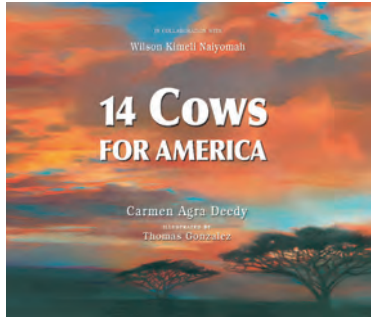


# 14 Cows for America

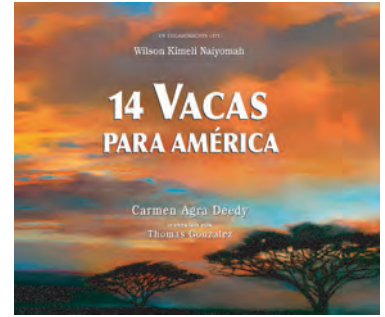
## Teacher's Guide



**14 COWS FOR AMERICA**  
**14 VACAS PARA AMÉRICA**  
Ages 6–10 / nonfiction

**Written by Carmen Agra Deedy**  
**Illustrated by Thomas Gonzalez**

**In collaboration with Wilson Kimeli Naiyomah**



HC: \$17.95 / 978-1-56145-550-8  
PB: \$8.95 / 978-1-56145-555-3

HC: \$17.95 / 978-1-56145-490-7

### About the Book

In 2001, a Maasai student in New York witnessed the horrific events of 9/11. When he returned to his village, he brought with him the sad story from America. The tribe's grief at the news quickly turned to a plan to help as Kimeli Naiyomah's people offered the most precious gift they could think of to those who lost so much: their cows. In Kimeli's words, **to heal a sorrowing heart, give something that is dear to your own**. This story has indeed conveyed a message of hope and healing across the world, and continues to inspire acts of compassion by communities everywhere.

### Themes

9/11	Maasai culture	Compassion	Friendship
Giving	Africa	Storytelling	Symbolism

### Themes for Character Education

Citizenship	Cooperation	Compassion	Kindness
Commitment	Creativity	Initiative	Dedication

### Awards and Distinctions

NYT Bestseller  
2009 Parents' Choice Gold Award  
2009 National Book Festival Selected book for Georgia  
2010-2011 Texas Bluebonnet Award (Master List)

### National Education Standards

NL-FL.K-12.4 (Language Arts): Comparisons  
NL-ENG.K-12.9 (Language Arts): Multicultural understanding  
NSS-C.K-4.4 (Social Studies): Other nations and world affairs  
NSS-G.K-12.4 (Geography): Human systems  
NA-VA.K-4.4 (Visual Arts): Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures  
NS.K-4.6 (Science): Personal and social perspectives

### Background for the Teacher

The Maasai are a compassionate and generous people who herd cattle in East Africa, where their daily life revolves around their cows. After 9/11, their unique culture inspired them to help the Americans with a very special gift. To learn more about the Maasai, their cows, and their generous offering, please visit our About the Maasai pages at [www.14cowsforamerica.com](http://www.14cowsforamerica.com). There, you will also find background information on the Maasai's history, culture, and language, as well as their African home.

# 14 Cows for America

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### Before You Read

1. What do you know about September 11?
2. Was anyone you know affected by 9/11? Were your family or friends affected? Were you?
3. Who else do you think was affected by the events of 9/11?
4. Let's look at a map. Where did the events happen?
5. Where did the victims of 9/11 live?
6. Where is Africa? Can you find Kenya on a map?

Note to Teacher: Transition from Q & A to reading book by saying, "Today we're going to learn about a small village in Africa and how they were affected by the events of 9/11."

### As You Read

1. Read the book aloud to the class straight through to let the students enjoy the book as a whole.
2. Read the book a second time, stopping to point out the Twin Towers imagery and allow students to point out parts of the story that interested them, or raised questions in their minds. Take the time to carefully pronounce the Maa vocabulary words using our pronunciation guide and its recordings of Kimeli himself pronouncing each word, available at <http://14cowsforamerica.com/pronounce.guide.pdf>.
3. Discuss and answer questions. All questions that cannot be answered during the discussion can be written down and used later as part of the learning activities in this guide.

### After You Read

1. How do you think the Maasai felt when they heard the story of 9/11?
2. Why do you think Kimeli gave his only cow to the United States?
3. Why did the others join in to add 13 more?
4. What did the gift of the 14 cows do for the United States?
5. Can you think of a time when you did something nice for someone who was suffering?

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES, INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

### Social Studies

Geography:

- Give each student a copy of **Activity 1: Africa Map Activity** (found at the end of this teacher's guide)

Culture:

- Read through *14 Cows for America*, paying close attention to the characters' appearance and surroundings. Now go through our Maasai Cultural Overview, found at <http://14cowsforamerica.com/MaasaiCulture1.pdf>, and lead a discussion around these questions: What would your life would be like if you lived in Maasailand? What would you wear and eat every day? What would your house be like, and how would you help your family and tribe?



# 14 Cows for America

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### Creative writing

Prose writing:

- Write about the ceremony depicted in *14 Cows for America* from the perspective of the cows.
- Write a story that begins with the sentence "I had to do something to help."

Journal writing:

- What does the tragedy of 9/11 mean to you?
- When have you given someone a gift of compassion, like the gift the Maasai gave to the United States?

Poetry writing:

- Give each student a copy of **Activity 2: Cinquain Poetry** (found at the end of this teacher's guide)

### Science

Life science:

- Hand out copies of **Activity 3: To the Maasai, the cow is life** (found at the end of this teacher's guide)

### Problem Solving

14 Cows on Vacation:

- The 14 cows given to the American people by the Maasai love their peaceful home in Enoosaen, but they're ready for a little adventure. They want to visit New York City! The cows have never traveled before and they need your help. Will you be their travel agent? Come up with three different plans to get all 14 cows from their remote village in Kenya to New York City for their trip. How much will each plan cost? Don't be afraid to use your imagination. Follow-up questions: What challenges did you encounter in imagining these plans? Do you think the Americans and the Maasai made the right decision to keep the "American" cows in Enoosaen?

### Art

Art appreciation:

- Read through *14 Cows for America* again as a class, paying close attention to the illustrations. What media did Thomas Gonzalez use in his illustrations? What colors does he use? Where can you find the image of the twin towers hidden in the illustrations?

Creating art:

- Hand out copies of **Activity 4: Maasai cattle brands** (found at the end of this teacher's guide)

### Language Arts

Maa Language activities:

- Give each student a copy of **Activity 5: Maa Word Find** (found at the end of this teacher's guide) and the Maa Pronunciation Guide and Glossary (online at <http://14cowsforamerica.com/pronounce.guide.pdf>).
- Give each student a copy of **Activity 6: Tone**, and use the Maa Pronunciation Guide to complete it.

Reading Activity:

- Read or hand out copies of **Activity 7: Reading Activity** and answer the questions at the end as a class.

# 14 Cows for America

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### Recommended Reading, Resources for Teachers and Librarians

PAPA, DO YOU LOVE ME?

by Barbara M. Joose (author) and Barbara Lavalee (illustrator)

This gentle picture book provides a glimpse into life in Maasailand through a child's eyes.

THE WARRIOR AND THE MOON: SPIRIT OF THE MAASAI

by Nick Would (author) and Evie Safarewicz (illustrator)

The author's travels through Africa with the Maasai inspired these five original stories.

LIVING IN THE AFRICAN SAVANNAH

by Nicola Barber

Learn all about Maasai culture, from the famous jumping dance to the importance of the cows.

AFRICA IS NOT A COUNTRY

by Margy Burns Knight

This informative book explores the 53 nations that make up the African continent.

EYEWITNESS: AFRICA

by Yvonne Ayo

This volume in the popular Eyewitness series explores the vast history and cultures of Africa.

SEPTEMBER 11 (WE THE PEOPLE: MODERN AMERICA SERIES)

by Mary Englar

This straightforward, informative book details the events of September 11, 2001.

THE LITTLE CHAPEL THAT STOOD

by A. B. Curtiss

The story of St. Paul's Chapel, which stood strong through the events of September 11 despite incredible odds, shows the hope that can rise from the ashes of tragedy.

THIS PLACE I KNOW: POEMS OF COMFORT

Georgia Heard, Editor

This poetry anthology, inspired by the events of September 11, offers comfort to children who have lived through tragedy and loss.

# 14 Cows for America

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### About the Author

Carmen Agra Deedy has been writing and traveling around the world telling stories for more than twenty years. Her books, including *Agatha's Featherbed*, *The Library Dragon*, *The Yellow Star*, and *Martina the Beautiful Cockroach: A Cuban Folktale* have received numerous awards and honors. Carmen has performed in many prestigious venues, but children are her favorite audience. Born in Havana, Cuba, she came to the United States as a refugee and, like most immigrants, sees the world from multiple perspectives. You can visit Carmen Agra Deedy's website at: [www.carmendeedy.com](http://www.carmendeedy.com).

### About the Collaborator

Wilson Kimeli Naiyomah received his master of science degree in molecular biology from Stanford University in 2008. He was awarded a Rotary International World Peace Fellowship and will begin studies in peace and conflict resolution at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia, in spring 2010.

### About the Illustrator

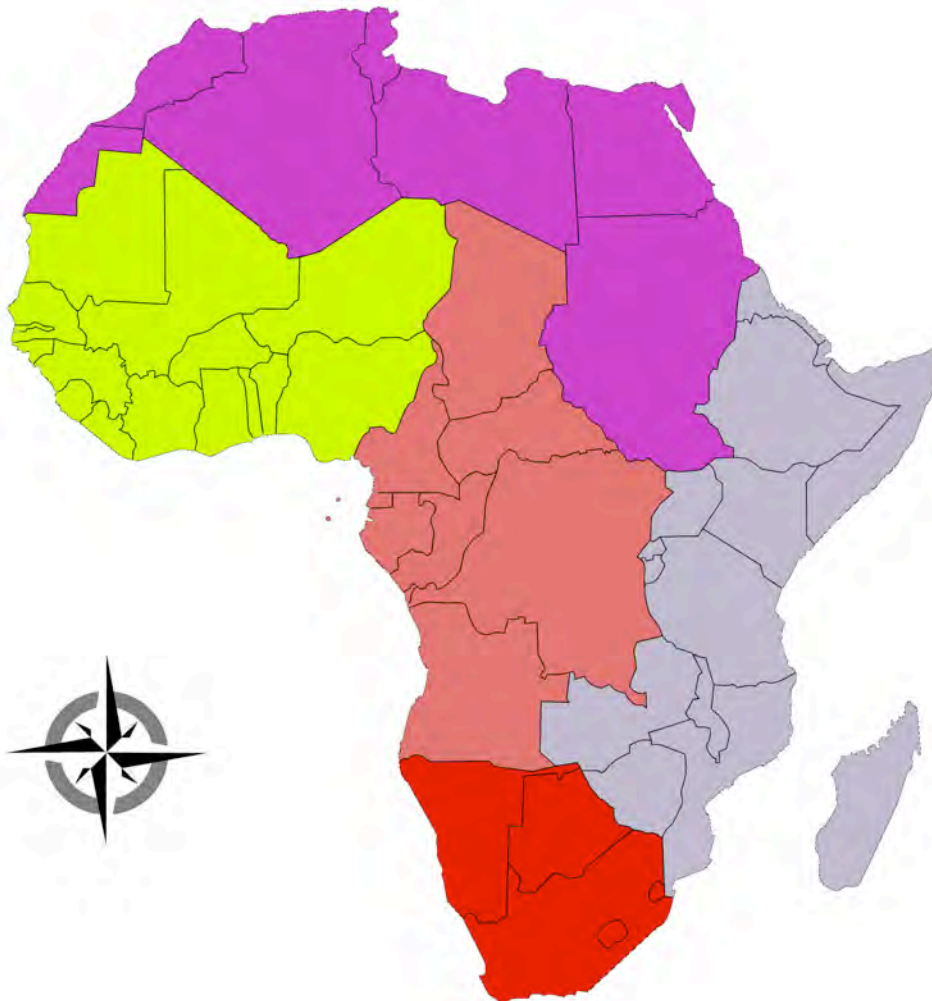
Thomas Gonzalez was born in Havana, Cuba, and moved to the United States as a child. An artist and painter, he directed campaigns for clients such as Coca-Cola, Delta Airlines, NASCAR, the NFL, and McDonald's. Gonzalez lives in Georgia. You can visit Thomas Gonzalez's website at: [www.tomprints.com](http://www.tomprints.com).

*14 Cows for America* Teacher's Guide prepared by Katherine Morrow Jones DePalma and Katya Jenson.

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# Activity 1: Africa Map Activity

First, fill out the **compass rose** with North, South, East, and West.  
Label the geographic regions: Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western, and Central Africa.



Draw Maasailand on the map. Hint: It's in both Kenya and Tanzania.

Draw Mount Kilimanjaro on the map.

How many African countries can you label?

Which geographic region is Kenya in?

---

Is Maasiland a country?

---

Who lives in Maasiland?

---

Answers provided in this guide's Answer Key.

# Activity 2: Cinquain Poetry

A **cinquain** is a five-line poem that follows a specific pattern:

Line One	One word: <b>noun</b>
Line Two	Two words: <b>adjectives</b> describing Line One
Line Three	Three words: <b>action verbs</b> relating to Line One
Line Four	Four words: a <b>complete sentence</b> about Line One
Line Five	One word: a <b>synonym</b> of Line One or word that sums it up

## Cheat sheet:

**Noun:** A word used to name a person, place, animal, thing, or abstract idea (like *cat, happiness, toaster, or George Bush*)

**Adjective:** A word used to describe a noun (like *fuzzy, silly, or wet*)

**Action verb:** A word that names an action (like *walking, falling, or crying*)

**Complete sentence:** A sentence with both a subject and a verb (like *Mary goes to the store* or *The mouse eats the cookie*)

**Synonym:** A word with the same or almost the same definition as another (like *student* and *pupil* or *house* and *home*)

Here's an example of a **cinquain**:

Cows  
Quiet, strong  
Grazing, lowing, healing  
They are a gift.  
Life.

Now try writing your own **cinquain** inspired by the story of *14 Cows for America*. Choose one of the words below to be your **noun** or **subject** for Line One, or make up your own!

Africa  
Cows  
Maasai

America  
Gifts  
New York

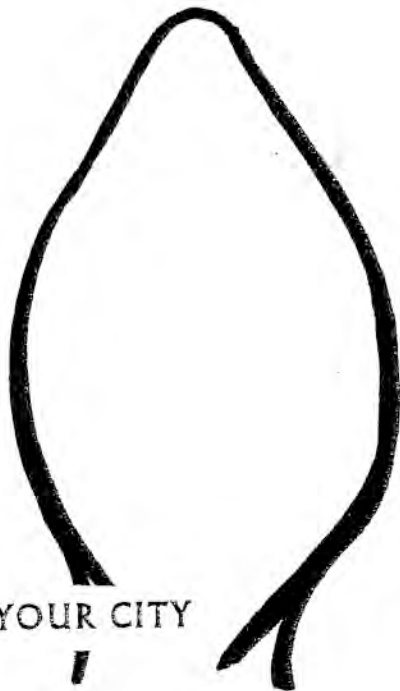
# Activity 3: To the Maasai, the cow is life

<p>Beef is served only on special occasions, like feasts and celebrations.</p> <p><b>Draw a big beefy feast.</b></p>	<p>The Maasai live mostly on cow's milk and corn meal mixed with milk.</p> <p><b>Draw a tasty glass of milk.</b></p>	<p>In Maasai culture, wealth is measured by the number of cows a person has.</p> <p><b>Draw a big herd of cows.</b></p>
<p>The Maasai believe that cows were given to them by their goddess Enkai.</p> <p><b>Draw Enkai giving cows to the Maasai people.</b></p>	<p><b>To the Maasai, the cow is life!</b></p>	<p>The Maasai make shoes and clothes from cowhide.</p> <p><b>Draw a snazzy cowhide outfit.</b></p>
<p>The Maasai use dried cow dung as fuel for fires.</p> <p><b>Draw a cow-patty campfire.</b></p>	<p>The Maasai mix cow dung with leaves and sticks and bake it in the sun into bricks. They use these bricks to make their homes.</p> <p><b>Draw a cow-dung cottage.</b></p>	<p>The Maasai sing songs to their cattle and give them names.</p> <p><b>Draw yourself a cow companion, and give it a name.</b></p>

# Activity 4: Maasai cattle brands

The Maasai brand their cows' ears to identify them. They created a new brand in the shape of the Twin Towers to identify the fourteen cows they gave to the United States after 9/11.

Design your own cattle brands for:



# Activity 5: Maa Word Find

As you find the Maa words, listen to the sound files in the **pronunciation guide** at <http://14cowsforamerica.com/pronounce.guide.pdf> and say them aloud.

Maasai	k	a	k	a	g	o	h	s	e	l
Maa	n	a	e	à	k	e	û	û	m	t
Enkarûs	t	a	ú	y	à	m	n	r	l	é
súpa	r	k	k	n	i	a	g	a	é	e
enkáng	i	ú	ú	é	p	n	n	k	c	l
aakúa	b	a	à	ú	á	g	û	n	h	d
takúényà	e	m	s	k	u	é	e	e	a	e
hello	r	z	n	a	p	f	l	a	l	r
fence	ú	e	g	t	a	l	a	é	l	e
welcome	w	e	l	c	o	m	e	g	ú	l
name										
elder										
language										
tribe										

Match each Maa word to its meaning.

Maasai	a language in Africa
Maa	fence
Enkarûs	welcome
súpa	a name
enkáng	hello, to a man
aakúa	hello, to a woman
takúényà	a tribe in Africa

Two Maa words mean almost the same thing. What's the difference?

# Activity 6: Tone

Use this worksheet to guide an activity for the entire classroom to do together.

Use the pronunciation guide to say all the Maa words in *14 Cows for America*. The Maasai language, Maa, has some sounds that we don't have in English. It's a **tone language**, and your voice goes up and down as you say words.

Like this:

<b>high</b>			<b>high</b>
	<b>low</b>	<b>low</b>	

**Tone languages** are languages that use high and low sounds to make words mean different things. Can you think of languages that go up and down, almost like people are singing?

Use the pronunciation guide to fill in some Maa words in the boxes below. Listen to the recordings of Kimeli saying each word. Show which parts are high and which are low.

	high	low
<b>súpa</b> <i>soo-pah</i>		
<b>enkáng</b> <i>ehng-kahng</i>		
<b>aakúa</b> <i>ah-kwah</i>		
<b>Enkarûs</b> <i>eng-kah-rohs</i>		

Try saying the sentences below. Can you make and hear the differences in tone?

## Éár olmurraní oIngátúny

The warrior will kill the lion.

eh	ar				<b>ni</b>		<b>nga</b>	tu	
		olm	<b>oo</b>	<b>ra</b>		ol			nee

## Éár olmúrrání oIngátúny

The lion will kill the warrior.

eh	ar		<b>oo</b>	<b>ra</b>				tu	
		olm			<b>ni</b>	ol	<b>nga</b>		nee

Does your voice go up and down when you speak English?

# Activity 7: Reading Activity

## A conversation with Kimeli Naiyomah

Kimeli Naiyomah began life as a homeless boy in Kenya's Maasailand. He knew he wanted an education but he also knew that he would not be able to go to school in Kenya. "I was fortunate that my struggle caught the attention of the *Washington Post*," he recalled. The newspaper granted him a scholarship to a major American university and a plane ticket to get him there. Kimeli was visiting New York City when tragedy struck. The young man from Maasailand spent the next two weeks in a city reeling from unimaginable disaster. "The tragedy became very personal to me," confided Kimeli. Back at school in California, he continued to be haunted, not just by the event but by a need to help. "So I had to do something. I was thinking and thinking and thinking.

"The idea of giving a cow to America just came to me," Kimeli marveled. "I'd never owned a cow—I've been homeless all my life." But now, he could buy his first cow and ask the elders of his village to bless it. "I found something important to me that would mean something to give."

For Kimeli, finding the solution was both a great relief and a delicate matter. This was something that had never been done before. "We don't give cows to strangers," he explained. "All cows must come home. You grow up knowing that cows stay in Maasailand and, as a warrior, you do not ever betray that." It took a warrior's courage to implement his plan.

Kimeli began his campaign with the first elder, sharing the story and telling him, "I think God will not punish us for this." It was a gentle beginning but the idea built momentum. One elder led him by the hand to another and Kimeli repeated the story and his request for a blessing. Kimeli personalized the Americans for these people who knew only Maasailand, making them like family--it would not be a curse to give this gift to a kinsman. Kimeli explained to them that "These people feed me, they give me the milk of their cows, they are the reason we have clean water in our village." But it is not just the gifts they had given him that he wanted the elders to understand, it was also their common humanity. "These people are *us*, and they have been very hurt." The elders saw this young warrior break down. "They knew that I was a man and they know I am not weak," he said simply.

Finally, the elders told him that "we have to consult the divine elder who speaks with God." What Kimeli had requested was very difficult and could be perceived as a betrayal. "It was the most intense period of my life," remembered Kimeli. "If they had said no, I would have been an outcast."

When at last they affirmed his gift, they also told him, "Son, if you want, I can give you my calf, too." These people knew of the young man's poverty. They were moved by his sacrifice to offer many of their own. The elders created a new "American" clan in Maasailand, and, with the help of the US Ambassador to Kenya, created a new ear brand that had never existed before: two parallel cuts pointing up, representing the twin towers. The children had a part to play as well: keeping Kimeli's calf from running away.

# Activity 7: Reading Activity

Kimeli's note at the end of *14 Cows for America* details what happens next—how the herd is held by the community in trust for the Americans. But how did the story become a book?

Kimeli was approached by many people who wanted to bring his story to a wider audience. Kimeli chose Carmen Agra Deedy because “she captured the entire spirit of the story.” Her version's closing sentence came directly from the heart of the story, “Because there is no nation so powerful it cannot be wounded, nor a people so small they cannot offer mighty comfort.” Kimeli talked with her after seeing that last phrase, knowing she understood the sacrifice and vulnerability of his act. “What am I?” asked the young man. “Nobody knows my father. Only by education did I become somebody. I was going back not as a strong Maasai—I had to beg the elders to understand me.” Carmen needed to capture Kimeli's humility for the book to work. She needed to make this, as Kimeli sees it, “a human story with a Maasai context.”

Kimeli said that “People are people—we're all human,” but he went on to add that “this story has blessed my people because it has told them who they really are. I was reading into the ancient Maasai.” Hospitality and compassion are central to their beliefs and values. “You'd see children by the side of the road who would tell strangers to come and drink milk; they care about the well-being of another person regardless of who that person is.”

Kimeli is proud that “Now, in my village, we know we are compassionate people. We are the people who comforted America.” And at the moment when the Star-Spangled Banner played, when he put his hand on his heart and saw his people follow his lead, Kimeli was healed as well. “This was a defining moment. Some things you must do.” Carmen Deedy has done her part as well. **“I wanted so badly to leave a true version of this story behind—newspaper stories contain the truth but not the spirit. Whatever happens now, I am at peace.”**

Kimeli leaves these words to the children who read his story: “What you feel in your heart is important. Mature with experience but keep your heart. I learned this from my people. **The song is there, just start singing it. Soon you will have an entire world singing with you. When you die you leave the song behind.**”

*A Conversation with Kimeli* appears courtesy of Kimeli Naiyomah and Ellen Myrick.

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*Reading comprehension questions on following page*

# Activity 7: Reading Activity

## Questions

Have you ever seen or heard about something that bothered you for a long time after? What did you want to do?

What kind of gift means the most to you? Have you ever given someone a gift that made you feel really good, or better about something?

Why do you think Kimeli chose to give the Americans a cow instead of something else? What made the cow such a special gift?

Why was it so difficult for the Maasai to decide whether to give their cows away? What did it mean when they did?

What does this story tell us about the Maasai people? Do you think they learned something from it too?

# Answer Key

## Activity 1

Which geographic region is Kenya in?

Kenya is the Eastern Africa geographic region.

Is Maasailand a country?

No, Maasailand is a region inside both Kenya and Tanzania.

Who lives in Maasailand?

The Maasai live in Maasailand.

## Activity 5

Match the words to their meanings.

Maasai	a tribe in Africa
Maa	a language in Africa
Enkarús	a name
súpa	hello, to a man
enkáng	fence
aakúa	welcome
takúényà	hello, to a woman

Two Maa words mean almost the same thing. What's the difference?

Súpa and takúéyà both mean "hello." One is for talking to men, and the other is for talking to women.

## Activity 6

Can you think of languages that go up and down, almost like people are singing?

Common examples of tone languages include East Asian languages such as Thai, Vietnamese, and Mandarin, and Southern African languages such as Yoruba and Zulu.

Does your voice go up and down when you speak English?

English does not have tone, but we do use it to ask questions. We use tone to give meaning to sentences, not words.