Objectives
The student will begin to understand the recent history of Nigeria and the impact of history and geography upon current events in the region; identify the current challenges facing Nigeria as a new democracy and a developing nation; identify standards of free and fair elections in democratic nations.

Time
One to Two Class Periods

Materials
Students will need copies of the handouts and articles cited below or computers with Internet access.

No special textbooks or materials are required

Maps of Africa and books on the history and geography of Africa may certainly be useful.

Subject: World History, Government, Geography

Background: Nigeria is Africa's most populous nation - one-fifth of all Africans are Nigerian. Nigeria is also the world's eighth largest oil producer, although the majority of Nigerians remain poor. Stability in Nigeria is important not only for humanitarian reasons but for the overall stability of West Africa. Nigeria is especially important to the United States since it is its fifth largest supplier of oil and after 9/11 the U.S. has tried to reduce its reliance on oil from the Mideast. For most of its 40 year history, Nigeria has been ruled by the military. Study of the elections in Nigeria will promote understanding the development of democracy there and in other countries with significant history of military rule.

Introduction: Discuss the history of Nigeria with your students.
1960: Nigeria gains independence from Great Britain
1965-66: Charges of voting irregularities and riots followed elections
1976 - 1979: Rule of General Olusegun Obasanjo; he voluntarily gives up power to a civilian government
1979-1983: Second Republic under President Shehu Shagari
1983: Coup led by Major General Muhammad Buhari
1993: Moshood Abiola wins presidential election yet the military annuls the election and imprisons him; he dies in prison nearly 4 years later
1995: Nine government critics, including Nobel Prize winning author Ken Saro-Wiwa, are publicly hanged; other nations denounce this action
1998: General Abdulsalami Abubakar is sworn in as Nigeria's president. Military leaders agree to election
1999: General Olusegun Obasanjo wins presidential election with a reported 63% of the vote. Former President Jimmy Carter, states: "There was a wide disparity between the number of voters observed at the polling stations and the final result that has been reported from several states."
2000: Muslim-Christian violence sparked by the introduction of Sharia (Islamic law) in several Northern states
2003 19 April - First civilian-run presidential elections since end of military rule. Olusegun Obasanjo elected for second term with more than 60% of vote. EU poll observers cite "serious irregularities". EU poll observers cite "serious irregularities".
2007 April - Umaru Yar'Adua of the ruling People's Democratic Party is proclaimed winner of the presidential election.
2008 February - Tribunal upholds election of Umaru Yar'Adua as president following challenge by rivals who wanted the vote annulled because of vote rigging.
Activities

1. Note that Nigeria has been ruled by military leaders for much of its 40-year history. What might account for this? Consider and analyze the following statement by General Abdusalami Abubakarer:

"All along - as far back as 1979, '72 - the military have been wanting to hand over, but because of one thing or another, the politicians, the civilians, fail to do things correctly and the military thought they should intervene to correct these anomalies."

--NewsHour, 10/21/98
For a 1999 NewsHour interview with President Obasanjo, see:

2. Have your students read and discuss the following NewsHour story on the 2003 elections in Nigeria. http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/jan-june03/nigeria_4-23.html. Then have students read the NewsHour Story on the 2007 elections in Nigeria.
http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/jan-june07/nigeria_4-23.html. What similarities are there? What differences?

3. Have your students meet in small groups and role-play acting as an international elections committee. Ask them to determine:

- Standards for free, fair, democratic elections (Would they be the same for all nations? Do we expect no irregularities as reported by a free press and independent observers, some small amount of irregularities, or simply improvement over the past?)

- Using what you know about Nigeria from the NewsHour Extra stories, try to determine whether or not Nigeria has met the standards (How is this determined and by whom?) What else about the situation does the story not tell you? If you were a reporter what other angles to the story would you need to research to answer this question?

- Consequences for nations that do not meet the standards (public denouncement by other nations and international organizations, recourse in domestic or international courts, economic sanctions, severing of diplomatic ties, military action, etc.)

Students share the results of their discussions. Differences in group determinations are discussed. (See the information taken from the Carter Center below)

NDI and The Carter Center believe that an accurate and complete assessment of any election must take into account all aspects of the electoral process. These include:

- the legal framework for elections
- an accurate and complete voters register
- the campaign period
- the voting process
- the counting process
- the tabulation of results
- election petitions and the application of sanctions for election violations
- the process for the transfer of power

All activities in the pre-election period, including electoral preparations and the overall political environment, must be given considerable weight when evaluating the democratic nature of elections. The team does not pre-judge the overall process in this report and realizes that no election can be viewed in isolation from the political context in which it takes place.

Extension:
Have students use the Internet to research violence between Nigeria and neighboring Cameroon. How has conflict between these two countries contributed to unrest in Nigeria? What is the outlook for the future, in terms of lasting peace with Cameroon?

Discussion Questions:
1. What challenges face Nigeria and other new democracies, especially those in developing countries?
   · debt (approx. $30 billion)
   · corruption of government officials
   · regional, tribal, and religious differences and clashes
   · AIDS (low rate in Nigeria provides an opportunity to prevent further spread)
   · building of civil society and institutions
   · political repression
   · restoration / availability of public services
   · oil revenues that benefit only a few in power (reportedly siphoned off by military, does not benefit those in oil-rich regions)
   · development of infrastructure
   · foreign and domestic investment

2. Compare / contrast the current situation in Nigeria with that in Iraq.
   · recent/current transition to democracy
   · history of repressive rulers
   · desire of some for the rule of Islamic law
   · massive oil reserves, profits in the hands of a few thus far
   · past colonization by Great Britain

3. What role should the U.S. and other wealthy nations play in helping Nigeria and other such nations develop economically and politically, if any? Students should consider the history of slave trade and colonialism; the benefits wealthy industrialized nations have gained from poorer nations, such as raw materials; and the possible negative consequences of not helping these nations. Then consider options such as the following.
   · Forgive debts
   · Invest in infrastructure, business, and education
   · Provide training in the development of civil society and institutions
   · Provide humanitarian aid
   · Provide technology