

Google Arts & Culture

Learn Together: Mo Amin's Africa

"Mohamed Amin with still cameras," Mohamed Amin/Camerapix. Mohamed Amin Foundation



Using the lesson plan and Google Arts & Culture resources

This lesson plan is designed to support you as you explore Google Arts & Culture stories and exhibits related to the lesson topic. The images you will see here are just a sample of the media—texts, images, audio, and video—available to you on the Google Arts & Culture website and app. As the lesson uses only resources found on GA&C, it cannot present every aspect of a given topic. A parent or teacher might be guiding you through the lesson, or you might choose to complete it on your own.

All you need to access the lesson is an internet connection and a web browser or the Google Arts & Culture app. You may want to take notes, whether you do that digitally or with paper and pen.

The lesson plan has an **introduction**, which will describe the topic and provide some background information that will help you understand what you are seeing, hearing, and reading. Then the lesson will take you on a journey from one **Story** to another, fill in some details along the way, and pose **questions** that will help you focus on important ideas. A **quiz** and a link for **exploring the topic further** are followed by **ideas for projects** related to the lesson topic that you can do at home or in the classroom.

As noted, the lesson plan includes **questions** about the main stories, and there is also a **quiz**. You will want to write answers to the questions in a notebook or on a piece of paper. Then you can check all your answers when you've finished the lesson.

Resources on the Google Arts & Culture website include Themes, Stories, Museum Views, items, and images.

- ❖ **Themes** bring together stories, exhibits, collections, images, audio, and video files that relate to a topic.
- ❖ In a **Story**, scroll to view each new page. Audio and videos on slides will play automatically. Clicking on an image title will take you to a page with more information about it.
- ❖ In **Museum Views**, you move through a 3D space. Click to move forward. Click, hold, and move the cursor left or right to turn.
- ❖ An **item** will take you to an individual **image**, where you can zoom in and sometimes read more about the artefact.



In this lesson, you will learn about:

- ❖ The historic work of photojournalist Mohamed Amin.
- ❖ How Amin photographed African governments as they shifted away from the colonial era.
- ❖ Amin's images of famine in Ethiopia and how they moved the world.
- ❖ How Amin photographed the nature and sports of East Africa.

You will:

- ❖ Explore some stories and exhibits about Mo Amin's life and photography.
- ❖ Answer some questions about what you have seen and read.

This lesson will take **30–45 minutes** to complete.

[“Mohamed Amin during the Bokassa Coronation ceremony,” 1977. Mohamed Amin Foundation](#)

[“Mohamed Amin in Aden,” Mohamed Amin. Mohamed Amin Foundation](#)





Learn Together: Mo Amin's Africa

Mohamed Amin was a photographer and photojournalist from Kenya. He was known as “six-camera Mo” for his ability to take pictures and videos everywhere, under any conditions. From the 1960s until his death in the 1990s, he photographed nearly every leader and political or social event in sub-Saharan Africa.

Mo Amin became the eyes of the world in Africa, publicizing events such as a violent revolution in Zanzibar, a famine in Ethiopia, and the brutality of dictators. But he was also dedicated to changing the world’s stereotypical images of Africa as a land of tragedy. His photographs showed the innovations, joys, and achievements of Africans. He was especially dedicated to showcasing his country of Kenya and its accomplishments after gaining independence.

This lesson will show you just a few of the millions of photographs in the Mohamed Amin Collection. You will see how Amin captured the full humanity of Africans in the 20th century through his photographs.

As you view the exhibits and stories in this lesson, think about these questions:

- ❖ How did Mo Amin gain access to the people he photographed?
- ❖ How did the world react to Amin’s photographs?
- ❖ How did Amin’s career as a photographer affect his personal life?

The Life of Mohamed Amin

Mo Amin was born in Nairobi, Kenya in 1943, the son of Indian immigrants who then moved from Kenya to Tanganyika, now Tanzania. The first time Amin held a camera, he fell in love with photography. As a student he worked as a school photographer and started a photography business, Camerapix.

As a young man, Amin discovered a knack for news photography and photojournalism. He was the perfect combination of brave, stubborn and friendly, winning over politicians, dictators, and ordinary people in order to capture them on camera. He boldly traveled across the continent and around the world to tell stories, enduring imprisonment, torture, and the loss of an arm in an accident. None of these stopped him from telling Africa's story.

Amin died in an airplane hijacking in 1996, but his son Salim continues his work with Camerapix, documenting Africa and the world.

Click [here](#) to learn about the life of Mo Amin.

Then come back to answer these questions:

1. What subjects did Amin photograph when he first started out as a photography student?
2. What was Mo Amin's first big photojournalism story?
3. What are some examples of Amin's determination to take photographs?

To read an interview with Mo Amin's son, photographer Salim Amin, click [here](#).

["Young Mohamed Amin with his new business, Camerapix," Mohamed Amin, 1963. Mohamed Amin Foundation](#)



Photographing the New Africa

After World War II, European colonialism in sub-Saharan Africa began to fall apart. Countries such as France, Belgium, and the United Kingdom could not afford to keep control of huge areas of Africa, and Africans would no longer tolerate foreign rulers. Dozens of countries shook off their colonial governments, some peacefully, others violently. Mo Amin photographed nearly all of these changes.

[“Self-styled Field Marshal John Okello,” Mohamed Amin. The Mohamed Amin Foundation](#)



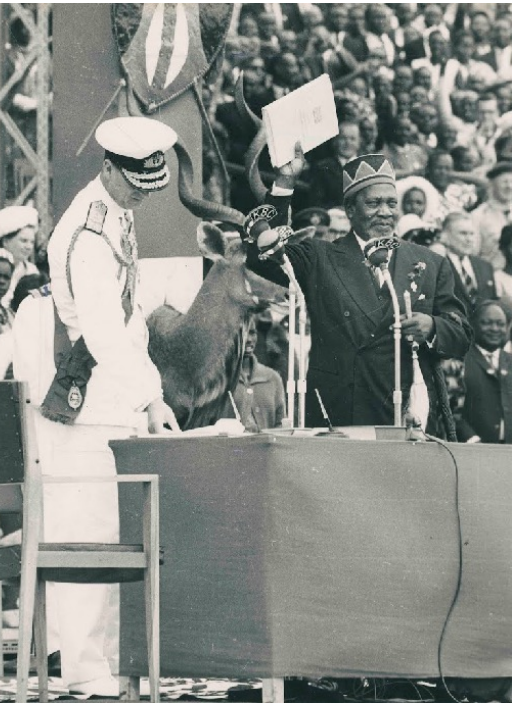
In the early 1960s, the island nation of [Zanzibar](#) experienced a violent revolution. Amin was able to get a boat to the country even as its airports shut down, documenting training camps set up by the Soviet Union. He also photographed the joyous independence of his home country of [Kenya](#). Through an unlikely coincidence, he convinced brutal Ugandan dictator [Idi Amin](#) to allow Mo to photograph his regime. Throughout his career, Amin photographed nearly every African leader of the 20th century.



[“Idi Amin Dada,” Mohamed Amin, 1975. The Mohamed Amin Foundation](#)

After reading about Amin’s photographs of African leaders, come back to answer these questions:

1. How did Mo Amin gain access to Uganda under dictator Idi Amin?
2. What is the mood of Amin’s photographs of the ceremony of Kenyan independence? What details in the photographs create this mood?
3. Why was it important information that the Soviet Union was training soldiers in Zanzibar?



[“Kenya becomes a Republic,” Mohamed Amin, 1963. The Mohamed Amin Foundation](#)

To learn about the people of Kenya Amin photographed, click [here](#).

Touching the World

In 1984, a combination of civil war and drought led to a massive famine, or deadly food shortage, in Ethiopia, the country directly to the north of Amin's home of Kenya. Mohamed Amin documented the thousands of starving families in photographs and on film. Though Amin had photographed brutal violence and refugees before, he said the Ethiopian famine was the most shocking event he ever witnessed in his life.

Amin's images shook the world, inspiring one of the largest and most widespread acts of charity in history. Irish musician Bob Geldof organized the celebrity-filled concert Live Aid, while American musician Harry Belafonte helped record the song "We Are the World." National governments and charities donated food and other aid. Amin was hailed as "the man who moved the conscience of humankind."

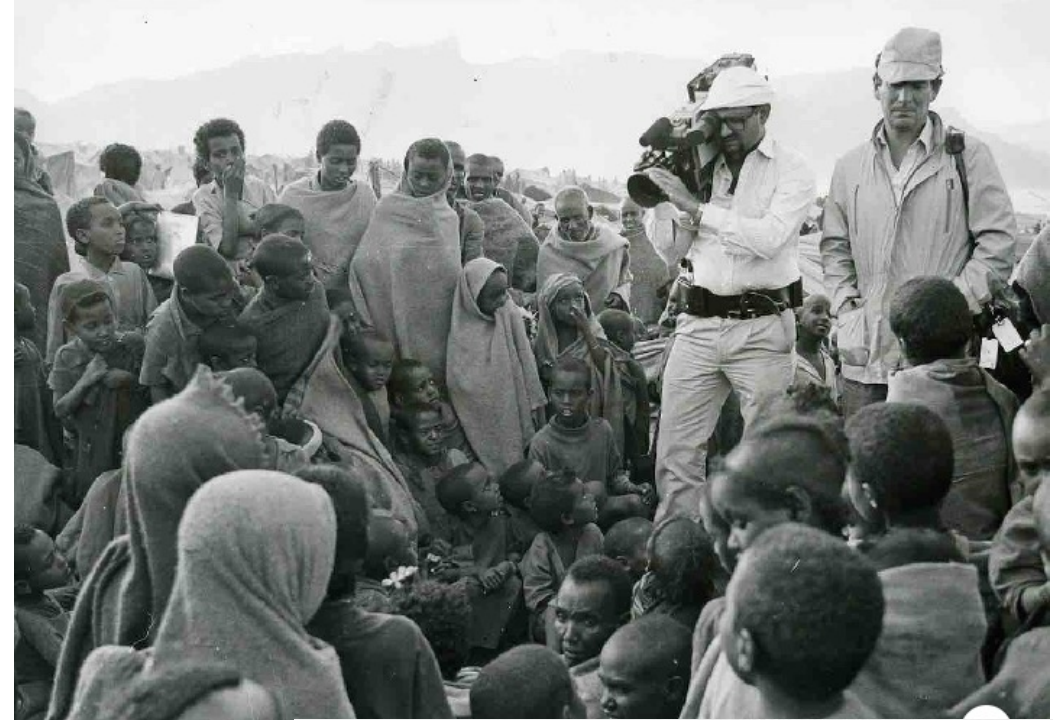
["Mohamed Amin and Michael Buerk," 1984. Mohamed Amin Foundation](#)

Click [here](#) to learn about Amin documenting the famine, and [here](#) to learn about the musical response.

Then come back to answer these questions:

1. What did Mo Amin say was the cause of the famine in Ethiopia?
2. What actions did Bob Geldof take after seeing Amin's photographs?
3. How did Amin change the fate of the people in Ethiopia during the famine?

["Ethiopian famine victims," Mohamed Amin, 1984. Mohamed Amin Foundation](#)





Game and Games

Mo Amin did not only photograph serious events. He took his camera with him on holidays and to document his favorite sports. Two of his favorite subjects were Africa's wildlife and the Safari Rally, a grueling cross-country road race in east Africa.

Amin often traveled to Kenya's world-famous game parks with his family. Though he was supposed to be on vacation, Amin couldn't resist bringing his cameras and photographing Africa's legendary wildlife, including elephants, rhinos, and giraffes.

Mohamed Amin and his son Salim went to the Safari Rally every year for decades, photographing cars and drivers as they navigated thousands of kilometers of mud, dust, animals, and other obstacles.

["Aziz Tejpar Gharial & Natu Vadgama," Mohamed Amin, 1975. Mohamed Amin Foundation](#)

Click [here](#) to learn about Amin's wildlife photography and [here](#) to learn about the Safari Rally. Then come back to answer these questions:

1. What was Amin the Elephant famous for?
2. The Safari Rally is held around Easter. Why does this make it extra challenging for drivers?
3. How did Salim Amin's feel about his father taking photographs during vacations and on trips?

To learn about Amin's photographs of rhino conservationist Michael Werikhe, click [here](#).

["Giraffe," Mohamed Amin. Mohamed Amin Foundation](#)



Quiz

Read the questions and write your answer in your notebook or on a piece of paper.

1. What was Mohamed Amin's family background?
2. Describe the Camerapix business and what Amin did with it.
3. Why did Amin's photographs of the revolution in Zanzibar gain world attention?
4. Why did Amin photograph European leaders such as the British Royal Family as well as African leaders?
5. What were the causes of the Ethiopian famine in the 1980s?
6. Besides their suffering, what did Amin hope to show about the famine victims in Ethiopia?
7. How did Amin's photographs help wildlife conservation in Africa?
8. What problems prevent competitors from finishing the Safari Rally?

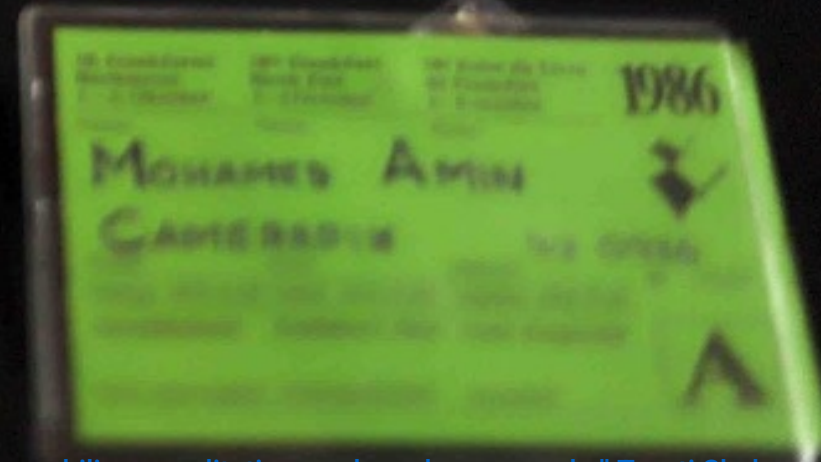
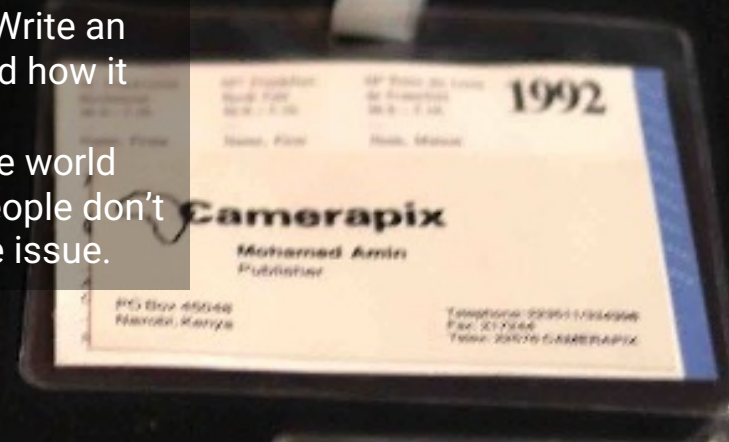
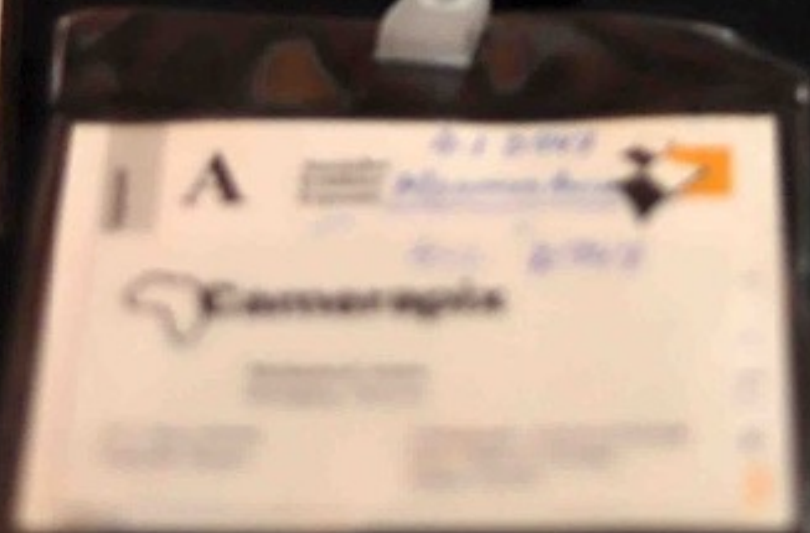
Explore Further

You have learned a bit about the life and work of Mo Amin. To learn more, click [here](#).

It's Your Turn!

In this lesson, you learned about Kenyan photojournalist Mo Amin. Here are some ideas for projects that you can do at home or in the classroom.

- ❖ Read [this story](#) about the equipment that Amin packed to travel to a breaking news event. Imagine you are a photojournalist covering an important event. Make a packing list or draw how you would pack your own bag. What items would be similar to Amin's? What items would be different?
- ❖ Think of a photograph of a recent news event that had an impact on you. Write an email to the photographer explaining how the photograph affected you and how it changed how you think or what you did about an issue.
- ❖ Mo Amin tried to show a positive side of Africa that much of the rest of the world did not see. Think of an issue in your school that has a side you believe people don't see. Try to take some photographs that show the lesser-known side of the issue.



["Memorabilia accreditation cards and press cards," Trupti Shah, Mohamed Amin Foundation](#)

Answers

The Life of Mohamed Amin

1. As a student, Amin photographed fashion and sports.
2. Mo Amin's first big photojournalism story was the revolution in Zanzibar.
3. Answers will vary. Amin took a boat to the island of Zanzibar when its airports were shut down. He was tortured in prison there. He dressed in formal wear to sneak into the coronation of the Emperor of the Central African Republic. He returned to photography only 3 months after losing an arm.

Photographing the New Africa

1. Mo Amin introduced himself over the phone to a Ugandan official, who assumed he was related to Idi Amin because they shared the same last name.
2. Amin's photographs are proud and joyful. They show crowds of people smiling, dancing, and waving during a large ceremony.
3. The revolution in Zanzibar took place during the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. Both sides took part in conflicts all over the world. If the Soviet Union was in Zanzibar, the Soviets and the U.S. were likely to interfere in other places in Africa to try to gain on each other.

Touching the World

1. Amin said that indifference, or the world not caring, was the cause of the famine.
2. Bob Geldof organized Band Aid, a group that recorded the charity single "Do They Know It's Christmas," and then Live Aid, a concert broadcast from London and Philadelphia, USA.
3. Amin's photographs forced people around the world to pay attention to the famine, and many people and governments felt moved to help by providing food and aid. This may have saved many people's lives.

Game and Games

1. Amin the Elephant had the longest and heaviest tusks in Africa.
2. Easter is in the middle of the rainy season in Kenya, turning much of the rally route to mud.
3. Mo Amin's son enjoyed spending time with his father at the Safari Rally and learning to take photos.

Answers

Quiz

1. Mohamed Amin's parents were Indian Muslims who immigrated to Kenya for his father's work.
2. Camerapix was Amin's photography business. At first, he was hired to be a photographer, but it became a photojournalism business. It had offices all across Africa to get photos of important events across the continent.
3. Amin photographed Soviet training camps in Zanzibar, showing that the revolution had become part of the global Cold War.
4. Amin photographed the transition between European colonial power in Africa and African power, so he photographed the outgoing European rulers as well as the African rulers.
5. The famine was caused by a long civil war combined with a drought.
6. Amin hoped to show the dignity of the Ethiopian people as well as their suffering.
7. Amin showed the beauty of African wildlife and also publicized the efforts of individual conservationists, encouraging people to join them.
8. Competitors may not finish the Safari Rally because they get stuck in mud, their cars break down due to bad roads and dust, competitors get lost, or they become exhausted.



["Mohamed Amin with Ugandan child soldiers,"](#)
[Mohamed Amin. Mohamed Amin Foundation](#)