

ON THE ROAD WITH BOB HOLMAN

Teacher's Guide

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Welcome to the ON THE ROAD WITH BOB HOLMAN series! According to UNESCO, there are approximately 6,000 modern languages in the world today. Unfortunately, like the dodo bird, many of these languages are headed toward extinction.

In this introduction you will find:

- Endangered Languages: What They Are
- The Series: Mission and Introduction
- About the Documentary Series
- About the Website
- Curriculum and Lesson-Plan Overview
- The People Behind the ON THE ROAD WITH BOB HOLMAN

ENDANGERED LANGUAGES: WHAT THEY ARE

In 2005, SIL Ethnologue listed 516 out of 6,912 languages as “nearly extinct.” A hundred years from now, around 80% of the world’s languages will have died out, according to experts.

ON THE ROAD WITH BOB HOLMAN: MISSION AND INTRODUCTION

The show and its website seeks to raise awareness about languages that are in danger of being lost. Through a three-part LinkTV documentary series airing in February 2012 and through its website, www.linktv.org, the show will illustrate:

- The importance of language to culture
- The connection of language to identity
- The role of language in poetry
- The socio-political causes for the dissolution of languages

ABOUT THE DOCUMENTARY SERIES

Part adventure story and part a celebration of language, each half-hour documentary captivates and inspires. Your host is Bob Holman, poet and poetry activist. Holman journeys from The Bowery Poetry Club, where he is founder and proprietor, to uncover the world’s endangered languages. With wit and wisdom, Holman introduces viewers to poets and culture-makers from around the world who are eager to share their stories. Language and poetry come to life as viewers hear esoteric tongues spoken aloud, see the beauty of the regions explored, and sense the power of words in forming our understanding of culture and identity.

The documentary series will air on the following dates and times on LinkTV. The channel is available on local cable stations and on DirectTV channel 375 and Dish Network channel 9410.

- February 1, 2012: The Griots of West of Africa
- February 8, 2012: Timbuktu to the Dogons
- February 15, 2012: Israel and the West Bank
- On Linktv.org website: a special episode on Nepal.
- All of the shows will be available online at www.linktv.org

CURRICULUM AND LESSON-PLAN OVERVIEW

The show encourages YOU to be a language activist by using the documentaries, website, and this curriculum as resources for raising awareness about endangered languages.

Have your students tune into the documentary series, and then use this curriculum to discuss the issues raised.

Through this curriculum, you will gain insight into:

- Several specific languages that are on the endangered languages watch list
- How to raise awareness about the issue of endangered languages

LESSON PLANS OVERVIEW

Lesson 1: West Africa and the Griots (Episode 1)

Description: Bob Holman fulfills his lifelong goal of following in the footsteps of Beat Generation poet Ted Jones to Timbuktu. In West Africa, he travels from Senegal, Gambia, and Mali, where he meets several *griots*, praise singers and bards who use the oral tradition to record history and genealogy. Karamo Susso acts as his guide.

This episode airs on LinkTV on February 1, 2012

The website will feature special posts related to this episode that viewers can participate in.

Lesson 2: Israel and the West Bank (Episode 3)

Description: Bob Holman travels to Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Ramallah. Here he meets linguist, poets and activist interested in Ladino, Yiddish, Arabic, and Hebrew.

This episode airs on LinkTV on February 15, 2012

The website will feature special posts related to this episode that viewers can participate in.

WHO IS BOB HOLMAN?

Bob Homan is the founder of The Endangered Languages Poetry Project and the host of this documentary series. He has been called a member of the "Poetry Pantheon" by the *New York Times Magazine*, and "Ringmaster of the Spoken Word" by *New York Daily News* and is the founder of the Bowery Poetry Club. He won three Emmys for WNYC-TV's *Poetry Spots*, received a Bessie Performance Award, and an International Public Television Awards for the PBS series *The United States of Poetry*. He teaches at NYU and Columbia, including "Poets Census," where students locate poets from non-English speaking communities, and "Translating Endangered Languages." He is

currently working on "Listen UP! Endangered languages with Bob Holman," a PBS documentary with Holman as host and David Grubin (*The Buddha, The Brain*, Bill Moyers) as Producer. In 2010, with linguists Daniel Kaufman and Juliette Blevins, he founded the Endangered Language Alliance in New York.

INTRODUCTION: GLOSSARY

Afro-Asiatic language* – This language group consists of about 375 living languages mainly in Africa and Southwest Asia. There are about 350 million speakers of these languages. It consists of six families: Berber, Chadic, Cushitic, Egyptian, Omotic, and Semitic.

endangered language – In 2005, SIL Ethnologue listed 516 out of 6,912 languages as “nearly extinct.” A hundred years from now, around 80% of the world’s languages will have died out, according to experts.

Indo-European languages includes Albanian, Anatolian (e.g., Hittite), Armenian, Balto-Slavic (Lithuanian, Russian), Celtic (Irish, Welsh), Germanic (English, German, Swedish), Hellenic (Greek), Indo-Iranian (Bengali, Hindi, Kurdish, Persian), Italic (French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish), and Tocharian.

Niger-Congo* – Africa’s largest language family, it not only has the most number of speakers but also has the largest number of distinct languages within it. It is the language family that includes the **Mandé group**, which includes Bambara and Bozo.

lingua franca* – The main language that is used among speakers of various other languages.

pidgin* – A simplification of a language, a “broken” form of a language, that results when a non-native speaker adapts another language.

Introduction

As you watch the documentaries, you may notice fascinating similarities between the languages, history, cultures, music, and literature of the cities and villages we explore in these documentaries. You will see that language is not a simple set of words, but rather a complex, ever evolving means of expression.

Many languages have similar roots, even when they are separated by time and place. Furthermore, languages have gone on to influence each other and other languages. Racial tensions, religious persecution, empires and wars, trade, geography, and migration all impact language as people move from their homeland into other regions, near and far. In this documentary series, we will discover languages like Berber and Hebrew were used for trade; languages such as Classical Greek and Latin and later English and French represent power; languages such as Classical Arabic and Classical Hebrew represent the languages of religion.

In some cases, we’ll see that people have learned to speak more than one tongue as a means toward communication for purposes such as trade. In cases such as those, we’ll see that there is a **lingua franca, a main language** that is used among speakers of various other languages. Examples of these include languages like Bambara in Mali and Wolof in The Gambia.

Other times, we'll see that instead of fully learning a second language, sometimes languages mix to create new languages. Languages such as Ladino and Yiddish represent languages of displaced peoples and expatriates who have absorbed the languages of their new home into their native tongue to create whole new languages.

Still in other instances, we'll see that instead of fully learning a new language or creating a complex new language, some people revert to a pidgin language. **Pidgin** is simplification of a language, a "broken" form of a language that results when a non-native speaker adapts another language.

Languages become endangered and even extinct when new ruling classes overpower a culture and either by conscious force or implicit dominance cause those languages to dissipate. Languages may also become endangered or extinct when people are forced because of persecution or when they choose—for reasons that could be personal, professional, or religious—to move to another land.

We see then that language is political and tied to power and economy. Countries have official languages, and these official languages are often a result not just of the original language of its native inhabitants but reflects historical power plays. The United Nations, despite having 192 member states, has only six official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish. It is not that the other unofficial languages are being overtly systematically abolished, but rather it's that declaring official languages provides a way for countries who normally would not speak the same language to be able to effectively communicate. That is the stated purpose of Esperanto, a language that was created in 1887 and has yet to be adopted as an official language of any country. Esperanto is intended to serve as second language, a *lingua franca*, to aid in communication as travel and the transmission of ideas around the globe becomes easier and faster.

According to UNESCO, there are approximately 6,000 modern languages in the world today. Unfortunately, like the dodo bird, many of these languages are headed toward extinction. In 2005, Ethnologue (SIL Publications) listed 516 out of 6,912 languages as "nearly extinct." A hundred years from now, around 80% of the world's languages will have died out, according to experts.

If languages become extinct, it is not just the language that becomes extinct. Language speaks to culture. It is deeply personal. It is spiritual. It allows us to understand and to be understood. Language informs our poetry, our literature, our music, and even our food. When we lose our language, we lose a portion of ourselves.

Language Families

Although languages are recognized as individual, distinct entities, whether they clearly a mix of two or more languages or appear autonomous, languages can be categorized under language groups.

You will be studying the languages in more depth later in the documentaries and corresponding curricula, however, sometimes it's so easy to focus on the specific details of a language that it's easy to overlook the overarching language family. For example, you come become enthralled by the many forms of Hebrew that have developed over centuries and go on to research the Mishnaic form of Classical Hebrew without looking broader to discover Hebrew is in the same language family as Arabic, which also has its

own historical and religious intricacies. Broadening the scope further, you'll see that Hebrew and Arabic are both part of the Semitic language group, which is one of the six groups of the Afro-Asiatic language family. Another one of the six groups of the Afro-Asiatic language family is the Berber language group. Now you've discovered just one of the many ways that the languages of Israel are similar to the languages of West Africa. Meanwhile, you'll discover that Yiddish, which is generally associated with Jewish people is not a Semitic language but rather is a High German language in the Indo-European language family. Likewise, although Berber and Bambara are both spoken in West Africa, they are part of two different language families. Bambara is part of the Niger-Congo language family.

Indo-European languages includes Albanian, Anatolian (e.g., Hittite), Armenian, Balto-Slavic (Lithuanian, Russian), Celtic (Irish, Welsh), Germanic (English, German, Swedish), Hellenic (Greek), Indo-Iranian (Bengali, Hindi, Kurdish, Persian), Italic (French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish), and Tocharian. High German language is a Germanic language group in the Indo-European class. It includes standard, mainstream German, Central German dialects, and Upper German dialects, as well as Luxembourgish and Yiddish.

Afro-Asiatic language consists of about 375 living languages mainly in Africa and Southwest Asia. There are about 350 million speakers of these languages. It consists of six families: **Berber**, Chadic, Cushitic, Egyptian, Omotic, and **Semitic**. **Central Semitic languages** are a Semitic language group that includes **Arabic** and Northern Semitic languages, which include **Aramaic** and Canaanite languages. The **Canaanite languages group** includes such languages as Ammonite, Edomite, Hebrew, Moabite, and Phoenician that at one time were spoken by the ancient people of Canaan (which includes modern-day Israel, Jordan, northeastern Egypt, Lebanon, and Palestinian territories). All of the languages in this group have been or currently are endangered or extinct.

Niger-Congo is Africa's largest language family, it not only has the most number of speakers but also has the largest number of distinct languages within it. It is the language family that includes the **Mandé group**. Mandé languages are a divergent branch of the Niger-Congo family of languages that includes Bambara (which is part of the Manding subgroup of Mande) and Bozo. This branch of languages is spoken in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

Discussion: Here are some questions you may consider for classroom discussion.

- What languages are represented within the student body of this class?
- What is the lingua franca of the class? Does it differ from the lingua franca of the student body when they are not in class?
- How did the individuals within the class come to speak the various languages?
- What does the diversity—or lack of diversity—of language say about students' places of origin, ethnic heritage, culture, religion, education, and travel?
- What makes languages similar and what makes them different?
- How do you think place affects language, given what you know about the languages spoken within the class and the overview of what's to come in the documentaries?

- How do you feel when you hear languages spoken that aren't your own? Do you think there should be a common language, a lingua franca, spoken across the world? What would that mean for the world?
- What are the downsides of languages becoming endangered? How might the extinction of languages affect culture, history, politics, religion, music, poetry, and identity?

Application: Here are a few suggestions for assignments related to this episode.

- Fill in a blank language tree to gain a better understanding of the interconnectedness of languages.
- Write a list of dead and endangered languages.
- Write a personal essay reflecting on what language means to you. What languages did you grow up speaking? Did you learn a second language? If so, why? How has language informed your sense of identity?
- Familiarize yourself with the blog. Participate in the blog, which will be updated after every episode.

Lesson 1: West Africa and the Griots (Episode 1)

Airdate: February 1, 2012 and online

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Synopsis:

The film is about Alhaji Papa Susso, a Gambian folk poet, and Bob Holman, a contemporary US poet, who are long-time friends. They travel to Africa to discover the oral traditions of language and storytelling that are quickly disappearing. Along with their disappearance is the loss of an entire culture and the history of people dating thousands of years. Through their travels in Gambia, Senegal, and Mali, they also explore African music and its influence on contemporary American jazz, rock n' roll, and blues and how traditional African music is being displaced by urban hip-hop, whose roots are in Africa. Throughout West Africa, they meet many different Griots, or storytellers, whose vast memories include the history of their tribes retold through songs and epic poems. The film intercuts between Papa and Bob's travels in rarely visited parts of West Africa including a boat trip up the Niger River to Timbuktu, the iconic site of the Farthest Away, a city that was once the capital of learning of Africa and is still filled with ancient lore. By listening to the poets, those who use language to make beauty, we hear the true value of a language — not simply as a communication device, but as the connector between people, and between people and their world. Not the purveyor of commerce, but the evocation of the soul.

Discussion: Here are some questions you may consider for classroom discussion.

- What is your reaction to the documentary?
- What surprised you?
- How does the language sound to you?
- What is a *griot* and why is the *griot* important to West African culture?
- How do you think the Niger River has affected West Africa's language, poetry, and culture?
- What specific challenges does West Africa face in maintaining its languages?

Application: Here are a few suggestions for assignments related to this episode.

- Fill in a blank map of Africa, as a way to grasp a sense of location and surrounding cultures.
- Write a poem inspired by what was viewed in this episode and/or discussed in class.
- Write a paper discussing how the history of the region and its current events affects its languages and its poetry.
- Participate in the blog, which will be updated after every episode.
- In the documentary, Bob Holman says, "Dreams, like poems, never die." Start a dream journal or write an essay based on your hopes, dreams, and aspirations.
- Create and perform your own *griot* song-poems about your life story.

Glossary of People, Places, and Words

Afro-Asiatic language* – Consists of about 375 living languages mainly in Africa and Southwest Asia. There are about 350 million speakers of these languages. It consists of six families: Berber, Chadic, Cushitic, Egyptian, Omotic, and Semitic. Ancient Egyptian and Biblical and contemporary Hebrew are part of this language family.

Aku's Creole* – A kind of pidgin English spoken in The Gambia.

bafalon* – A glockenspiel played along with the kora.

Bamako – Capital of Mali, and also its largest city. Has a population of about 1,809,000.

Bambara or **Bamanankan*** – The language that about 80% of the population of Mali speaks, either as their first or second language; also spoken in The Gambia, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea. It is part of the Manding language group, which is within the larger Mandé group, which is an offshoot of the Niger-Congo family.

Banjul – The capital of The Gambia.

Beat Generation – The name given to a group of writers, many of whom met while living in New York City, in the 1950s; principal writers and poets included Jack Kerouac (*On the Road*), Allen Ginsberg (*Howl*), William S. Burroughs (*Naked Lunch*), and Gregory Corso (*Bomb*).

Berber* – The indigenous people who live west of the Nile Valley in North Africa, largest population of which are in Morocco. The Berber languages are part of the Afro-Asiatic language family.

Bozo or Boso – A Malian ethnic group with a current population of about 132,000 that are considered “the masters of the river.” The four recognized Bozo languages—Hainyaho, Sorogama (which includes four dialects: Debo, Korondugu, Kotya, and Pondori), Tièma Cièwè, and Tiéyaho—are part of the Northwestern Mande languages.

Dakar – The capital of Senegal.

Debo* – One of the four dialects of the Bozo's Sorogama language.

djembe* – A type of drum.

Djenné – Located in Mali, West Africa, it believed to be the oldest city in sub-Saharan Africa. It's a mosque that has to be rebuilt every year because its made of mud. It is a World Heritage Site.

The Gambia – The smallest country on West Africa's mainland, its capital is Banjul.

griot – A poet in Western Africa who uses the oral tradition to sing of genealogy, history, and current events.

Hainyaho* – One of the four Bozo languages. It is spoken in the west, along the Niger River, and has a few thousand speakers.

Jola-Fonyi* – A language spoken in The Gambia.

Ted Jones – A writer from the Beat Generation who lived part-time in Timbuktu.

Salif Keita* – A griot musician from Bamako, Mali. Born into a ruling class, he was the first African griot to become popular in the West.

kora – An instrument made of animal-hide covered hollowed-out gourd with strings made out of fishing line.

Korondugu* – One of the four dialects of the Bozo's Sorogama language.

Kotya* – One of the four dialects of the Bozo's Sorogama language.

Seydou Badian Kouyaté* – Born in Bamako, Mali, in 1928, he wrote Mali's national anthem, *Pour l'Afrique et pour toi, Mali*, or simply *Le Mali*, adapted in 1962, and several novels, including *Sous l'orage* (1957). After he a coup d'état, the Minister of Economic and Financial Coordination was deported to Dakar, Senegal.

lingua franca* – The main language that is used among speakers of various other languages. Examples: Bambara in Mali; Wolof in The Gambia.

Mali – The seventh largest country in Africa. The capital of this country in West Africa is Bamako.

Mande languages* – A divergent branch of the Niger-Congo family of languages that includes Bambara (which is part of the Manding subgroup of Mande) and Bozo. This branch of languages is spoken in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

Manding languages* – A group of West African languages that is part of the larger Mande language group. It includes such popular languages as Bambara, Dioula, Mandinka, and Maninka.

Mandinka* – A language spoken in The Gambia.

Mandjaque* – A language spoken in The Gambia.

Maninkakan* – A language spoken in The Gambia.

Niafunké – Located in north central Mali, it is part of the Timbuktu region. The Niger River used to run through it. Approximately 135,000 people live in this city, most of which are Muslim. It is most famous for being the home of bluesman Ali Farka Touré.

Niger River – Western Africa's main river and third largest in Africa.

Niger-Congo* – Africa's largest language family, it not only has the most number of speakers but also has the largest number of distinct languages within it. This includes Bambara, a Mande language spoken in Mali, and Wolof, spoken in Senegal.

pidgin* – A simplification of a language, a "broken" form of a language, that results when a non-native speaker adapts another language.

Pondori* – One of the four dialects of the Bozo's Sorogama language.

Pulaar* – A language spoken in The Gambia.

Sahara Desert – The largest hot desert in the world, it makes up most of North Africa.

Sarahole* – A language spoken in The Gambia.

Senegal – A country in West Africa. Its capital is Dakar.

Léopold Sédar Senghor – (October 9, 1906 – December 20, 2001) The first president of Senegal, as well as a poet.

Serer-Sine* – A language spoken in The Gambia.

Sorogama* – The most widely spoken Bozo language, with about 100,000 speakers. It consists of four of its own dialects: **Debo**, spoken near Lake Debo; **Korondugu**, spoken north of Mopti; **Kotya**; and **Pondori**, spoken south of Mopti.

Karamo Susso – The griot who guides Bob Holman in this video. Papa Susso's son who was born in Bamako.

Papa Susso – An international renowned griot from Gambia who lives part-time and performs in New York. His son is Karama Susso.

Tamacheq* – The central language of the Tuareg. It is a Berber language.

Tamazight* – The general name for the different languages that comprise the Berber languages.

Tifinagh* – In the Berber language, the written script used in poetry and Saharan rock art.

Timbuktu – A city in Mali, West Africa. Mostly made up of the Sahara Desert, this is Mali's biggest northern-most district. Its capital is Timbuktu, and it also includes Dire, Goundam, Gourma-Rharous, and Niafunké.

Ali Farka Touré – (October 31, 1939 – March 7, 2006) A world-famous musician born in Kanau, Mali, West Africa. He is known for combining African music traditions and African languages with American blues. He later became mayor of the Malian town Niafunké.

Vieux Touré – Son of Ali Farka Touré. Lives in Niafunké, Mali.

Tièma Cièwè* – One of the four Bozo languages. It is spoken in the northeast, near Lake Debo, and has an estimated 2,500 speakers.

Tièyaho* – One of the four Bozo languages. It has a few thousand speakers.

Tuareg – A semi-nomadic population of about 1 million Muslims in Western Africa, who speak Tamacheq.

West Africa or **Western Africa** – Africa’s westernmost region, that contains the following 16 countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

Wollof * – The lingua franca of The Gambia.

*These words do not appear in this documentary but may be helpful for further understanding.

Selected Quote from “On the Road with Bob Holman”

The Niger is a river through time. Here are the roots of hip-hop, gospel, and jazz. It’s in the *griot* tradition that the blues began and then returned to the electric guitars of musicians like Ali Farka Toure and his son Vieux Touré who live just upriver. The natural sounds, music, and poetry you hear in Africa gave birth to the great musical forms of the U.S. Being here you realize that the oral tradition resists being written down because it can’t be. It’s a living thing, mouth to ear, person to person, generation to generation.

Sahara Desert

With a somewhat rough start on camelback, intrepid poet Bob Holman ventures across the world’s largest hot desert, the Sahara. Covering most of North Africa (and dividing the continent into North and Sub-Saharan Africa), the Sahara Desert is about 3,500,000 square miles—roughly the same size as all of the United States! It is comprised of the Aïr Mountains, the central Ahaggar Mountains, the Libyan desert, western Sahara, Ténéré desert, and the Tibesti Mountains. The Nile River crosses through the Sahara Desert. Modern day countries that are covered by the desert include Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Libya, **Mali** (featured in this documentary), Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Western Sahara, Sudan, and Tunisia.

Believed to be 3 million years old, the Sahara Desert has been home to people since the last ice age. Among the early people groups to have made their mark on the Sahara are the Berbers, the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Nubians, and the Phoenicians. Trade and imperialism brought further influence upon this region.

Berbers and Their Language

The oldest group believed to have lived in the Sahara are the **Berbers**, the indigenous population that lived in the region between the Atlantic Ocean and western Egypt in North Africa. Today, the largest population of Berbers are in Morocco.

Originally, the Berbers’ language was an unwritten one. Therefore, apart from the rock art they left behind in ancient Sahara, little is known about their ancient history and culture from their own perspective. What we know about their past comes from references to them in ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman writings. Throughout history, the Berber languages were attempted to be put into writing and underwent many changes, due to foreign influences. The first Berber alphabet appeared in around 200 BC and was made from the Tifinagh alphabet, which continues to be used today by the **Tuareg**. Somewhere between AD 1000 and AD 1500 it was made from the Arabic alphabet. In the 1900s the Berber alphabet transformed again, this time, to the Latin alphabet.

The Berber languages, which as a group are often referred to as **Tamazight**, are part of the Afro-Asiatic language family. **Afro-Asiatic languages** include about 375 living languages mainly in Africa and Southwest Asia. There are about 350 million speakers of these languages. It consists of six families: Berber, Chadic, Cushitic, Egyptian, Omotic, and Seitic. Ancient Egyptian and Biblical Hebrew are part of this language family. The Berber or Tamazight languages, which are part of these Afro-Asiatic languages, include such language types as Kabyle, Tarifit, and Tashelhiyt. There are perhaps 40 million people in the world who speak Berber languages.

The Gambia: History and Trade

The smallest country on West Africa's mainland, The Gambia is almost entirely surrounded by the country of Senegal. The exception is the western part of the country, which meets the Atlantic Ocean. The other body of water important to the country is The Gambia River.

The Gambia is an extremely poor country, with around a third of its people living below the international poverty line. Despite this, it is actually an agriculturally rich country. Historically, the country was part of two well-known trade routes. In the tenth century, it was an active participant along the trans-Saharan trade routes with the Arabs that dealt with gold and ivory. From about the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, it was perhaps better known for its involvement in the exportation of "Black Ivory," the human trafficking initiated first by the Portuguese and then the British (other countries were involved as well) that is known as the transatlantic slave trade. It's been estimated that 3 million slaves came from The Gambia. Slavery is of course one cause for the dissolution of native languages.

The Gambia: Its Languages

There are about ten languages spoken in The Gambia, and most of them are part of the Niger-Congo language family. Because The Gambia was colonized by England (it gained independence in 1965), it should not be surprising that English is the country's official language. There is also a language called Aku's Creole, which is a kind of **pidgin** English. Wolof is the **lingua franca**. The other languages are Jola-Fonyi, Mandingo, Mandjaque, Maninkakan, Pulaar, Sarahole, and Serer-Sine. Most people speak at least two languages.

All of the African languages were only oral until the Europeans came and instilled the practice of writing.

The Gambia: Its Culture

The **griots** are the keepers of the oral tradition in The Gambia and throughout West Africa. As we see in this documentary, Papa Susso is one such *griot*.

The main musical instruments used in The Gambia are the **kora** and the *bafalon* (a glockenspiel).

American author Alex Haley's book (1976) and television series (1977) *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* arguably put Gambia on the radar for modern Americans. The

story traces an African American whose ancestors were brought over as slaves back to The Gambia, where he visits a *griot*.

Banjul, The Gambia

The Gambia's capital is **Banjul**, which is where Holman's friend, the renowned *griot* Papa Susso, lives. At Papa Susso's compound we meet his wives and relatives, including his brother, who is the *griot*-in-residence.

Banjul is located on St. Mary's Island. It is at the cross-section of the Atlantic Ocean and the Gambia River.

The Mandé people gathered fibers on the island to make rope. The word for "fiber" in **Mande** is *Banjul*, and in 1973 the city acquired that name. It had originally been called *Banjulu* by the Portuguese, and then, from 1816 to 1973, Bathurst, after Secretary of the State of the British Colonies Henry Bathurst.

Banjul was founded by the British in 1816 as a place to enforce the Slavery Abolition Act.

One of its main attractions is Albert Market. We see the street market in this documentary.

Dakar, Senegal

When Holman first lands in Africa, he meets Papa Susso in Dakar, the capital of Senegal. (Papa Susso actually lives in Banjul, but because The Gambia is so small it's easier to meet in the neighboring country.)

Dakar is the westernmost city on the mainland of Africa. A major port city, it has long been established in transatlantic trade. By the 1530s, the Portuguese had begun exporting slaves from Senegal. The UNESCO World Heritage Site the House of Slaves (Maison des Esclaves), located on a tiny island known as Goree, is a twenty-minute boat ride from Dakar. Built in 1776, it is infamous for being Africa's final exit point for slaves.

Portugal, Holland, and England intermittently controlled Dakar, before France took power in 1677. Dakar became an important city for the empire, which built industrial businesses such as canneries and mills there. The port was also valuable to France's navy and air force.

Mali: Its History

Traveling through the Sahara Desert in West Africa, Bob Holman visits the Republic of Mali. In the Berber language Bambara, *Mali* means "hippopotamus."

The Sahara covers the northern part of the country. The southern part includes the Niger River and the Senegal River. The capital of Mali is Bamako (see section on Bamako for further information). Close to 478,800 square miles, Mali is home to approximately 14,500,000 people.

From about the eighth century through the sixteenth century, Mali was one of the most powerful empires of West Africa. Part of the trans-Saharan trade route, it was a key player in the trade of gold, salt, and slaves.

Mali: Its Languages

Overtaken by France from about 1905 to 1959, Mali's official language is French. Today, because French is viewed as a more prestigious language, it is used for writing.

However, about 80% of the population (which equals about six million people) speaks, either as their first or second language, **Bambara** or **Bamanankan**. It is part of the Manding language group, which is within the larger Mandé group, which is an offshoot of the Niger-Congo family. Bambara is not only spoken in Mali, but in The Gambia and Senegal, which are also featured in this documentary, and in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea.

Bambara was exclusively oral until the French occupancy. In 1949, the language was given an N'Ko alphabet, which is a Mande alphabet. Then in the 70s, the Latin alphabet was applied to the language. Still, while Bambara does have a written alphabet, it resists being written down and instead has a strong oral tradition. The *griots*, as you see in the documentary (and can read more about below), are therefore integral to keeping the language alive and to recording history and culture in Mali's national tongue. While on the road, Holman goes to visit Malian musician Ali Farka Touré, who sings in Bambara.

The Bozo fishing population usually speak Bambara or other popular African languages like Fulfulde, Songhay, or Soninke, but they also have their own languages. The four **Bozo languages** recognized by ethnologists are part of the Northwestern Mande languages (Bambara, as noted above, is also a Mande language) and are tonal. The most widely spoken Bozo language is **Sorogama**, which has about 100,000 speakers and consists of four of its own dialects: **Debo**, spoken near Lake Debo; **Korondugu**, spoken north of Mopti; **Kotya**; and **Pondori**, spoken south of Mopti. The other Bozo languages are **Hainyaho**, which is spoken in the west, along the Niger River, and has a few thousand speakers; **Tièma Cièwè**, which is spoken in the northeast, near Lake Debo, and has an estimated 2,500 speakers; and **Tiéyaho**, which has a few thousand speakers.

Bamako, Mali: Its History and Trade

The capital of Mali is Bamako. The name means "crocodile river" in Bambara, and three crocodiles make up the city's coat-of-arms seal.

With about 1,809,000 people living in it, it is also the largest city in Mali. It is the fastest growing city in Africa, and one of the top-ten fastest growing cities in the world. Its population is quite diverse, and it is considered the crossroads of West Africa. Part of this is because the Mali population itself is diverse, however it is also because the city is situated close to Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, and closest of all to Guinea.

Moreover, the Niger River flows through Bamako, making it a natural hot-spot for trade. For obvious reasons, fish is an important part of the economy. The Bozo people are a Malian ethnic group with a current population of about 132,000 that are considered "the masters of the river." Other exports today include meat, textiles, and metal wares. In earlier times, gold, ivory, kola nuts, and salt were among its main goods.

Bamako, Mali: Its Culture

In the 1990s, music became another popular export. Ali Farka Touré (see section on him below), whom Bob Holman sets off to see in this documentary, and **Salif Keita** are two musicians associated with Bamako.

The National Library of Mali is located in Bamako. The resources in the library are free, but if you want to take anything out there is a subscription fee. African Photography Encounters, a biannual photography festival, is held here.

Among its notable writers is **Seydou Badian Kouyaté** (born in 1928), who wrote Mali's national anthem, *Pour l'Afrique et pour toi, Mali*, or simply *Le Mali*, adapted in 1962. Originally written in French, it was later translated to Bambara. The music to it is by Banzoumana Sissoko. Despite being credited as the writer of Mali's national anthem, under President Modibo Keita, and becoming Minister of Economic and Financial Coordination in 1962, six years later he was deported to Kidal, a Tuareg city in Mali, and then Dakar, Senegal, because of a coup d'état. Kouyaté is also the author of the novels *Sous l'orage* (1957), *Le Sang des masques* (1976), *Noces sacrées* (1977), and *La Saison des pièges* (2007), and the political drama *La Mort de Chaka* (1961).

Another important writer is playwright and filmmaker Adama Drabo (1948–2009), whose *Ta Dona (Au feu!)* is in the Bambara language. It was shown at Cannes Film Festival in 1991 and nominated for the Gold Lion prize at the Locarno International Film Festival. His 1997 film *Taafé Fanga* likewise made the festival circuit.

Mali's capital was the backdrop the film *Bamako*, which looks at poverty in Africa. Directed by Abderrahmane Sissako, it was first released in 2006 at the Cannes Film Festival and was the winner of the first Council of Europe Film Award.

Niafunké, Mali

Niafunké is in north central Mali. Part of the **Tombouctou** region, it is near Timbuktu. The Niger River runs through it. Approximately 135,000 people live in this city, most of whom are Muslim. It is most famous for being the home of bluesman Ali Farka Touré.

Ali Farka Touré, Musician

Holman travels to Niafunké in search of Malian musician Ali Farka Touré and his son Vieux Farka Touré. Born in the village of Kanau in the northwestern region of Tombouctou in Mali on October 31, 1939, Ali Farka Touré moved to Niafunké as a baby.

Ali Farka Touré's given name was Ali Ibrahim. He told his record label, World Circuit, that his parents gave him the nickname "Farka," which means "donkey" and is symbolic of stubbornness, because African superstition dictates that parents should name their children something silly if they've already had another child pass away.

Rolling Stone magazine named Touré one of the top "100 Greatest Guitarists of All Time." Touré's music is viewed as a crossroads of Mali's traditional music and America's blues. He sang in such African languages as Bambara (mentioned above), Fulfulde, Songhay, and Tamasheq. He won Grammy® Awards for *Talking Timbuktu* (1995) and *In the Heart of the Moon* (2005).

More than just a preeminent musician, Touré was a politician and in 2004 became mayor of Niafunké. Because Mali is such a poor country, the Muslim musician put his own money toward electricity, roads, and sewers.

Soon after this documentary was filmed, Touré passed away in Bamako, Mali, on March 7, 2006.

Timbuktu as Crossroads

Timbuktu is part of the Tombouctou region of Mali, which is located in West Africa. What makes Timbuktu particularly well-connected is that it is approximately 15 km north of the Niger River and is at the intersection of the east–west and north–south Trans-Saharan trade routes across the Sahara to Araouane. Because of its central location and reputation for being rich in gold, traders from throughout West Africa as well as northern nomads such as the Berber, Arab, and Jewish people often crossed paths. Primarily a place just to pass through on camel while trading and seasonally inhabited by the Tuareg nomads, Timbuktu was permanently settled in the eleventh century.

Timbuktu as Center of Learning

It is believed that Timbuktu is home to one of the world's very first universities, the University of Sankore, which was built in AD 1581. The university is actually a mosque that was created to teach the Qur'an, though such subjects as science and history were also taught.

Books were considerably important to learning and culture in Timbuktu. In the area, there are up to 700,000 surviving manuscripts, dating from pre-Islamic times to the twelfth century. Reports suggest that after gold and salt, books incurred the largest profit. According to one West African Islamic proverb, "Salt comes from the north, gold from the south, but the word of God and the treasures of wisdom from Timbuktu."

There used to be 120 libraries in Timbuktu and its surrounding region, but today only approximately 70 private libraries in Timbuktu preserve the ancient manuscripts. The many libraries scattered between West Africa, North Africa, and East Africa form the African Ink Road. In 1970 the Mali government in partnership with UNESCO established the Ahmed Baba Institute, which not only houses ancient manuscripts from Western Africa but furthermore restores and even digitizes them.

Under the direction of Saadi ruler Ahmad I al-Mansur, the Moroccan army, led by pasha Mahmud B. Zarqun, invaded Timbuktu in search of gold. After it was captured on August 17, 1591, Timbuktu's once-flourishing culture, including its intellectualism, began to decay.

Timbuktu Today

Today, although Timbuktu is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a popular tourist destination, it remains a poverty-stricken city. In 1990 UNESCO listed it as in danger of ruin because of desert sands. Efforts stabilized the city and it was taken off the endangered list in 2005, but now there is the risk that the new constructions will overtake the ancient landmarks.

Griots

“*Griots* are the keepers of the West African oral tradition,” states Bob Holman. “The *griot* sings culture into existence.” Their songs relate history and genealogy, as well as such current events as marriages, births, deaths, and gossip. They play the *kora*, an instrument made of animal-hide covered hollowed-out gourd with strings made out of fishing line.

At one time, *griots* sang for kings and queens. Today, these singing historians are less exalted and may have to take on additional jobs, such as taxi driver, as this episode shows. Still, *griots* have gained recognition around the world for upholding the oral tradition.

In this episode, Holman’s guide is the *griot* **Karamo Susso**. He is the son of **Papa Susso**, a *griot* that performs at Holman’s culture hotspot, The Bowery Poetry Club. Along the way, Holman also encounters father–son hunting *griots*. He also points out that women play an important role in the oral tradition in West Africa, as they form street theaters to satirize local politics.

Selected Griot Song-Poem from “On the Road with Bob Holman”

Holman visits the home of a woman who is known for her golden earrings. This documentary features the following *griot* song-poem about the golden earrings:

Add a sweet note to the saddest music

Build the road by walking

River waves, sand waves, gold earring

Pray for the river rising

The incompleteness so complete

Once upon a place

Ted Jones, Beat Poet

When he was in his twenties, Holman began corresponding with writer Ted Jones. Jones invited him to visit him in Africa, and Holman set off for the adventure. As he reveals in this documentary, however, Holman arrived without a visa and was jailed overnight and then sent back to America.

Ted Jones was born on July 4, 1928, in Cairo, Illinois. His father had worked on the riverboats in Mississippi and was a musician. After graduating from Indiana University in 1951, Ted Jones moved to Greenwich Village, New York, where he met such Beat Generation writers as Jack Kerouac (author of the novel *On the Road*) and Allen Ginsberg (author of the poem *Howl*).

Jones infused jazz into his own poetry. He wrote about the African-American experience, and his style is reminiscent of the oral tradition. His books of poems are *Funky Jazz Poems*, *Beat Poems*, *All of T.J. and No More*, *The Truth*, *The Hipsters*, *Afrodisia*, and *A Black Pow Wow of Jazz Poems*. He is known for the phrase “Bird Lives,” which pays homage to musician Charlie “Bird” Parker.

In the 1960s he moved to Paris, France, and until the 1990s divided his time between there and Timbuktu. He later moved to Seattle and then Vancouver, where he died in 2003.

Selected Poem by Ted Jones

The documentary features one of Ted Jones' most famous poems:

If you should see a man walking down a crowded street talking aloud to himself, don't run in the opposite, but run towards him, for he's a poet. You have nothing to fear from the poet—but the truth.

Resources

Wikipedia entry for Timbuktu: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timbuktu>

Wikipedia entry for griot: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Griot>

Henry Louis Gates' "Wonders of the African World" for PBS:
<http://www.pbs.org/wonders/>

Suite 101 article on the Ahmed Baba Institute:
http://historicalresources.suite101.com/article.cfm/the_ahmed_baba_institute_in_timbuktu

Karamo Susso's Myspace page: <http://www.myspace.com/kamososso>

Wikipedia entry for Niger River: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_River

Wikipedia entry for Léopold Sédar Senghor:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%A9opold_S%C3%A9dar_Senghor

Sacred Sites' page on Djenné: <http://sacredsites.com/africa/mali/djenne.html>

Festival in the Desert: <http://www.festivalinthedesert.org/>

Every Culture's entry for Tuareg: <http://www.everyculture.com/wc/Mauritania-to-Nigeria/Tuareg.html>

Wikipedia entry for Ali Farka Touré: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ali_Farka_Touré

World Circuit (the record label that represents Ali Farka Touré)

2002 - Ali Farka Touré - Le miel n'est jamais bon dans une seule bouche - a documentary film by Marc Huraux[12]

Mediamatic Travel site on Bamako: <http://travel.mediamatic.net/page/55921/en>

All Business' Bamako: The Stuff of Legends (includes info on music):
<http://www.allbusiness.com/africa/1150076-1.html>

Map of Bozo languages: http://www.sil.org/silesr/2000/2000-003/Boso_map.htm

Wikipedia entry for musician Salif Keita: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salif_Keita

Internet Movie Database entry for *Bamako* film: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0814666/>

Access Gambia's page on Gambia Slavery, History:
<http://www.accessgambia.com/information/slavery-history.html>

Access Gambia's page on Gambia Languages:
<http://www.accessgambia.com/information/languages.html>

Wikipedia entry for Roots:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roots:_The_Saga_of_an_American_Family

Access Gambia's page on Banjul History:
<http://www.accessgambia.com/information/banjul-history.html>

LitKicks page on Ted Jones: <http://litkicks.com/TedJoans>

YouTube page of Ted Jones and David Amram:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iAoxZXYuZvE&NR=1>

Lesson 2: Israel and the West Bank (Episode 3)

Airdate: February 15, 2012

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Synopsis:

In the beginning there was the WORD and from there many languages were created in the Holy Land. When Israel was created, the government initiated a rigorous and controversial plan to make Hebrew the official language in order to unify the populace and to find a pure, holy language for the Promised Land. Alas, this has resulted in the

near extinction of Yiddish, Ladino and other languages spoken by Jewish people from around the world. Today, Israelis are discovering their other mother languages and the unique cultures, food, music, and stories that resulted from them. Additionally, Palestinians try to preserve their own language and culture in a divided country.

Discussion: Here are some questions you may consider for classroom discussion.

- What is your reaction to the documentary?
- What surprised you in the documentary?
- How do the languages sound to you? Do they sound similar or different? Have you heard these languages spoken before?
- How do you think place affects language?
- What is the role of place in poetry?
- How do you think religion affects language?
- How do religion, religious beliefs, and religious language affect poetry?
- What specific challenges does Israel face in maintaining its languages?

Application: Here are a few suggestions for assignments related to this episode.

- Fill in a blank map of the Middle East, as a way to grasp a sense of location and surrounding cultures.
- Write a paper discussing how the history of the region and its current events affects its languages and its poetry.
- Write a research paper on poets from Israel.
- Write a poem inspired by what was viewed in this documentary and/or discussed in class.
- Write a *kvitel*. These are personal prayers not to be read by anyone else, but can be symbolically collected and buried.
- Participate in the blog, which will be updated after every episode.

Glossary of People, Places, and Words

Afro-Asiatic language* – Consists of about 375 living languages mainly in Africa and Southwest Asia. There are about 350 million speakers of these languages. It consists of six families: Berber, Chadic, Cushitic, Egyptian, Omotic, and Semitic. Ancient Egyptian and Biblical and contemporary Hebrew are part of this language family.

Arabic – The Semetic language that has the most speakers.

Aramaic – An endangered language.

Ashkenazi, Ashkenazic Jews, or Ashkenazim* – Literally, German Jewish people. These are the people who developed the Yiddish language.

Assyrians* – A mainly Christian population originally from Mesopotamia that still speak Aramaic as their first language.

Central Semitic languages* – A Semitic language group that includes Arabic and Northern Semitic languages (Aramaic and Canaanite languages).

Canaanite languages group* – Also known as Hebraic languages, it is a language group that falls under Semitic languages, which fall under Afro-Asiatic languages. It includes such languages as Ammonite, Edomite, Hebrew, Moabite, and Phoenician that at one time were spoken by the ancient people of Canaan (which includes modern-day Israel, Jordan, northeastern Egypt, Lebanon, and Palestinian territories). All of the languages in this group have been or currently are endangered or extinct.

Chaldeans* – A mainly Christian population originally from Mesopotamia that still speak Aramaic as their first language.

Classical Hebrew* – A dead language that is broken up into Biblical Hebrew, which was the primary language (Aramaic is also used) of the Tanakh, and Roman Era Hebrew. The language was revived and made into the official language of Israel.

Early Rabbinic Hebrew* – Also called Tannaitic Hebrew or Mishnaic Hebrew, this is the type of Classical Hebrew that was used from about the first century AD to the fourth century AD. It appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as the Mishnah section and Tosefta sections (which is part of the Gemara section) of the Talmud.

Gemara* – The discussions, which includes the Tosefta, of the Oral Law of Judaism (the Mishnah) that were written around 200 or 500 CE. Along with the Mishnah, it makes up the Talmud.

Hasidic Judaism or Hasidism* – The Hebrew word for “piety,” this branch of Orthodox Judaism teaches mysticism and emphasizes joy.

Hebrew bible* – Also called the Tanakh or Jewish bible (comprises the Christian Old Testament), which is written primarily in Classical Hebrew and also Aramaic.

High German language* – A Germanic language group in the Indo-European class. It includes standard, mainstream German, Central German dialects, and Upper German dialects, as well as Luxembourgish and Yiddish.

Indo-European language* – Although Yiddish is written with the Hebrew alphabet and is of Jewish origin, it is part of the High German language group, which is part of this language family. This language family includes Albanian, Anatolian (e.g., Hittite), Armenian, Balto-Slavic (Lithuanian, Russian), Celtic (Irish, Welsh), Germanic (English, German, Swedish), Hellenic (Greek), Indo-Iranian (Bengali, Hindi, Kurdish, Persian), Italic (French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish), and Tocharian.

Jewish bible* – Also called the Tanakh or Hebrew bible (comprises the Christian Old Testament), which is written primarily in Classical Hebrew and also Aramaic.

Etgar Keret* – An Israeli author who incorporates everyday spoken Hebrew, in the forms of dialect and slang, into such comics as *Jetlag*, *Tel Aviv*, *Actus Tragicus* (1999) and *Pizzeria Kamikaze* (2005) and short story collections as *The Bus Driver Who Wanted to Be God & Other Stories* (2004) and *The Nimrod Flipout* (2006).

Euphrates* – One of the two rivers that characterize Mesopotamia.

lingua franca* – The main language that is used among speakers of various other languages. Examples: Latin in the Mediterranean during the Roman Era; Aramaic in the Middle East during Biblical times.

Litvish* – A dialect of Eastern Yiddish.

Mishnah* – The Oral Law of Judaism that was first compiled into writing around 200 CE. It makes up the Talmud, along with the Gemara.

Mishnaic Hebrew* – Also called Early Rabbinic Hebrew or Tannaitic Hebrew, this is the type of Classical Hebrew that was used from about the first century AD to the fourth century AD. It appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as the Mishnah section and Tosefta sections (which is part of the Gemara section) of the Talmud.

Orthodox Judaism* – This branch of Judaism teaches a strict interpretation and follows traditions that were not written in the Torah but rather have been passed down orally, as indicated now in the Talmud.

pidgin* – A simplification of a language, a “broken” form of a language, that results when a non-native speaker adapts another language.

Poylish* – A dialect of Eastern Yiddish.

Qumran Hebrew* – The language between the Greek and Roman eras (third century BC to first century AD) that is the language that the Dead Sea Scrolls are written in; sometimes referred to as Dead Sea Scroll (DSS) Hebrew.

Rhineland* – A region in Germany that reaches from the river Rhine between Bingen and the Dutch border. During medieval times, it was home to the Ashkenazic Jews or Ashkenazim, and is therefore the birthplace of the Yiddish language.

Roman Era Hebrew* – A type of Classical Hebrew that took form when the Romans came to power, it is influenced by the Aramaic language and had a Golden Age (1st or 2nd century BC to 500 BC) and a Silver Age (500 BC to 60 BC).

Sayfo/seyfo* – The Assyrian genocide that took place during World War 1.

Semitic language* – It includes such languages as Arabic and Hebrew, and is part of the larger Afro-Asiatic language family.

Syriac Christianity* – Eastern Christianity in which Syriac, an Aramaic dialect, is used in liturgy.

Talmud* – Comprised of the Mishnah (the Oral Law) and the Gemara (the analysis of the Mishna and other writings), this is the main text of Judaism.

Tanakh* – The Hebrew or Jewish bible (comprises the Christian Old Testament), which is written primarily in Classical Hebrew and also Aramaic.

Tannaitic Hebrew* – Also called Early Rabbinic Hebrew or Mishnaic Hebrew, this is the type of Classical Hebrew that was used from about the first century AD to the fourth century AD. It appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as the Mishnah section and Tosefta sections (which is part of the Gemara section) of the Talmud.

Tigris* – One of the two rivers that characterize Mesopotamia.

Tosefta* – Written in Mishnaic Hebrew and some Aramaic around 200 AD, it is part of the Gemara section of the Talmud.

Torah* – The Hebrew word for “teaching” or “instruction,” it is oftentimes translated as the “law.” It is the first five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Ukrainish* – A dialect of Eastern Yiddish.

Yiddish – An Ashkenazi Jewish language that combines elements of Aramaic, German, Hebrew, and Slav languages.

Abrahamic religions* – Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are the three monotheistic faiths that share a common origin, founded in Judaism.

Allah* – The Muslim name for God.

Classical Arabic* - The liturgical and literary language of Islam. It is the language of the Qu’ran.

Colloquial Arabic* – The dialectal varieties of contemporary Arabic.

Islam* – Literally means “submission to God.” It is the Abrahamic religion whose prophet is Muhammad. Its main religious text is the Qur’an. Its followers are known as Muslims. It is one of the leading religions of the Middle East and North Africa. There are two major denominations: Shi’a and Sunni.

The Israeli West Bank Barrier – A separation barrier that the state of Israel is building on the West Bank for the purpose of physically dividing Israel and Palestine.

Judeo-Arabic* – An endangered language spoken by Mizrahi Jews and Sephardi Jews.

Kvittel (plural: kvitlach)* – Written prayers of petition.

Modern Standard Arabic – The language used in formal speech and most writing in contemporary Arab-speaking countries.

Old North Arabian or Ancient North Arabian* - A dead language that was spoken in the pre-Islamic Middle East.

Palestinian Arabic* – The language spoken by Arab citizens in Israel and by Palestinians.

Shi’a* – A denomination of Islam.

Sunni* – A denomination of Islam.

United Nations* – The United Nations, established in 1945, has 192 member states. Its official languages are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish.

Yahweh* – The Hebrew name for God.

*These words do not appear in this documentary but may be helpful for further understanding.

Abrahamic Religions

The Abrahamic religions are important to understanding Israel's culture and languages. There are three Abrahamic religions: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Judaism, the oldest of the religions, is the foundation to both Islam and Christianity. All three religions are monotheistic have a direct lineage to Abraham. Therefore, the origins of the Abrahamic religions' people and language are Semitic.

Judaism is believed to have begun in Israel and Judah the first and second millennium BC. According to the Hebrew Bible, Jewish people are God's Chosen People and He has made the area from the Euphrates River to the River of Egypt their Promised Land. In Genesis, one of the books in the Torah, the Hebrew Bible, which is written in Classical Hebrew, God tells a man named Abraham, "I will make of thee a great nation." Although his wife Sarah is at first believed to be barren she eventually gives birth to Isaac, who becomes the ancestor of the Israelites. Jewish people call God Yahweh.

Christianity began in Israel in the mid-first century, about AD 33. Jesus Christ, who Christians believe to be the Messiah the Old Testament spoke of, was born around 5 BC in Bethlehem, which was then part of the kingdom of Judah and is now a Palestinian city in the central West Bank; it's about six miles south of Jerusalem, Israel. He grew up in Nazareth, which was not an important city at the time but now is the largest city in the North District of Israel and is called "the Arab capital of Israel." Jesus was born a virgin birth to Mary, and his human father's genealogical lineage traces back to King David and on to Abraham. Jesus' life and resurrection is told in the Gospels, and the New Testament, which was written in Koine Greek. Jesus himself spoke Aramaic, which was the central language of Israel during the time He lived.

Unlike Judaism and Christianity, Islam did not begin in Israel. Islam began in AD 610 in Saudi Arabia when the prophet Muhammad had a revelation of the first verse of the Qu'ran, which became the holy book of Islam and is written in Classical Arabic. Muhammad was born around AD 570 near Mecca, and Muslims (followers of Islam) believe he descended from Abraham's son Ishmael. Ishmael is Abraham's oldest son, born not to his wife, Sarah, whom he thought was barren and therefore could not fulfill God's promise of making him a great nation, but to her handmaiden, Hagar. Islam in Arabic literally means "submission," and within a century of Muhammad's revelation Islam had reached from the Atlantic Ocean to Central Asia, expanding even wider in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries due to the Ottoman Empire. Muslims call God Allah.

Walls

In the documentary, we discover the role of walls in Israel. Walls have physical, spiritual, and metaphorical functions, in their religious, political, and cultural uses. In the

case of the Israeli West Bank Barrier the wall separates; in the case of the Wailing Wall, the wall unites.

Israeli West Bank Barrier

The Israeli West Bank Barrier is a separation barrier that the state of Israel is building on the West Bank for the purpose of physically dividing Israel and Palestine. Yitzhak Rabin, who was then prime minister of Israel, advocated for the structure in 1992 after an Israeli girl in her teens was murdered in Jerusalem. Two years later, construction began, but it has not yet been completed. In 2001, after the Dolphinarium discotheque suicide bombing, in which suicide bomber Saeed Hotari, of the Palestinian Hamas group, killed 21 teenagers and injured 132 when he blew himself up outside of a club in Tel Aviv, Israel, the grass-roots movement Fence for Life was formed by the people of Israel. Fence for Life is a non-partisan movement that has successfully worked to persuade the Israeli government to build the barrier as a security measure against attacks.

While the Israeli West Bank Barrier is important to the politics, culture, and geography of Israel, what makes the structure particularly relevant to our study of language is the naming of the barrier. The International Court of Justice proposed that it be called a wall, instead of a “barrier” or “fence,” to clarify the physicality of the structure.

Below are some common colloquial names for the Israeli West Bank Barrier.

Israeli names:

Separation fence

Security fence

Anti-terrorist fence

Palestinian names:

Racial segregation wall (in Arabic)

Apartheid wall (in English)

As you can see, the naming of the Israeli West Bank Barrier is politically charged. Those in Israel use names that suggest that they need to protect themselves from outside forces, which current events have shown to be the Palestinians. The Palestinians, on the other hand, use names that suggest that they are being ostracized.

Outside of the West Bank, journalists use the name “barrier” to avoid politicizing the separation structure.

The Western Wall/The Wailing Wall

Located on the western side of the Temple Mount, in the Old City of Jerusalem, the Western Wall is a Jewish religious site for prayer.

In the 10th century BC, Solomon’s Temple was built on the Temple Mount, according to the Tanakh, the Jewish bible or the Christian Old Testament. In 586 BC the Babylonians

destroyed it. Soon after, in 516 BC, the Second Temple was built. When King Herod the Great came to power, he expanded the temple and it became known as Herod's Temple. Technically speaking, the Second Temple was torn down to make Herod's Temple, but because Herod's expansion was done through such a process as to allow sacrificial rituals to continue without halt, Herod's Temple is interchangeably still called the Second Temple. The **Gemara**, a commentary on the **Mishnah** that Judah ha-Nasi wrote (together the Gemara and the Mishnah make up the Jewish religious text the Talmud), describes the temple architecture and temple life. Despite being a religious temple to **Yahweh**, God, Herod's Temple functioned more like a bazaar. It is the site of the famous story of Jesus and the Money Changes, recorded in the Christian Gospels, in which Jesus, drove people out, saying "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves," (Matthew 21:13). When he says, "It is written," he is referring to Isaiah 56:7, part of the Tanakh, which says, "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations," and instructs that whether they are Jewish or not, all people who obey God are allowed to come to the temple to pray to God. At the time, though, people were not coming to the temple to pray but to exchange money, as this was where Greek, Roman, and Jewish money was exchanged. Jesus predicts, in Matthew 24:2, that the temple will be destroyed. Indeed, in AD 70, the Romans destroyed Herod's Temple during the First Jewish-Roman War.

The Talmud, the Jewish holy book written around AD 200 to AD 500, explains that the temple was destroyed because of unreasonable hatred in the culture. However, Late Antiquity Jewish midrashic texts refer to a wall of the temple that would never be destroyed. Indeed, although the temple was destroyed, the retaining wall that supported the expansions to the Second Temple survived. This is known as the Western Wall. The Western Wall, which typically refers to the 187-foot section of the wall that is exposed, though other parts of the wall exist but are not as easily visible, has been set aside for prayer. It has become a place of pilgrimage. In the nineteenth century, Sephardic Jews met there to hear sermons in Ladino (see section "Ladino"). In the twentieth century, on D-Day, Jewish people met to pray for the success for the Allies in World War II. In the twenty-first century, there was a massive prayer rally (around 50,000 to 250,000 people) on August 10, 2005, in reaction to Israel's unilateral disengagement plan, which was enacted to expel Israeli's from the Gaza Strip and four communities in the West Bank.

In addition to the spoken and silent prayers, about three hundred years ago, people began writing their prayers on paper and placing them within the cracks of the wall. Prayers of petition that are written down are called **kvitel**, which is the Yiddish word for "note" (plural: *kvitlach*). These prayers are written in different languages; may be verses from the Torah; may be poetry; may be long or short requests; may be written in different colored ink; and may be written on anything from special parchment to whatever scrap of paper—even including candy wrappers—that someone has at hand. Two times a year, the prayers are buried in the Mount of Olives. Among the leaders who have placed their written prayers within the wall are Pope John Paul II, Hilary Clinton, and Barack Obama. The practice is so popular that the Israeli Telephone Company has set up a fax service that allows for the prayers of those who do not personally come to the wall to be positioned within the wall. In total, there are more than a million written prayers placed at the wall every year.

The Western Wall is oftentimes referred to as the Wailing Wall. Historically, it was referred to as the Western Wall in Hebrew. The name Wailing Wall comes from the

Arabic name *el-Mabka*, which means “Place of Weeping,” as Jewish people came in mourning to the wall after the temple had been demolished. Today, though, the Arabic word *al-Buraaq*, which refers to Muhammad’s Pegasus Buraq being tethered to the wall, is used instead.

Yiddish

Yiddish literally means “Jewish.” It is an **Ashkenazi** Jewish language written with the Hebrew alphabet. Yiddish is an amalgamation of Aramaic and Hebrew, which are Semitic languages that are part of the Afro-Asiatic language family (see section on Hebrew below), but were strongly influenced by German, Romance, and Slavic languages, which are part of the **Indo-European language family**, and is therefore considered **High German language**. Until the nineteenth century, it used a different typeface than Hebrew.

The language developed amongst the Jewish peoples living in medieval (approximately tenth century) Rhineland, Germany. As the language spread, it took on attributes of other languages. Eastern Yiddish, which tends toward Slavic influences and includes the **Litvish**, **Poylish**, and **Ukrainish** dialects, is the dominant form of the language. Western Yiddish, which includes the Midwestern, Northwestern, and Southwestern dialects, is barely spoken today.

Although Yiddish is commonly referred to as the “mother tongue” (*mame-loshn*) while Aramaic and Hebrew are together referred to as the “holy tongue” (*loshn-koydesh*), it is the language used by Jewish people—specifically **Orthodox** and the **Hasidic** Jews, who believe in traditions that were passed down orally and indicated in the **Talmud** as well as those written in the **Torah**—around the world today who follow the religion with a more strict interpretation. Interestingly, Yiddish is more often used because Hebrew is specially reserved for religious practices.

Therefore, Orthodox and Hasidic followers teach Yiddish as the first language to their children. In addition to being the primary language used at home, it is also taught in schools. Yiddish has an interesting gender component, though. Amongst the **Ashkenazi** people noted above, while men were taught both Hebrew and Yiddish, women were only taught to read Yiddish. Consequently, even today, Jewish fiction for women is sometimes marketed in Yiddish.

Yiddish became endangered during World War II, when many Jewish people were killed during the Holocaust. The language is flourishing now, though. There are about 215,000 people who speak the language in Israel, about 179,000 who speak the language in the United States of America, and many more people who speak the language around the world. In fact, it should be pointed out that although only about 20,000 people speak the language in Belgium, that is about 45% of the country’s Jewish population; which is interesting considering only about 3% of the Jewish population in Israel speak Yiddish. In Palestine, meanwhile, the language has almost exterminated. Among institutions of higher learning that teach the language are Columbia University, Harvard University, and Stanford University. There are Yiddish-language newspapers, books, and videos around the world.

Yiddish: Words Incorporated into the English Language

The United States has absorbed many Yiddish words into the English language. Some of these words include:

Bagel – a type of bread

Blintz – a crepe filled with cheese

Chutzpha – daring

Glitch – small setback

Klutz – someone who's clumsy

Kosher – refers to Jewish dietary laws but is also used to casually to mean allowed or appropriate

Kvetch – complain

Latke – potato pancake

Lox – smoked salmon, often served with bagels

Maven – an expert

Mazel Tov – Congratulations

Nosh – eat

Oy vey – An expression of complaint

Putz – jerk, fool

Schlep – to move or drag

Schmooze – to talk and network

Schmuck – idiot, oaf

Schtick – an act, usually comedic

Yenta – someone who gossips

Hebrew: General

Hebrew, like **Aramaic** is part of the **Canaanite languages group**, which is a **Semitic language**. **Arabic** (see Arabic section for more information) is also a Semitic language. Semitic languages are part of the larger **Afro-Asiatic language family**. (As the curriculum for the West Africa episode of "On the Road with Bob Holman," the Afro-Asiatic language family also includes such languages as Berber, which is spoken in West Africa.) As noted in the **Yiddish**, Hebrew is called the "holy tongue" (loshn-koydesh) because it is the language used in the **Hebrew bible**, the **Tanakh**. Hebrew can be broken into two categories: Classical, biblical Hebrew and contemporary Hebrew, which have different vocabulary and grammar.

Hebrew: Classical and Biblical

Classical or biblical Hebrew is the language of the Torah. Today, biblical Hebrew is considered a dead language in the sense that it is not widely spoken, except in study or prayer. However, it still remains an important and popular language today. Archeologists, linguists, scholars, and theologians study it, as do children in public schools in Israel.

Classical Hebrew is the primary language (Aramaic is also used) of the Hebrew or Jewish bible, which is referred to as the **Tanakh** in Judaism and the Old Testament in Christianity. (Protestant Christian bibles only include the Tanakh in their Old Testament, while Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox bibles include additional writings in their Old Testament; all three branches of Christianity also include a New Testament, which they believe is a fulfillment of the Old Testament.) The language was used from about twelfth through the sixth centuries BC. Like many languages, Classical Hebrew underwent several incarnations. Among the variants of Biblical Hebrew are Archaic Biblical Hebrew, also called Old Hebrew or Paleo-Hebrew, which was used in from the tenth century to the sixth century BC, and is the language used in the Song of Moses (Exodus 15) and the Song of Deborah (Judges 5), and Late Biblical Hebrew, which was used from the fourth to the sixth century BC and is the language used in Ezra and Nehemiah. Most of the Hebrew Bible was written in the sixth century BC in the language simply referred to as Biblical Hebrew.

Biblical Hebrew, discussed above, is the language generally referred to when discussing Classical Hebrew, but there is also **Roman Era Hebrew**. The Romans came to power after the Greeks in about the second or first century BC, and Latin became the **lingua franca** of the Mediterranean region. During this time, the Hebrew language underwent a Golden Age, from the time the Romans gained power to about 500 BC, and a Silver Age, from about 500 BC to 60 BC. It was during this time that **Aramaic** (see section on Aramaic) became the **lingua franca** of the Middle East and greatly influenced Roman Era Hebrew. The language between the Greek and Roman eras (third century BC to first century AD) is the language that the Dead Sea Scrolls are written in, and is referred to as Dead Sea Scroll (DSS) Hebrew or **Qumran Hebrew**. Later during the Roman time, from about the first century AD to the fourth century AD (the time period after the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem), **Mishnaic Hebrew**, also referred to as **Early Rabbinic Hebrew** or **Tannaitic Hebrew**, took shape and also appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls as well as the **Mishnah** and **Tosefta** sections of the **Talmud**.

Classical Hebrew is the foundation for Samaritan Hebrew and modern Hebrew.

Hebrew: Modern

Modern Hebrew, which has its origins in Classical Hebrew, is, along with Arabic (see section on Arabic), an official and predominant language of Israel. About ten million people in Israel speak the language. About two hundred thousand people in the United States speak it.

What makes Hebrew such a fascinating language is that it came close to extinction but then was revived. Sometime after **Classical, Roman Era Hebrew** took on its **Mishnaic Hebrew** form, perhaps around second century AD, the language began to die out. The holy tongue remained in constant use for religious practices, such as prayer and instruction, and remained preserved for liturgical purposes, but was no longer the

dominant spoken language, at least in its Classical form. During medieval times, as Jewish people had relocated to other areas, the language began to morph. One prominent example of this is the **Ashkenazi Hebrew** that developed among the Jewish people who lived along the Rhine River in Germany, which had a branch that developed into **Yiddish** (see Yiddish section). As different people groups moved in, who spoke **Arabic**, **Ladino**, or Yiddish, only a distorted, **pidgin**-like version of Hebrew remained in use as a **lingua franca** for trading.

It wasn't until the nineteenth century that the revival of the Hebrew language began. Interestingly, the revival actually began as two separate movements—literary Hebrew in Europe and spoken Hebrew in Palestine—that eventually merged in the early 1900s. Even today, though, there are disparities between the written and the spoken form. It wasn't until the 1940s that spoken Hebrew found its way into literature. **Etgar Keret** is an example of one author who incorporates everyday spoken Hebrew, in the forms of dialect and slang, into his novels. Born in Ramat Gan, Israel, and currently living in Tel Aviv, he is the author of the comics *Jetlag*, *Tel Aviv*, *Actus Tragicus* (1999) and *Pizzeria Kamikaze* (2005) and the short story collections *The Bus Driver Who Wanted to Be God & Other Stories* (2004) and *The Nimrod Flipout* (2006).

Arabic: General

Arabic is the first language of about 280 million people and a Semitic language. It is an official language of 26 countries, primarily in the Middle East—including Israel—and North Africa. It is also one of the six official languages of the United Nations.

Arabic is a Central Semitic language, which is part of the larger Afro-Asiatic language family that also includes the Berber language, which you will see in the West Africa documentary. **Central Semitic languages** include Aramaic (a Northwest Semitic language; see section “Aramaic”), Hebrew (a Canaanite language; see section “Hebrew”), and Phoenician (a Canaanite language). Arabic stems from the Old North Arabian, or Ancient North Arabian, dialect, and is in fact the only form of it that exists today.

Like Aramaic and many other languages, Arabic has had many incarnations. From around the 6th century BC to the 6th century AD, the language was in the form of the Old North Arabian; from the 7th century to the 9th century AD this gave way to Classical Arabic; today, Modern Standard Arabic is the language used for printed materials, though there are also regional, colloquial or dialectical forms of Arabic.

Arabic is the lingua franca of the afterlife, according to some Muslims. They consider it to be God's chosen language to speak to man here on earth as well. Some people say it was the language humans first spoke. According to that line of reasoning, Arabic is the language from which all other languages are derived. However, while the Arabic language may be commonly associated with Muslims, it is actually not most Muslim's first language. Muslims around the world often speak other languages and only use Classical Arabic for religious purposes. Likewise, there are many people who are not Muslim who speak Modern Standard Arabic and Colloquial Arabic. Among these speakers are Mizrahi Jews.

Old North Arabian

Old North Arabian, also sometimes referred to as Ancient North Arabian, is a dead language. It was spoken in the Middle East, probably in the countries of Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Syria, from about the 6th century BC to the 6th century AD. This would have been before the rise of Islam in 630s.

Old North Arabian is a general name for several dialects that existed during that time period. These dialects include Dedanitic/Lihyanitic, Dumaitic, Hasaitic, Hismaic, Safaitic, Taymanitic, and Thamudic.

Today, we know the language existed because of ancient inscriptions found in the Middle East. Old North Arabian was written in the South Arabian alphabet, which branched off from the Proto-Sinaitic alphabet around the 9th century BC. The South Arabian alphabet became extinct as the Arabic alphabet rose in popularity.

Classical Arabic

Classical Arabic, also known as Qur'anic or Koranic Arabic, is the liturgical and literary language of Islam. It is the language of the Qu'ran, the Islamic religious text that Muslims believe to be the proof of Muhammad's prophethood.

The foundations of Classical Arabic are found in the Old North Arabian language. It is, in fact, the only form of the Old North Arabian language that exists today, as Classical Arabic is the only language the majority of Muslims use for prayers. Incidentally, Classical Arabic was spoken from the 7th century to the 9th century AD, the time period in which Islam rose to influence.

Today, Classical Arabic is the only branch of the Old North Arabian dialect group still in existence. Its existence is based solely on it being the liturgical and literary language of Islam. Muslims speak other languages commonly.

Modern Standard Arabic

Today, Modern Standard Arabic is the predominant form of the Arabic language. It stems from Classical Arabic and has gone on to influence such languages as Portuguese, Sicilian, and Spanish along the Mediterranean. Arab countries recognize Modern Standard Arabic as their official language, with the Middle East and North Africa using it as their literary language. There are estimated to be between 300 million to 1 billion Arabic speakers worldwide.

Arabic is used in formal speech and most writing. Most newspapers and magazines are written in Modern Standard Arabic. It is the only form of Arabic taught in schools in Arab countries. Consequently, it is also the language of reading primers, literature, and official documents.

Colloquial Arabic

Although Modern Standard Arabic is the official language and literary language of Arab countries, there are actually many colloquial or dialectal varieties of contemporary Arabic. The varieties tend to stem from regional differences. Colloquial Arabic is generally the first language learned until children learn Modern Standard Arabic. Since Modern Standard Arabic is generally the literary form of Arabic, Colloquial Arabic is

usually only spoken. However, some writers choose to use the various forms of Colloquial Arabic in their plays and poetry.

Judeo-Arabic falls under the categories of both Colloquial Arabic and Classical Arabic. It is not a single dialect but rather a collection of dialects. It generally refers to the dialects of Arabic that Jewish people—specifically Mizrahi Jews and Sephardi Jews—who live or lived in Arab countries spoke. Today, Judeo-Arabic is considered an endangered language. Many Jewish people who were living in Arab countries fled back to Israel or to France during the Arab-Israeli War of 1948. Displaced, they resorted to the predominant languages of the countries to which they moved.

Palestinian Arabic is another dialect or collection of dialects of Colloquial Arabic. It is spoken by Arab citizens in Israel and by Palestinians. Palestinian Arabic is a Levantine Arabic influenced by the Aramaic language (see section “Aramaic: General Information” for further information).

Ladino: General

Ladino is the popular name for the endangered Judeo-Spanish language. Other common names for it include Djudeo-Espanyol, Djudeo-Kasteyano, Djudezmo, Judezo, and Spaniolit.

As some of the names suggest, Ladino is principally a Jewish form of Spanish. Ladino is in the same language family as the romance language Spanish: the Indo-European. The Spanish that influenced the language is not modern Spanish, however. Rather, it is Old Spanish, or Old Castilian.

Many Ladino words, however, are derived from Semitic languages, such as Aramaic and Hebrew. Unlike Spanish, which falls under the Indo-European language family, Hebrew and Aramaic, as Semitic languages, fall under the Afro-Asiatic language family.

While the Spanish romance language and the Aramaic and Hebrew Semitic languages are the dominant influences on Ladino, many other languages—and cultures—have shaped the language as well. These languages include Arabic, part of the Semitic group of the Afro-Asiatic language family; Greek, part of the Hellenic group of the Indo-European family; and Turkish, part of the Turkic group in the Altaic language family. Like so many other languages we are studying in these documentaries, place has played a significant role on Ladino. Depending on where a speaker lives, Ladino has been known to pick up words from Bosnian, Bulgarian, French, and Portuguese. It is interesting to note that Ladino played a role for Arab and Berber speakers, whom you will hear about in the West Africa documentary, when Castilians found Sephardim helpful in the colonization of Northern Africa.

The language originally came into existence as Jewish people translated Hebrew works into Castilian. As the cultures came into contact with one another, their languages influenced each other. Jewish people picked up some Castilian while Castilian people picked up some of the Semitic languages. The languages evolved as the cultures interacted and ladino was formed.

Ladino: Modern

Ladino is at risk for extinction for a number of reasons. As its name Judeo-Spanish suggests, it is a language that was brought into existence because of a mixing of

cultures. The probability that Ladino continues to evolve to take on more of the Spanish language—which today is more likely to be modern Spanish than Castilian—means that the language could eventually become completely absorbed in Spanish as a matter of convenience.

Other threats to Ladino are more menacing. Most Ladino speakers are Sephardic Jewish people, those who lived along the Iberian Peninsula before they were exiled in the late 15th century. On March 31, 1492, Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon, as Spain's joint Catholic Monarchs delivered the Alhambra Decree that stated that all Jewish people had to leave Spain and Spanish colonies within four months. This was not formally revoked until 1968. In 1654, Jewish people were expelled from Dutch Brazil/New Holland, the northern part of Brazil, by the Dutch, who had colonized the region in 1630. Many relocated to the Caribbean, where Ladino came into contact with Papiamentu, the African-Romance creole, and a mix of the languages, which was more heavily Papiamentu than Ladino, was used to trade.

The Holocaust during World War II did not only displace Jewish people but systematically attempted to wipe them—and consequently, their language—out. The Nazis deported and murdered more than 75%—about 50,000—Salonika/Thessaloniki. The Jewish people who were living in that region of Greece were Ladino-speakers; however, as you will see in the section entitled “Yiddish,” there are languages spoken by Jewish people in other regions of the world that were endangered because of the Holocaust.

Today, most Ladino speakers continue to be Sephardic Jews. The largest number of Ladino speakers are in Israel. They are estimated to be approximately 1000,000 Ladino speakers there. Coming in at about 2,000 less than that is Turkey. After that, the number of Ladino speakers in a given country drops significantly. Here in the United States, it is estimated that there are only about 300 people who speak Ladino.

Resources

Wikipedia entry for Western Yiddish: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Yiddish

Wikipedia entry for Eastern Yiddish: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Yiddish

Wikipedia entry for List of English Words of Yiddish Origin:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_English_words_of_Yiddish_origin

Wikipedia entry for Yiddish: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yiddish_language

Wikipedia entry for List of Yiddish Poets:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Yiddish_language_poets

Wikipedia entry for Yiddish Literature: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yiddish_literature