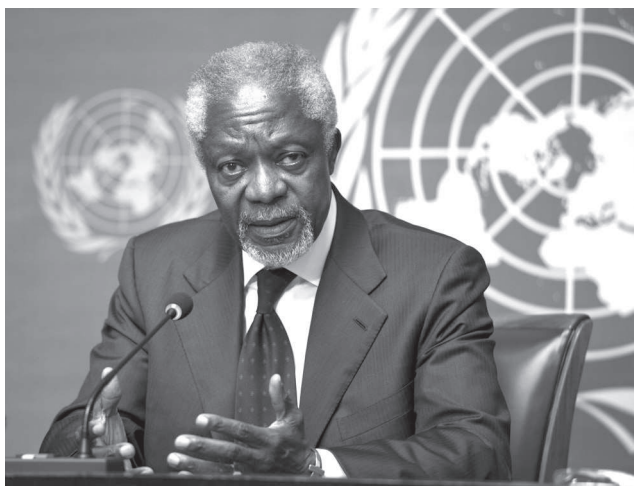
Henrietta Appiah

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Share what you know about people who are Indigenous to Africa. Name some tribes or empires. Name some of the Indigenous languages spoken in Africa.
2. Do you speak more than one language or dialect? What part of your heritage are you proudest of? Why?

The name of my tribe is Ashanti, also known as the Asante. We are indigenous to western Africa in a country called Ghana. I am proud to be an Ashanti because of our rich culture and heritage.

We have always been known as fierce fighters. The Ashanti tribe has a saying: “If I go forward, I die. If I go backward, I die. It’s better to go forward and die.” From this Ashanti heritage, I carry with me strength, persistence, and resilience. These qualities allow me to take care of my family as we learn to live in U.S. society but hold our



Kofi Annan (1938-2018) was the Secretary General of the United Nations for ten years starting in 1997. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2001 for his human rights work and for his focus on stopping the spread of HIV in Africa.

heritage and identity dear.

The Ashantis are a unique people in many ways. In an Ashanti community, everyone lives together in buildings around the courtyard. I grew up this way in the Ashanti tribe, staying with my parents

until I got married. Traditionally, the head of the household is the oldest brother living in the clan. The elders pick him to lead the family. We call him the father or the housefather. The family is very important to the Ashanti tribe, especially the mother’s family. We believe that everyone in the family inherits the mother’s flesh and blood. The father provides the soul.

There are dozens of languages in Ghana, but most people speak Twi. Twi is one of the major dialects in

Ghana. I speak Twi and English as native languages. I can understand other dialects, like Ga, which we learn in school, but it is difficult for me to speak them. Sometimes there are people from rural areas who speak only their native dialect. Here in the U.S., if I see someone from Ghana, I



**“If I go forward, I die.
If I go backward, I die.
It’s better to go forward and die.”**



Map of Africa. Find Ghana. Find the territory of the Ashanti Empire. What other territories and countries can you identify? Using the information on this map, estimate how long Africa is from North to South, and how wide it is from East to West. Explain how you figured it out. Check your answer online.

address them first in Twi. I think it is very important for the Ghanaian tribes to maintain their native languages because it is part of our identity. It distinguishes us by our heritage and connection to our clan.

One of the most important symbols of the Ashanti culture is the Golden Stool. We bring out the Golden Stool for grand occasions. We believe the Golden Stool represents the spirit of our ancestors. While I have never seen the Golden Stool of my home community, it is still there and my father told me stories about it growing up.

Historically, the Ashanti practiced slavery. If Ashanti people went to war and won, they brought the enemy home as slaves. They believed that slaves would follow their masters into the afterlife. Now, the Ghanaian tribes live peace-

fully with one another. In fact, one famous Ashanti, Kofi Annan, was a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

We Ashanti people still pass on our traditions and languages from generation to generation. We feel proud of who we are, and we carry this with us everywhere we go. The importance of family in our culture keeps us together and makes us strong, successful people.

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Henrietta Appiah is a student at ERACE in Branford, CT. She studies writing and is working toward continuing her education in the nursing field.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. Summarize a few of the key things you learned about the Ashanti people by reading this article.
2. Look at the map of the world on p. 7. Identify the seven continents. Skim this entire magazine, noting which continents are represented in the articles. Which ones are missing? What can you find out about Indigenous Peoples from those continents that are *not* represented in this issue?



The Ashanti flag features a gold stripe at the top, a green stripe at the bottom, and a black stripe in the middle, with the golden stool in the center.