

The Berlin Conference (1884-1885):
Dominant Diplomacy, Dire Consequences

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Process Paper

We first came across the idea of investigating African history when one of us heard a brief explanation of African colonization that piqued her interest. When she suggested African history, our teacher indicated the Berlin Conference for us to explore. Neither of us initially knew much about the topic as it had not been a part of our past history courses; however, we decided that the Berlin Conference would be a unique and worthwhile topic to investigate.

Databases provided by our school library and the Internet proved to be the most invaluable sources of information during our research of the Berlin Conference. Our teacher also provided us with a series of lectures by university professors that contained a wealth of information from which we derived the majority of our analysis. Although we did not find many relevant books, our library offered several documentaries which we found to be extremely useful.

As the first step of our project, we divided the task of researching the context, event, and significance of the Berlin Conference and wrote separate analyses. Next, we combined our research and chose a medium. Originally, we had planned to create a group documentary film; however, we decided that creating a website would be a novel experience as neither of us had previously designed a website. We formatted our website using the NHD Site Editor, which was hosted by Weebly. Due to the word limit for website entries, we were compelled to condense our student-created analysis and to search for relevant multimedia to successfully convey our message. Because of our lack

of technological experience, we encountered numerous obstacles, which pushed us to utilize our problem-solving skills and teamwork to overcome our problems. However, we were eventually able to create an end product of which we were both proud.

Our topic deals with the National History Day theme of "Debate and Diplomacy: Successes, Failures, Consequences" because the Berlin Conference in itself was a significant act of diplomacy that decided the fate of a whole continent of people and left them to bear the consequences that resulted. It has caused much debate amongst historians about whether the conference was what brought about the problems and unrest of modern-day Africa. After intensive investigation, our group concludes that the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 introduced foreign influences that revolutionized the reality for African natives at the time and caused the successful advancement, but also various failing aspects, of Africa.