

# GHANA MALI SONGHAI

WORLD HISTORY

# APPLYING COMMON CORE

ACTIVITIES TO MEET ANCHOR STANDARDS



CHARLIE BOONE

**APPLYING  
COMMON  
CORE**

**WORLD HISTORY**

# **GHANA MALI SONGHAI**

**CHARLIE BOONE**



**SOCIAL STUDIES SCHOOL SERVICE**  
CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA



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# Introduction

## Goals

The main goal of this book is to help students develop skills outlined in the Common Core Standards by clarifying what the standards are asking for and by giving teachers specific activities they can use to address the standards.

## Organization

The book is mostly organized by the categories into which Common Core places its standards. The first three chapters are “Key Ideas and Details,” “Craft and Structure,” and “Integration of Knowledge and Ideas.” Because “Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity” is addressed every time students read, it does not have its own chapter. Also, because it is common for many writing categories to overlap on a paper, the fourth chapter covers all the writing standards and is divided into the three main paper types: argumentative, informative, and narrative.

Activities open with an introductory page that includes every standard covered by the activities, directions, estimated lesson length, and additional teaching ideas. At the back of the book are selected answers for the reading activities.

## Tracking Common Core Standards

On page 3, there is a chart that can help you track which Common Core Standards you have addressed and with which activities.

## Narrative Writing

Narrative writing is not required for social studies teachers, which is why there is no WHST.6-8.3. However, this form of writing was included in this book (W.6.3–W.8.3) because numerous social studies teachers also teach language arts, for the many educators who find creative writing a valuable way to explore history, and because other required writing standards can be covered with narrative writing.

## Common Core Standards

If a teacher covers the six reading activities and three papers outlined in this book, he or she will have addressed every 6–8 History/Social Studies Common Core Standard at least once. Although it is not expected that teachers cover every standard in each unit of study, this gives teachers a great way to see examples of every standard and have numerous assignments to choose from.

# Common Core Standards

## READING

### Key Ideas and Details

#### **RH.6-8.1**

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

#### **RH.6-8.2**

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

» *Summarize primary or secondary sources.*

#### **RH.6-8.3**

Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).

» *Summarize the steps of a process or historical event.*

### Craft and Structure

#### **RH.6-8.4**

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

» *Use context to decipher the meanings of difficult words.*

#### **RH.6-8.5**

Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).

» *Determine how the author has ordered the information.*

#### **RH.6-8.6**

Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

#### **RH.6-8.7**

Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

» *Interpret a reading with a visual.*

#### **RH.6-8.8**

Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

#### **RH.6-8.9**

Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

### Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

#### **RH.6-8.10**

By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

## SPEAKING AND LISTENING

### Comprehension and Collaboration

#### **SL.6.1–SL.8.1**

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6–8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

## WRITING

### Text Types and Purposes

#### **WHST.6-8.1**

Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

» *Argumentative writing.*

#### **WHST.6-8.2**

Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.

» *Informative writing.*

#### **W.6.3–W.8.3**

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

» *Creative writing. (This is not required for social studies teachers.)*

### Production and Distribution of Writing

#### **WHST.6-8.4**

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization,

and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

» *Write for a specific audience.*

#### **WHST.6-8.5**

With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

» *Use writing process.*

#### **WHST.6-8.6**

Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas clearly and efficiently.

» *Publish writing for an audience.*

### Research to Build and Present Knowledge

#### **WHST.6-8.7**

Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

» *Research to answer a question.*

#### **WHST.6-8.8**

Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

» *Use multiple credible sources when researching and summarize findings in own words.*

#### **WHST.6-8.9**

Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

» *Support essays with information or quotes from texts.*

### Range of Writing

#### **WHST.6-8.10**

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.



# Tracking Common Core Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY	Assignment	Assignment	Assignment	Assignment
<u><b>RH.6-8.1</b></u>				
<u><b>RH.6-8.2</b></u>				
<u><b>RH.6-8.3</b></u>				
<u><b>RH.6-8.4</b></u>				
<u><b>RH.6-8.5</b></u>				
<u><b>RH.6-8.6</b></u>				
<u><b>RH.6-8.7</b></u>				
<u><b>RH.6-8.8</b></u>				
<u><b>RH.6-8.9</b></u>				
<u><b>RH.6-8.10</b></u>				
<u><b>SL.6.1–SL.8.1*</b></u>				
<u><b>WHST.6-8.1</b></u>				
<u><b>WHST.6-8.2</b></u>				
<u><b>W.6.3–W.8.3*</b></u>				
<u><b>WHST.6-8.4</b></u>				
<u><b>WHST.6-8.5</b></u>				
<u><b>WHST.6-8.6</b></u>				
<u><b>WHST.6-8.7</b></u>				
<u><b>WHST.6-8.8</b></u>				
<u><b>WHST.6-8.9</b></u>				
<u><b>WHST.6-8.10</b></u>				

\*Not required for social studies teachers.





# Key Ideas and Details

**ACTIVITY 1**

Timbuktu

**RH.6-8.1**

**RH.6-8.2**

**ACTIVITY 2**

The Songhai Empire

**RH.6-8.2**

**RH.6-8.3**

# ACTIVITY 1

**CHAPTER**  
Key Ideas and Details

**DURATION**  
1 class period

## Timbuktu

### COMMON CORE STANDARDS

#### **RH.6-8.1**

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

#### **RH.6-8.2**

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

#### **RH.6-8.7**

Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

#### **RH.6-8.9**

Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

#### **RH.6-8.10**

By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

### DIRECTIONS

- Students quietly look at the map of Timbuktu, considering three questions: What do I wonder? Why is it surprising that Timbuktu became an impressive city? Why might Timbuktu have become such an impressive city? Students share their responses to the questions with a neighbor, then the class.
- The class reads “Introduction” together, highlighting lines or phrases that give reasons for how Timbuktu became such an impressive city and underlining examples of it being an impressive city.
- Students read “Timbuktu’s Rise” with a partner, annotating the text as they did in the previous step. Students share what they highlighted and underlined with the class.
- Students read “Heights of Timbuktu” independently, annotating the text like they did previously. Students share what they highlighted and underlined with a neighbor, then the class.
- Students independently answer “Timbuktu Questions.”

### EXTENSIONS

- The Tuareg people founded Timbuktu. Have students research their culture and share what they find out with the class.
- Assign students to read a news article about the work to remove ancient manuscripts out of Timbuktu after radical Islamists took over the city in 2012.
- Have the class explore more details about how France and England raced to get to Timbuktu and back first in the nineteenth century.

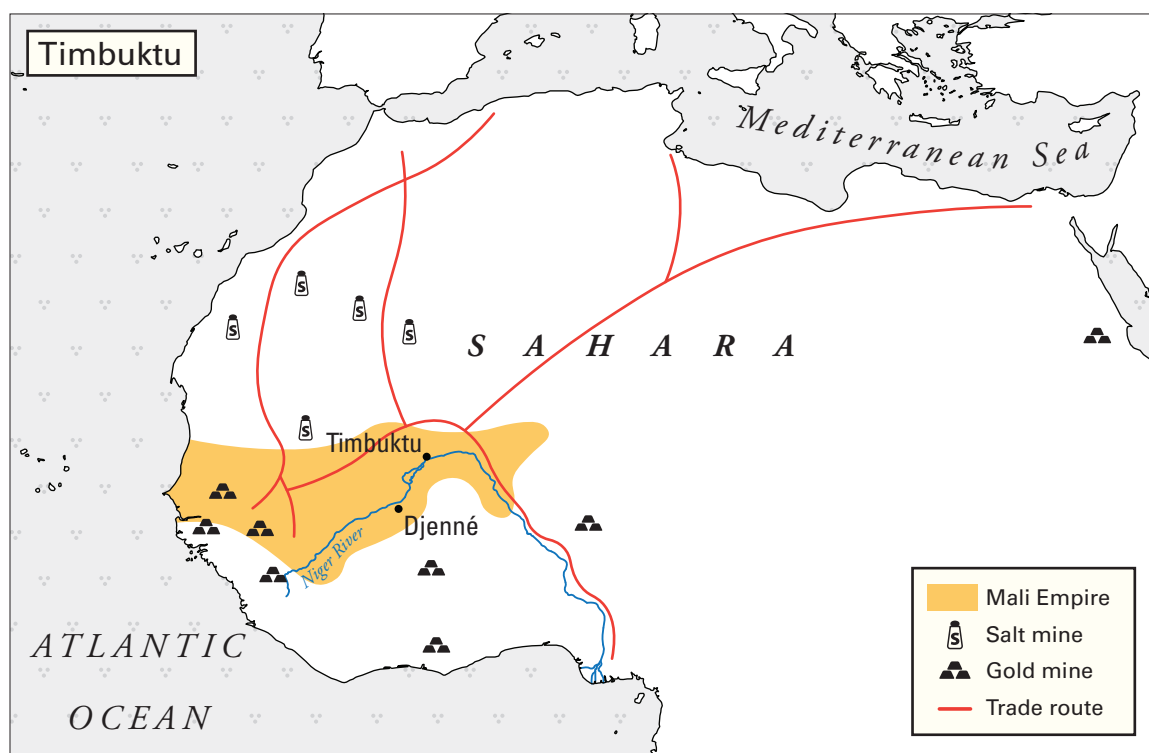
### IMPORTANT/DIFFICULT VOCABULARY

There are many ways to review vocabulary. Below are some words from which you may choose to create a review activity.

- |                |                  |               |
|----------------|------------------|---------------|
| ▪ Baobab flour | ▪ Entrepôt       | ▪ Pirogue     |
| ▪ Barbary      | ▪ Hegira         | ▪ Sahel       |
| ▪ Depots       | ▪ Ingots         | ▪ Shea butter |
| ▪ Ducats       | ▪ Men of letters | ▪ Wattles     |

# TIMBUKTU <sup>1/3</sup>

## Introduction



“From here to Timbuktu” is a phrase that means going to a faraway place. The phrase probably originated in nineteenth century Europe when Timbuktu was not particularly far away, but was hard to get to; Timbuktu’s geography had much to do with this. Although Timbuktu stands near the Niger River, it borders the Sahara Desert and is hundreds of miles from the Atlantic Ocean. Despite this, between 1200 and 1600 Timbuktu was a major trading destination for Arabs, Jews, Berbers, and West Africans, as well as a renowned center for learning.

Europeans had rarely traded directly at Timbuktu, but had heard many tales about its impressiveness. Early in the nineteenth century, no modern European had ever made it back from Timbuktu alive. Interest grew so great that in 1824 the Geographical Society of Paris announced it would give the first non-Muslim who returned from a Timbuktu visit 10,000 francs! (In 1828 Renè Caillié pulled off the feat.) But how did Timbuktu become such a legendary city? And what was so remarkable about it? Read the following sources to find out.

## Timbuktu’s Rise

The following is from the *Tarikh al-Sudan*, a seventeenth century history of the area. It was written in Arabic by Abd al-Sadi, a Moroccan who lived most of his life in Western Africa.

At the beginning, it was there that travelers coming by land and by water would meet. They constructed depots for their grains and their trade goods. Soon it became a main route and stopping place, for travelers stopped there both coming and going to the Sahel from the north.

Later, as it began to become established, it grew by the goodness of God, and the population expanded. People came there from everywhere and from all sides . . . and it became a place of commerce. At first the people of Waguda, Ghana, were those who came to trade in the greatest numbers, and they became merchants for all surrounding regions.

Below is a quote from Salem Ould Elhadj, a twenty-first century Malian scholar and native of Timbuktu. He bases most of his knowledge off stories that have been passed down for hundreds of years.

For Timbuktu, the great wealth was from salt, which came down from Taghaza and was transported on pirogue to the Middle Niger, and the Bani to Djenné. Timbuktu would never have grown as important as it did if it hadn't been the main entrepôt for the merchants of Djenné, which sent here a large number of businessmen and men of letters. Djenné contributed greatly to the growth of this new city, and the new approaches from Djenné were available by water for most of the year. This led to the establishment in Timbuktu of a great number of merchants' houses. They imported ivory, cola nuts, cereals, spices, baobab flour, shea butter, slaves and powdered gold. From the north came salt, fabrics, dates, eggs and feathers of ostriches.

Source: Villiers, Marq de, and Sheila Hirtle. *Timbuktu: The Sahara's Fabled City of Gold*. New York: Walker and Company, 2007.

## Heights of Timbuktu

The below excerpt was written by Leo Africanus, who was born in 1485 in Moorish-controlled Granada. When Spain took over soon after, he and his family were expelled to Morocco. Working for the government there, Leo Africanus traveled extensively throughout North and West Africa and is believed to have gone to Timbuktu. In 1517 Christian pirates captured Leo Africanus and gave him to Pope Leo X as a slave. Impressed by Leo Africanus's intelligence, the pope freed him and Leo Africanus started writing books, including his most famous work, *The History and Description of Africa and the Notable Things Contained Therein*. This book, which is excerpted below, was one of the few sources about Timbuktu written in Italian, and in 1600 it was published in English.

The name of this kingdom is a modern one, after a city which was built by a king named Mansa Suleyman in the year 610 of the hegira [1232 CE] around twelve miles from a branch of the Niger River.

The houses of Timbuktu are huts made of clay-covered wattles with thatched roofs. In the center of the city is a temple built of stone and mortar, built by an architect named Granata, and in addition there is a large palace, constructed by the same architect, where the king lives. The shops of the artisans, the merchants, and especially weavers of cotton cloth are very numerous. Fabrics are also imported from Europe to Timbuktu, borne by Berber merchants.

The women of the city maintain the custom of veiling their faces, except for the slaves who sell all the foodstuffs. The inhabitants are very rich, especially the strangers who have settled in the country; so much so that the current king has given two of his daughters in marriage to two brothers, both businessmen, on account of their wealth. There are many wells containing sweet water in Timbuktu; and in addition, when the Niger is in flood canals deliver the water to the city. Grain and animals are abundant, so that the consumption of milk and butter is considerable. But salt is in very short supply because it is carried here from Tegaza, some

500 miles from Timbuktu. I happened to be in this city at a time when a load of salt sold for eighty ducats. The king has a rich treasure of coins and gold ingots. One of these ingots weighs 970 pounds.

The royal court is magnificent and very well organized. When the king goes from one city to another with the people of his court, he rides a camel and the horses are led by hand by servants. If fighting becomes necessary, the servants mount the camels and all the soldiers mount on horseback. When someone wishes to speak to the king, he must kneel before him and bow down; but this is only required of those who have never before spoken to the king, or of ambassadors. The king has about 3,000 horsemen and infinity of foot-soldiers armed with bows made of wild fennel which they use to shoot poisoned arrows. This king makes war only upon neighboring enemies and upon those who do not want to pay him tribute. When he has gained a victory, he has all of them—even the children—sold in the market at Timbuktu. . . .

There are in Timbuktu numerous judges, teachers and priests, all properly appointed by the king. He greatly honors learning. Many hand-written books imported from Barbary are also sold. There is more profit made from this commerce than from all other merchandise.

Instead of coined money, pure gold nuggets are used; and for small purchases, cowrie shells which have been carried from Persia, and of which 400 equal a ducat. Six and two-thirds of their ducats equal one Roman gold ounce.

The people of Timbuktu are of a peaceful nature. They have a custom of almost continuously walking about the city in the evening (except for those that sell gold), between 10 PM and 1 AM, playing musical instruments and dancing. The citizens have at their service many slaves, both men and women.

The city is very much endangered by fire. At the time when I was there on my second voyage, half the city burned in the space of five hours. But the wind was violent and the inhabitants of the other half of the city began to move their belongings for fear that the other half would burn.

There are no gardens or orchards in the area surrounding Timbuktu.



Timbuktu from a distance, September 7, 1853

Source: Africanus, Leo. *History and Description of Africa*. Translated by John Pory. London: Hakluyt Society, 1896.

Image source: Timbuktu Painting. By Martin Bernatz, and Heinrich Barth, *Einzug in Tumbuktu*, in Heinrich Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa: being a Journal of an Expedition undertaken under the Auspices of H. B. M.'s Government, in the Years 1849-1855*. Vol. 4, London: Spottiswoode, 1858



\_\_\_\_\_

1. What is a geographic reason for why Timbuktu became such an impressive city?
2. What is a geographic reason for why Timbuktu was hard to get to?
3. Cite two lines or phrases that show Timbuktu was a great place for learning.
4. Cite two lines or phrases that show there was a lot of money in Timbuktu.
5. Would you consider the excerpt from the *Tarikh al-Sudan* a primary or secondary source? Explain.

- Applying Common Core: Ghana, Mali, and Songhai. Permission granted to reproduce for classroom use only. © 2016 Social Studies School Service.

## ACTIVITY 2

**CHAPTER**  
Key Ideas and Details

**DURATION**  
1 class period

# The Songhai Empire

### COMMON CORE STANDARDS

#### **RH.6-8.2**

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

#### **RH.6-8.3**

Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).

#### **RH.6-8.5**

Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).

#### **RH.6-8.10**

By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

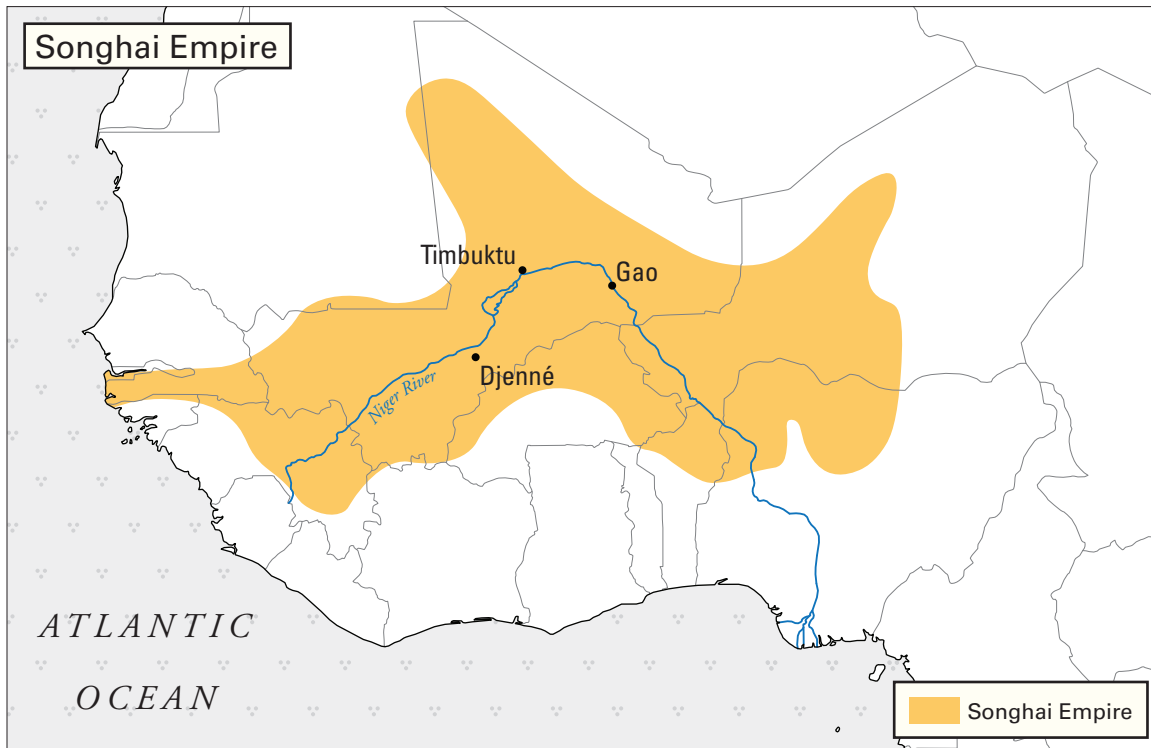
### DIRECTIONS

- The class reads the first three paragraphs of "The Songhai Empire" together, summarizing the main ideas of each paragraph in the margins.
- Students read the rest of "The Songhai Empire" independently, summarizing the main ideas of each paragraph in the margins. Students share what they wrote with a neighbor, then the class.
- Students independently answer "The Songhai Empire" questions.

### EXTENSIONS

- Have students make a Venn diagram that compares and contrasts the Ghana, Mali, and Songhai empires.
- There are over three million speakers of a language group referred to as "Songhai languages." Give students examples of words to learn from one of the main Songhai languages (Zarma, Western Songhai, Central Songhai, Eastern Songhai, Dendi, or Tadakshak).

## THE SONGHAI EMPIRE <sup>1/2</sup>



The Songhai (sometimes spelled “Songhay”) Empire was an important kingdom in West Africa that flourished during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. At its height the Songhai Empire was larger than the Ghana and Mali empires ever had been, covering all or parts of today’s Mali, Niger, Senegal, the Gambia, Mauritania, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Benin, and Guinea-Bissau.

The Songhai Empire can trace its origins to ninth-century Sorko fishermen who lived along the Niger River. Many of these people were living near Gao, which became the capital of the Songhai state during the eleventh century. At that time, the strongest kingdom in West Africa was the Ghana Empire, which was located west of Gao (and not in today’s Ghana). In the fourteenth century, Mali, the new West African power, added Songhai to its empire. Historians are unsure of how much control Mali really had over Songhai because, according to some sources, the people of Gao never paid tribute to Mali. Still, Mali was definitely considered the greater power, although not for much longer.

The city of Gao successfully rebelled against the Mali Empire and gained independence in 1375, and the Songhai state expanded from there. The Songhai had a very strong military at this time, known for its cavalry and fleets of canoes. Under its king, Sonni Ali the Great, the Songhai empire grew larger. Gao remained as the capital, and it became a major trade hub where West Africans traded gold, ivory, kola nuts, palm oil, and spices for salt, horses, cloth, weapons, and copper. Songhai’s territory also included the famous trade and intellectual center, Timbuktu.

Songhai's most famous ruler was Muhammad I Askia, a former general under Sonni Ali. In 1493, Muhammad seized power from Sonni Ali's son, who had succeeded his father in 1492. Under Muhammad, territory was added, trade expanded, and schools were built. He also centralized the government, making the bureaucracy more efficient and extending how much of the empire was taxed. Mohammed was a devout Muslim who increased cultural ties to the Arab empires by visiting Mecca and encouraging Muslim scholars to come to Songhai.

The end of the Songhai Empire came in 1591 when the Moroccans, hoping to gain control of the region's gold mines, attacked Songhai while it was in the midst of a civil war. Although the Songhai outnumbered the invaders, the Moroccans came equipped with never-before-seen cannons and a primitive type of rifle, called arquebuses. The Moroccan army conquered the area, but struggled to govern it, as the local people resisted Moroccan rule. Tired of the rebellions and finding the gold industry harder to control than they anticipated, in 1661 Morocco's troops pulled out of the area. The Songhai Empire technically continued in today's Niger, where the Songhai people resettled after their defeat by the Moroccans. They ruled what came to be called the Dendi Kingdom until 1901, when French forces took over.

---



Niger River



1. Do you think this reading was organized sequentially, comparatively, or causally? Explain.
2. What role did the Mali Empire play in the history of the Songhai Empire?
3. What were some items traded in Gao?
4. What made the Songhai army so strong?
5. Why was Muhammad I Askia not supposed to be the leader?

6. What made Muhammad I Askia such an important leader?
7. What may have been the key advantage that enabled the undermanned Moroccans to defeat the Songhai people?
8. When the Songhai fled to the east from the Moroccans, what became the name of their new kingdom?
9. Who took over the conquered Songhai Empire in 1901?
10. Use bullet points below to summarize five to seven key events in the history of the Songhai Empire.

# Craft and Structure

**ACTIVITY 3**

Gold and Salt

**RH.6-8.4**

**RH.6-8.5**

**ACTIVITY 4**

The Epic of Sundiata

**RH.6-8.6**

## ACTIVITY 3

**CHAPTER**  
Craft and Structure

**DURATION**  
1 class period

# Gold and Salt

### COMMON CORE STANDARDS

**RH.6-8.1**

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

**RH.6-8.2**

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

**RH.6-8.4**

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

**RH.6-8.5**

Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).

**RH.6-8.10**

By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

### DIRECTIONS

- Students answer the following questions in their journal: “How might salt and gold be connected? What might they have to do with West Africa?” Students share what they wrote with a neighbor, then the class.
- The class reads the first two paragraphs together, highlighting parts they can connect to, have a question about, or are surprised by. Students should draw a line from the highlighted part to the margins and explain their connection, ask their question, or describe why they were surprised.
- Students read the remaining paragraphs independently, annotating as they did in the previous step. Students share what they highlighted with a neighbor, then the class.
- Students independently answer “Gold and Salt Questions.”

### EXTENSIONS

- Have the class explore the importance of current natural resources (e.g., copper, oil, natural gas).
- Have the class learn about the medieval slave trade and write about what role, if any, it may have played with the future transatlantic slave market.
- Assign students one of the other key traded items (e.g., kola nuts, cowrie shells, slaves) to research, and have them teach each other why the trade of their item was so important.

## GOLD AND SALT <sup>1/2</sup>

Flourishing trade was the crucial factor for why there were so many prosperous West African empires. That there was so much trade is, in some ways, surprising. Around 5000 BCE in North Africa, temperatures increased and rainfall declined, causing a process called desiccation that led to the creation of the Sahara Desert. Those living in the land south of the Sahara Desert became isolated from the Mediterranean world, which soon became a hotbed of civilizations. It was not until after the introduction of the camel in 100 CE that trade across the Sahara became common again. But crossing the Sahara by camel was not a fast trip; even today the average trip can take weeks.

Before the camel helped connect these groups, West Africa had set up its own trading networks. Farming communities had developed in West Africa around 1000 BCE. The smelting of iron may have started as early as the sixth century BCE in West Africa, and when applied to farming tools, it led to more settled people and, consequently, more trade between them. Trade picked up in the fifth century CE when the Berbers and West Africans established caravan routes. This grew even greater after Arab empires took over North Africa in the seventh century. As historian John Iliffe put it, “The chief reason why trans-Saharan trade grew so swiftly in the early Islamic period was probably that it linked two flourishing regional economies.” Throughout this time, and for the next thousand years, innumerable items were traded. But, probably the most important transaction in West Africa was the exchange of gold for salt.

Between the ninth and sixteenth centuries, three West African kingdoms (Ghana, Mali, and Songhai) ruled powerful, wealthy empires. At their heights, all three controlled the West African gold mines, which contributed greatly to their wealth. The importance of the gold trade increased after the Saudi Arabian-based Umayyad Dynasty, which made their coins partly from gold, increased their territory by conquering North Africa. West Africa’s gold mines met this heightened demand, producing an impressive amount of gold. They provided Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East with the majority of their gold until Europe began importing it from the Americas. The Ghana Empire produced so much that the tenth-century Persian geographer Ibn al-Faqih claimed that gold grew “in the sand, as carrots do, and is picked at sunrise.” Because the rulers of the West African kingdoms taxed much of the items being traded, the kings quickly grew rich. The Muslim historian al-Bakri wrote in the eleventh century how the dogs in Ghana wore golden collars and horses had golden saddles. An Arabic traveler, Ibn Battuta, visited Mali in 1352 and commented on how a king sat under a silk umbrella with a golden bird attached to it, wore fine clothes, and donned a golden scull cap. Also, Mansa Musa, who was emperor of Mali in the fourteenth century, gained international notoriety for his lavish display of wealth during his pilgrimage to Mecca.

Gold not only supported these kingdoms, but it also decided their fates. Ghana rose to prominence because of its control of the gold trade. However, by the twelfth century gold



Gold bars



mines to the east opened up, and Ghana lost its gold monopoly. Soon after, the holders of the biggest mine to the east conquered Ghana and started the Mali Empire. The Songhai Empire, whose biggest trade item was also gold, soon supplanted the Mali Empire. But gold also proved to be Songhai's undoing as Moroccans attacked the kingdom to get control of the gold mines. Morocco would not succeed in gaining much control of the area, but the attack resulted in the demise of the Songhai Empire, which is considered the last of the great West African kingdoms.

Today we mostly just think of salt as something we add to our food. But it used to be valued as far more than a flavor enhancer. Before refrigeration, the best way to preserve many



Salt crystals

food items was by salting them. In the Sahara Desert, there were large salt deposits, remnants of the great lakes that were there before desiccation. Ibn Battuta actually reported that one city, Taghaza, had so much of this valued mineral that the houses and mosques of the town were built from salt slabs. The Songhai Empire contained multiple salt mines and valued them so much that its rulers had them guarded and kept their locations secret. Salt also could be found in Africa outside the Sahara. Some smaller kingdoms evaporated water from the Niger Delta and Lake Chad to make salt. Still, salt was scarce in much of sub-Saharan Africa. Some sources

claim that salt was so desired by the West Africans, that, at times, salt was literally worth its weight in gold (meaning a pound of salt was worth a pound of gold). The salt trade was also a major factor in the spread of Islam, as it brought together Muslim traders from North Africa with West African merchants; today, many of the countries in West Africa remain predominately Muslim. Even in modern times, the salt trade has not completely disappeared, as salt slabs are still loaded onto camels and carried across the Sahara Desert.

Both of these items continue to be highly valued. In 2015 a pound of gold was worth almost twenty thousand dollars. Gold's most popular use is being formed into jewelry, but it has also become a key ingredient in electronics due to its conductivity; the World Gold council estimated that a standard cell phone has around 30 milligrams of gold in it. Salt may have lost some of its value with the onset of refrigerators and numerous spice competitors, but it certainly has not gone away. It actually has become a bit of a health problem, with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) projecting that in 2009 and 2010 over 90 percent of children ate too much sodium (what salt mostly is made up of), which is linked to high blood pressure and obesity. The principal way sodium becomes part of one's diet is not by adding too much salt at the table, but by consuming sodium-loaded processed foods. The CDC estimated that the average child eats 3,300 milligrams of sodium each day, 1,000 more milligrams than recommended, before they even add their own salt. Now if only we could trade all that salt for its weight in gold!

**GOLD AND SALT QUESTIONS** <sup>1/2</sup>

1. *Desiccation* is mentioned in the following quotation from the reading: “Temperatures increased and rainfall declined, causing a process called desiccation that led to the creation of the Sahara Desert.” What does *desiccation* mean?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. The term *sub-Saharan Africa* is mentioned in the fifth paragraph. What part of Africa do you think *sub-Saharan Africa* refers to?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. “Processed food” is brought up in the last paragraph. What is processed food?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. How does the first paragraph introduce the paper?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. The body paragraphs are organized by topic. Would it matter if the two topics (gold and salt) were switched? Explain why you think this.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. How does the last paragraph conclude the paper?

7. What is the connection between salt and gold?
8. Cite a line that supports that West Africa needed to import salt.
9. Cite a line that supports that West Africa did not need to import salt.
10. How did gold have a positive effect on West Africa?
11. How did gold have a negative effect on West Africa?
12. Why was gold such a valued item in medieval times? Why is it valued today?
13. How has the use of salt changed since medieval times? How has it not changed?

## ACTIVITY 4

**CHAPTER**  
Craft and Structure

**DURATION**  
2 class periods

# The Epic of Sundiata

### COMMON CORE STANDARDS

#### **RH.6-8.1**

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

#### **RH.6-8.2**

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

#### **RH.6-8.3**

Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).

#### **RH.6-8.6**

Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

#### **RH.6-8.10**

By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

### DIRECTIONS

- Students are placed into small groups, with each group assigned a section of "The Epic of Sundiata" to act out. Most likely, two groups will need to be assigned to each section.
- Students read their section independently, summarizing what happened in the margins. The group members share their summaries and decide what part each person will have. Everyone in the group should have a part, with at least one person being the narrator. Students reread their section, highlighting all parts that are applicable to their part.
- The class discusses and decides on three elements that make a play strong (e.g., informative, interesting, well practiced). Groups practice their plays.
- Groups act out their scenes, with the class assessing each performance on the elements the class came up with before.
- Students read each tale independently, filling out "The Epic of Sundiata Chart" as they go. Students share what they wrote with a neighbor, then the class.
- Students read "What Historians Believe about Sundiata's Life" with a partner, highlighting any that were mentioned or alluded to in the tales.
- Students independently answer the questions.
- The teacher may want to bring up that Sundiata's nickname is the Lion King, and that some have claimed there are similarities between the Epic of Sundiata and Disney's film *The Lion King*. Disney maintains that despite similarities in the name and it being set in Africa, *The Lion King* was based on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, not the Epic of Sundiata. Others have found there to be more similarities between the Epic of Sundiata and *The Lord of the Rings*.

## THE EPIC OF SUNDIATA <sup>1/3</sup>

The Epic of Sundiata is a famous West African story about Sundiata, who is considered to be the first king of the Mali Empire. Malian storytellers have told this story for centuries, and it is a mix of actual history and legend. The following version contains many of the main parts of the epic.

### Characters

- **Sundiata:** The hero of the story, who later came to be known as the Lion King
- **Maghan Kon Fatta:** Sundiata's father and king of Kangaba
- **Sassouma:** Maghan Kon Fatta's first wife
- **Sogolon:** Sundiata's mother and second wife of Maghan Kon Fatta
- **Dankaran:** Sassouma and Maghan Kon Fatta's son; became king after the death of Maghan Kon Fatta
- **Soumaoro:** King of neighboring Sosso

### Sundiata's Childhood

Maghan Kon Fatta was the king of Kangaba. He already had a wife, but a soothsayer predicted that if he married the hunchback sorceress Sogolon, their child would become a greater conqueror than even Alexander the Great. Unsurprisingly, the king's first wife, Sassouma, was not happy about this. She wanted their first son, Dankaran, to be the next king of Kangaba. Despite her protestations, the king married Sogolon. They had a son, who they named Sundiata.

Sundiata did not initially look or act much like a future conqueror. At the age of three he was still crawling. He also had a giant head and strange eyes. Sassouma was delighted that her son, Dankaran, was healthy and handsome. She couldn't help but make comments like, "There may be no predictions of glory for my son, but at least he can walk on two legs!" The other children poked fun at Sundiata, although they had to be careful because he was incredibly strong for his age and could beat them up if he got ahold of them.

Sogolon was very concerned for her son and tried casting spells to fix his problems. These did nothing, and at seven he still could not walk. Maghan Kon Fatta was upset about his enfeebled son, and he discussed what he should do with his advisor, called a griot. The king's griot counseled the king to be patient, saying that they needed to trust what the soothsayer had prophesized.

### The Lion's Awakening

The king of Kangaba, Maghan Kon Fatta, passed away. The elders met and decided to ignore the prophecy, making Dankaran king. Sassouma, now called the queen mother, forced Sundiata's family to live in the palace's backyard. For food they had to make do with table scraps from the palace feasts they were no longer allowed to attend. Sassouma even encouraged people in the kingdom to come by the palace and laugh at them. Sogolon started a vegetable garden, which gave her some joy during such a difficult time.



One day Sogolon wanted the leaf of a baobab tree to flavor their dinner. Seeing no other options, she asked Sassouma if the palace had any extra baobab. Sassouma gave her some, but mocked her, saying, “Your son is worthless! My son would get those leaves for me.”

Sogolon was upset. Then, when she got home and saw her son sitting around doing nothing, she lost her temper, yelling, “Why do I have to beg for a simple leaf? What kind of son are you?”

Sundiata, hating to see his mom upset, replied, “You don’t need to worry, Mom. Today I will walk and get you all the baobab leaves you need. I just need the heaviest iron rod that the blacksmiths can make.”

Sundiata’s friend went to a blacksmith and came back with such an iron bar. They placed the iron bar in the palace backyard. Sundiata crawled to it and easily lifted the bar, so that it was standing on one end. With great struggle, and only using his arms, Sundiata pulled himself up to standing. While pulling himself up the bar bent like a bow. His friend was so excited that he broke out into a song he called “Hymns to the Bow.” Sundiata threw the bar off to the side and took his first laborious steps, walking until he found a baobab tree. He pulled the whole tree out of the ground as easily as if he was pulling up a weed. Sundiata returned to the backyard, where he planted it. He told his mom, “Now you will never need to beg for baobab leaves again.” His mom cried with happiness.

This led to Sundiata becoming more and more popular. The people who used to come by to mock his family now spoke glowingly about him and wondered why he was not king. Sassouma grew worried that her son would be replaced. She called up the nine great witches of Mali and promised them a cow, lots of rice, and hay if they killed Sundiata. The witches said they could not harm Sundiata unless he harmed them. Sassouma came up with a plan for them to steal vegetables from his mother’s garden, and then after Sundiata retaliated against them, they would be able to kill him. The next day Sundiata came home to find the witches stealing vegetables from his mother’s garden. But instead of harming them, he approached them and said, “This food is for everyone. Help yourself.” The witches returned to Sassouma, telling her that they would not help her kill Sundiata and that they would now look after him.

## Sundiata’s Exile

Fearing that Sassouma would continue to hatch plans to harm their family, Sogolon convinced Sundiata that they needed to go into exile; he, Sogolon, and his siblings left the capital. When Sassouma learned that they had left, she spread the word throughout the kingdom that people should not take them in. Scared of the queen mother, people refused to open their homes to Sundiata and his family. The family spent seven years wandering throughout the countryside.

Eventually, the sorcerer king of Djedeba took him in. This went well at first, but Sassouma found out they were there and bribed the king to kill Sundiata. After receiving the bribe, the king challenged Sundiata to a game called *wori* (which included sorcery and rocks), with Sundiata winning one of the king’s swords if he won and being killed if he lost. They started to play and on his turn Sundiata made up a poem with the line, “The gold came only yesterday.” This was in reference to the king being bribed, which the crafty Sundiata had figured out. This

infuriated the king, who proceeded to lose the game. But instead of living up to his side of the bargain, he banished Sundiata and his family from his kingdom.

Next, the family stayed with the king of Tabon, who wanted to be a good host but was worried that Sassouma would order an attack on his kingdom if he continued to shelter Sundiata. The king had a group of his merchants accompany Sundiata and his family to the kingdom of Ghana. On the way, Sundiata and his family heard about how Ghana had been powerful until the princes stopped following their traditions. Soon drought struck and now Ghana was so weak that their rulers had to pay tributes to Soumaoro, king of Sosso.

They also heard that Soumaoro was an evil king. He possessed magical powers and was very cruel to the people he ruled. It was said that the walls of a room in his palace were made of human skin, he sat on a skin throne, the nine heads of kings he had killed adorned the wall, and a giant snake helped him go to sleep at night. While Sundiata had been in exile, Soumaoro had taken over his homeland, Kangaba. Sundiata knew that at some point he would have to fight Soumaoro to regain control of Kangaba. Sundiata and his family arrived in Ghana, where they were treated well.

## Sundiata versus Soumaoro

Sundiata was now old enough to take on the evil sorcerer king, Soumaoro. Sundiata raised an army and marched them to Sosso. A soothsayer warned Soumaoro of Sundiata's approach and advised Soumaoro to attack early. Soumaoro, arrogant as always, replied, "I am not worried about this Sundiata. I will send my son to take care of him."

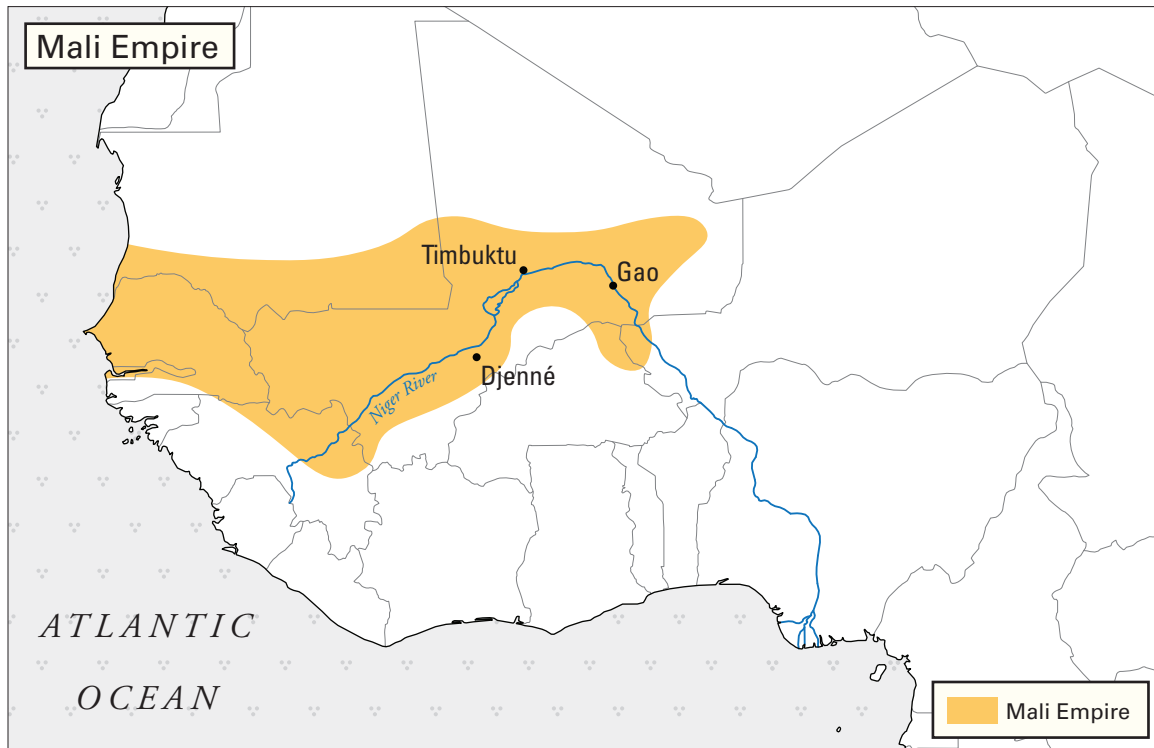
The armies of Sundiata and Soumaoro's son met in battle, with Sundiata's army winning. Sundiata personally led his men and slayed many enemies. People heard of this victory and as Sundiata's men continued to march through the countryside, townspeople cheered them and more men joined their army.

When Sundiata and Soumaoro met, the armies fought to a stalemate. In the midst of the battle, Sundiata spied Soumaoro. Sundiata shot an arrow at him, but Soumaoro caught it in the air. Sundiata charged Soumaoro with his spear, but, right before he could strike, Soumaoro teleported to the top of a nearby hill.

Sundiata now knew that Soumaoro was too powerful of a sorcerer to be simply beaten on the battlefield. Sundiata asked his sorcerer sister for help. She had been forced to be married to Soumaoro, and knew of the secret to killing him. It required using an arrow whose tip was a white rooster's talon.

The armies met again, and Soumaoro's soldiers outnumbered Sundiata's. Showing no fear, Sundiata charged into battle, this time with a fierce battle cry. Near the end of the battle, Sundiata found Soumaoro. Soumaoro hid behind his men, but Sundiata still was able to shoot the magic arrow at him. The arrow almost missed its target, only managing to graze Soumaoro's shoulder. But this was enough. All of Soumaoro's magic drained out of him. Sundiata was now mansa, which means king of all kings. The Mali Empire had begun and was ruled by the man they would come to call Lion King!

## WHAT HISTORIANS BELIEVE ABOUT SUNDIATA'S LIFE



Muslim scholars wrote very little about Sundiata. This may be because it is thought he practiced a mix of traditional religions and Islam. Later rulers of Mali, who were considered more devout, are featured more in Arabic histories of the area. Most information about Sundiata, including the Epic of Sundiata, comes from Mali's oral tradition.

- Sundiata's father was Maghan Kon Fatta. Maghan Kon Fatta was the king of a small kingdom, Kangaba. It was located on the Niger River.
- Sundiata had a physical handicap as a child.
- Some oral traditions say that after Maghan Kon Fatta died around 1218, his son Dankaran took over. The Sosso people, who were led by Soumaoro, took over Kangaba in 1224. According to a version in the *Tarikh al-Sudan*, Soumaoro conquered Kangaba when Maghan Kon Fatta was still king. Soumaoro had Maghan Kon Fatta and eleven of his twelve sons killed, sparing Sundiata because of his handicap.
- Around 1230 Sundiata formed an army north of the lands controlled by Soumaoro.
- Sundiata defeated Soumaoro in 1235 in the Battle of Kirina. This made him the first ruler of the Mali Empire.
- In 1240 he retired from leading the military, but remained king of Mali.
- Under Sundiata or his generals, the Mali Empire expanded, eventually taking over the remnants of the Ghana Empire.
- Sundiata died around 1255.

THE EPIC OF SUNDIATA CHART <sup>1/2</sup>

	Three to Five Main Events	Lines or phrases that make Sundiata sound like he will be a great king	Lines or phrases that show Sundiata faced many challenges before becoming king	Details mentioned that you think are facts about Sundiata or Mali at that time
Sundiata's Childhood				
The Lion's Awakening				

<b>Sundiata's Exile</b>				
<b>Sundiata versus Soumaoro</b>				



## THE EPIC OF SUNDIATA QUESTIONS <sup>1/2</sup>

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1. Which events from “What Historians Believe about Sundiata’s Life” were mentioned in the legends about Sundiata?
2. What was mentioned in the legends about Sundiata that was not mentioned in “What Historians Believe about Sundiata’s Life,” but you still think was probably true.
3. What are three details from the legends about Sundiata that you feel strongly are not facts.
4. What makes the information from “What Historians Believe about Sundiata’s Life” less reliable?
5. Why might Muslim chroniclers have mentioned so little about Sundiata?
6. What are the two different versions of how Kangaba was conquered? Which do you trust more? Explain.

7. Summarize a part from “The Epic of Sundiata” that made him sound like he would become a great king. Explain.
8. Summarize a part from the tale that made him sound like it would be unlikely that he would become such a great king. Explain.
9. How might Sundiata’s struggles to walk have led to him being a better king?
10. Cite two examples of loaded language that show Soumaoro in a bad light.
11. What could be a moral of Sundiata’s story?



# Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

**ACTIVITY 5**

Mansa Musa

**RH.6-8.7**

**RH.6-8.8**

**ACTIVITY 6**

Learning about Ghana

**RH.6-8.8**

**RH.6-8.9**

# ACTIVITY 5

**CHAPTER**  
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

**DURATION**  
1 class period

## Mansa Musa

### COMMON CORE STANDARDS

#### **RH.6-8.1**

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

#### **RH.6-8.2**

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

#### **RH.6-8.7**

Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

#### **RH.6-8.8**

Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

#### **RH.6-8.10**

By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/ social studies texts in the grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

### DIRECTIONS

- Students quietly look at the chart considering three questions: What surprises me? What do the people have in common? What questions do I have? Students share their thoughts with a neighbor, then the class.
- The class reads “Richest People Ever” as a class, filling out the “Mansa Musa Chart” as they go.
- As a group, students use the remaining sources to fill in the rest of the “Mansa Musa Chart.”
- Students independently answer the questions.

### IMPORTANT/DIFFICULT VOCABULARY

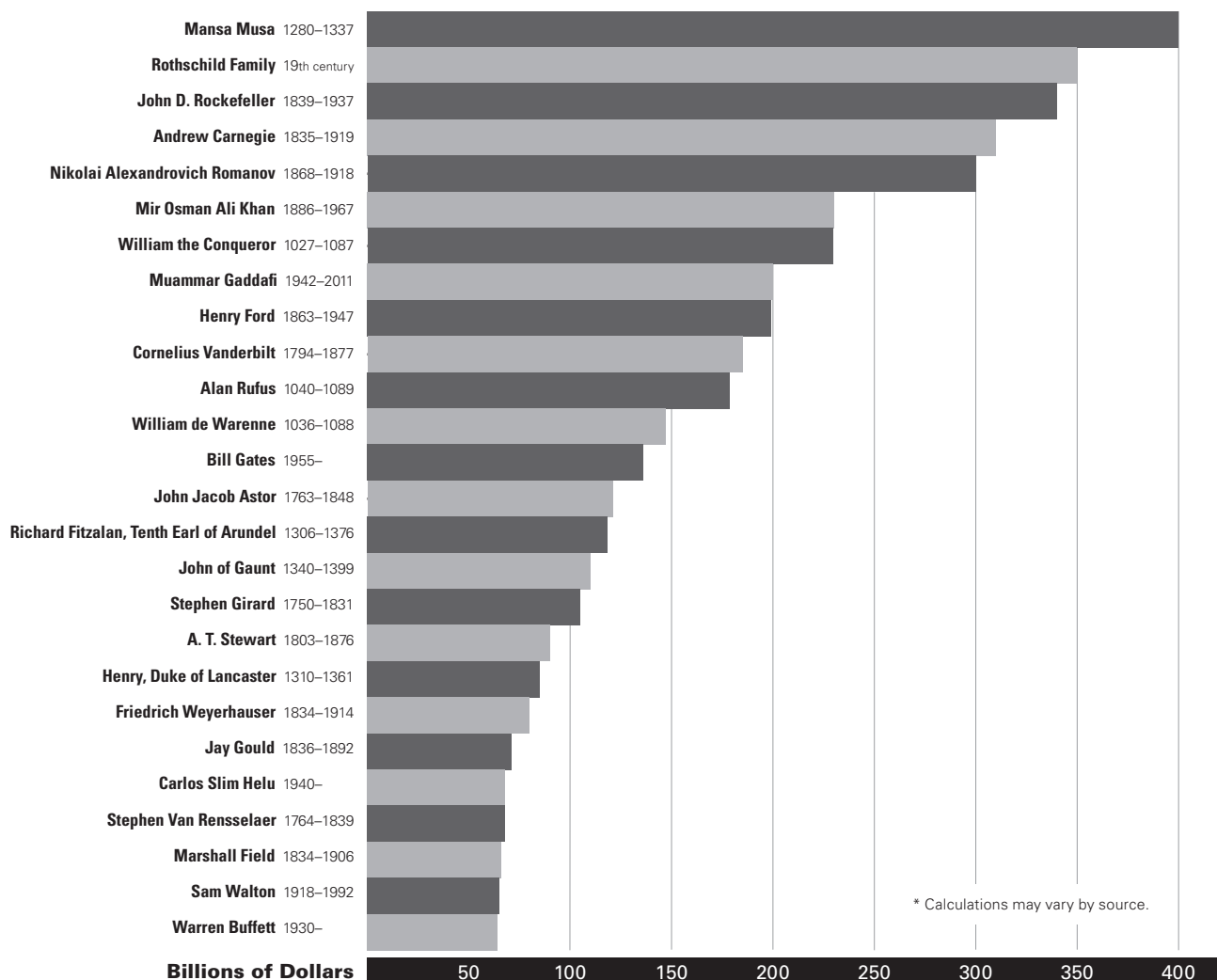
There are many ways to review vocabulary. Below are some words from which you may choose to create a review activity.

- |                                   |             |              |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| ▪ Benefactions                    | ▪ Copious   | ▪ Opulence   |
| ▪ Cairenes<br>(people from Cairo) | ▪ Dirhams   | ▪ Piety      |
| ▪ Cartographer                    | ▪ Inflation | ▪ Pilgrimage |
| ▪ Chronicled                      | ▪ Mithqual  | ▪ Pomp       |
|                                   | ▪ Net worth | ▪ Prodigal   |

## RICHEST PEOPLE EVER

In 2014 the website Celebrity Net Worth compiled the following estimate of who, after adjusting for inflation, were the richest twenty-five people to ever live.

### Twenty-Five Wealthiest People in History



To take into account inflation, the article's author applied a 2199.6 percent inflation rate, which calculated \$100 million in 1913 to be equivalent to over \$2 billion today. The site also used the October 10, 2013, price for gold (a date from six months before they released the study) of \$1,330 per ounce. In 2014, the website The Richest made a similar ranking, publishing a story titled "10 of the Wealthiest Historical Figures to Ever Live." The two lists have some differences. For example, the Russian tsar Nikolai Alexandrovich Romanov was considered the fifth richest by Celebrity Net Worth, but did not make the list made by The Richest. However, the lists are more similar than different, with nine of the same people in both top tens and Mansa Musa being considered the richest ever by both.



## MANSA MUSA <sup>1/2</sup>

### The Richest Person Ever?

In 1324, on Mansa Musa's way to a pilgrimage to Mecca, he stopped in Cairo. From there, tales of his riches spread around the world. More than six centuries later, in 2014 the website Celebrity Net Worth made a list of the richest people ever, with Mansa Musa topping the list. At an estimated net worth of \$400 billion in today's dollars, the website determined he had been worth almost three times as much as Bill Gates.

Clearly, Mansa Musa had a lot of money. He was the king of the Mali Empire, one of the largest in the world at that time, which contained huge, important gold mines. Mansa Musa not only took copious amounts of gold for himself, but also taxed much of the considerable trade that occurred in his empire.

Mansa Musa did much with his money to help Mali. Notably, he paid for Arab architects to come to Mali. The architects built many buildings, including a palace and impressive mosques in Gao and Timbuktu. Additionally, he did much to improve education in Mali, constructing libraries and schools. After his trip to Cairo, he brought back various Islamic scholars, helping to establish Timbuktu as a center of learning.

Although Musa's heirs inherited his wealth, the fortune depleted quickly. His sons fought each other, and in 1375 the Songhai town Gao successfully rebelled against Mali. Between these civil wars and Songhai's conquest of Mali, much of Mansa Musa's vast fortune disappeared.

### In Cairo

The Arab historian al-Umari came to Cairo a few years after Mansa Musa's famous 1324 visit and wrote the following about it.

From the beginning of my coming to stay in Egypt I heard talk of the arrival of this sultan Musa on his Pilgrimage and found the Cairenes eager to recount what they had seen of the Africans' prodigal spending. I asked the emir Abu . . . and he told me of the opulence, manly virtues, and piety of his sultan. "When I went out to meet him [he said] that is, on behalf of the mighty sultan al-Malik al-Nasir, he did me extreme honour and treated me with the greatest courtesy. He addressed me, however, only through an interpreter despite his perfect ability to speak in the Arabic tongue. Then he forwarded to the royal treasury many loads of unworked native gold and other valuables. . . .

This man [Mansa Musa] flooded Cairo with his benefactions. He left no court emir nor holder of a royal office without the gift of a load of gold. The Cairenes made incalculable profits out of him and his suite in buying and selling and giving and taking. They exchanged gold until they depressed its value in Egypt and caused its price to fall. . . .

Gold was at a high price in Egypt until they came in that year. The mithqal did not go below 25 *dirhams* and was generally above, but from that time its value fell and it cheapened

in price and has remained cheap till now. The mithqal does not exceed 22 *dirhams* or less. This has been the state of affairs for about twelve years until this day by reason of the large amount of gold which they brought into Egypt and spent there.

Source: Al-Umari. *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History*. Edited by J. F. P. Hopkins and Nehemia Levtzion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

The below excerpt is by Abd al-Sadi, who wrote the *Tarikh al-Sudan*, in the seventeenth century.

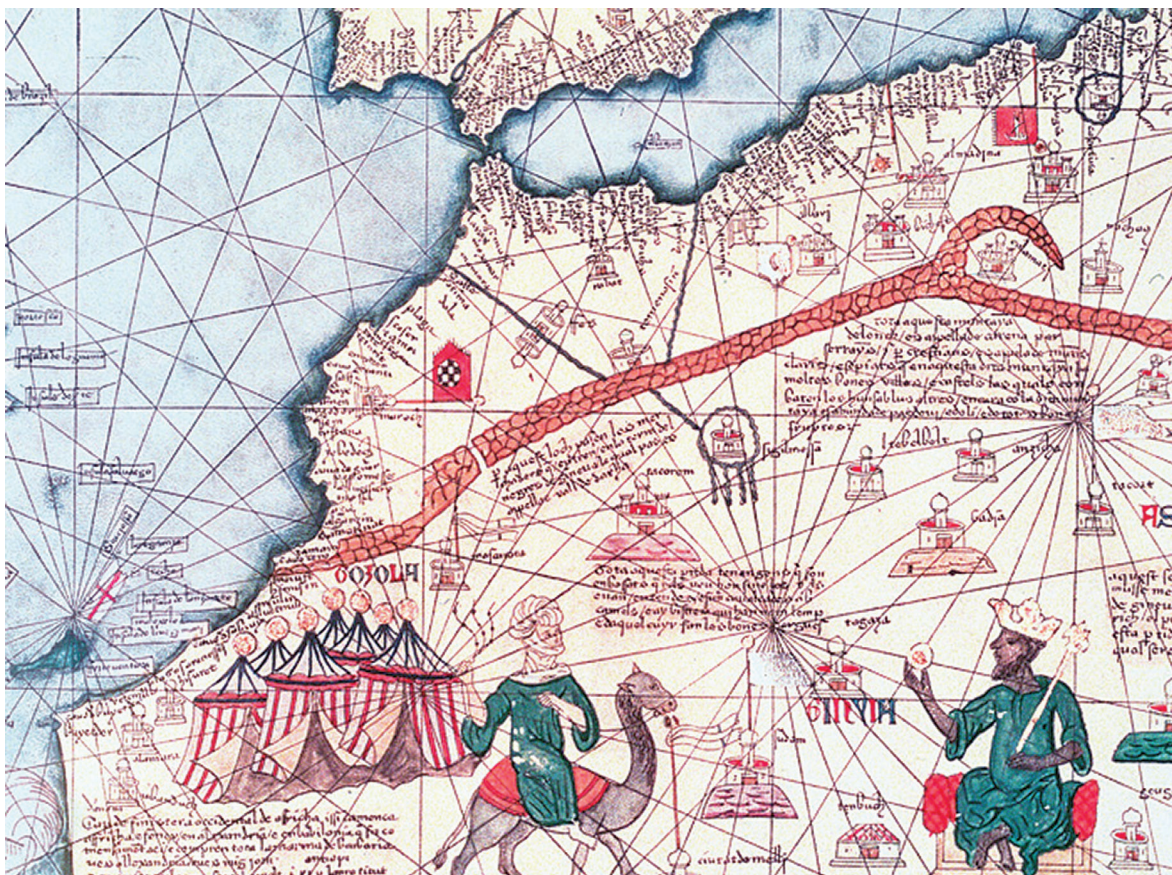
He made the pilgrimage to the Sacred House of God departing—God knows best—in the early years of the eighth century [of the hegira]. He set off in great pomp with a large party, including 60,000 soldiers and 500 slaves, who ran in front of him as he rode. Each of his slaves bore in his hand a wand fashioned from 500 mithqals of gold [that is, over 4 pounds of gold each, for a total of 2,200 pounds]. . . .

The Easterners who chronicled his visit were astonished at how mighty a ruler he was.

Source: Villiers, Marq de, and Sheila Hirtle. *Timbuktu: The Sahara's Fabled City of Gold*. New York: Walker and Company, 2007. Pages 76–77.

## On the Map

Mansa Musa's wealth had, both literally and figuratively, put Mali on the map. Word of his visit to Cairo made it to Europe, and for the next two hundred years, many European cartographers made sure to include Mali on their maps. In 1375, soon after his visit to Cairo, a Spanish cartographer made the below map, which includes Mansa Musa and the Mali Empire.



Catalan Atlas, 1375

Image source: Detail of the *Atlas Catalan*. By Cresques Abramham, 1375, the National Library of France

# MANSA MUSA CHART

	Facts, quotations, and/or inferences from the section that show Mansa Musa was very rich and/or helped Mali become a stronger empire.	Question/s about the section
Richest People Ever		
The Richest Person Ever?		
In Cairo		
On the Map		

## MANSA MUSA QUESTIONS <sup>1/2</sup>

39

### ACTIVITY 5 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

1. List two observations about the “Twenty-Five Wealthiest People in History” chart.
2. List two observations about the map.
3. What makes the “Twenty-Five Wealthiest People in History” chart open to argument? Why does it still appear that Mansa Musa was one of the richest people ever?
4. Cite an opinion from one of the readings about Mansa Musa. Explain what makes it an opinion.

5. According to al-Umari, the price of gold in Cairo dropped after Mansa Musa's visit. What role may Mansa Musa's visit have played in this?
6. How do we know the accounts of al-Umari and Abd al-Sali are not primary sources?
7. How did Mansa Musa's wealth help Mali?
8. Why was Mansa Musa so rich?
9. Summarize in a paragraph how we know Mansa Musa was incredibly rich. The answer should include facts and quotations from the readings.

## ACTIVITY 6

**CHAPTER**  
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

**DURATION**  
2 class periods

# Learning about Ghana

### COMMON CORE STANDARDS

#### **RH.6-8.1**

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

#### **RH.6-8.2**

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

#### **RH.6-8.3**

Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).

#### **RH.6-8.8**

Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

#### **RH.6-8.9**

Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

#### **RH.6-8.10**

By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

### DIRECTIONS

- The class reads "Abu Ubayd al-Bakri" together, underlining facts they think are interesting or important and highlighting facts they find hard to believe.
- Students read "USHistory.org" independently, underlining facts they think are interesting/important and highlighting facts they find hard to believe. Students share what they recorded with a neighbor, then the class.
- With a neighbor, students complete "The Ghana Empire Questions."
- Students complete the first question of "The Ghana Empire Summary" independently. For homework, students will share this with an adult and answer the last two questions.
- The next day, students share their answers to the last two questions of "The Ghana Empire Summary" with a neighbor, then the class.

### IMPORTANT/DIFFICULT VOCABULARY

There are many ways to review vocabulary. Below are some words from which you may choose to create a review activity.

- |                  |            |                   |
|------------------|------------|-------------------|
| ▪ Acacia         | ▪ Dinar    | ▪ Paganism        |
| ▪ Administrative | ▪ Halters  | ▪ Pedigree        |
| ▪ Autonomy       | ▪ Imam     | ▪ Plaited         |
| ▪ Brocade        | ▪ Muezzins | ▪ Vassel (vassal) |



## ABU UBAYD AL-BAKRI

Al-Bakri was an eleventh century writer who lived in today's Spain when its rulers were Muslim. Below is an excerpt from *Book of Highways and Kingdoms*, in which he wrote about the geography and cultures of many areas, including West Africa. It is not believed that he went to many of the places he wrote about. He based his books primarily on accounts by merchants and geographers.

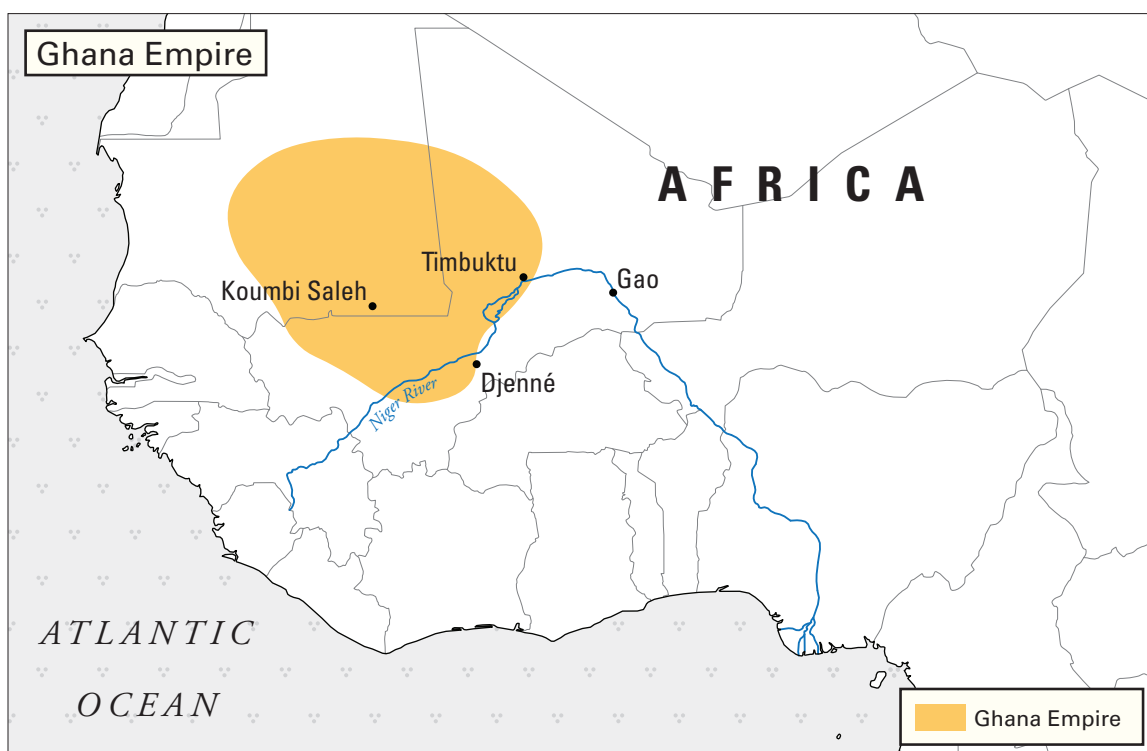
The city of Ghana consists of two towns situated on a plain. One of these towns, which is inhabited by Muslims, is large and possesses twelve mosques, in which they assemble for the Friday prayer. There are salaried imams and muezzins, as well as jurists and scholars. In the environs are wells with sweet water, from which they drink and with which they grow vegetables. The king's town is six miles distant from this one. . . .

Between these two towns are continuous habitations. . . . In the king's town, and not far from his court of justice, is a mosque where the Muslims who arrive at his court pray. Around the king's town are domed buildings and groves and thickets where the sorcerers of these people, men in charge of the religious cult, live. In them too are their idols and the tombs of their kings. These woods are guarded and none may enter them and know what is there. . . . The king's interpreters, the official in charge of his treasury and the majority of his ministers are Muslims. Among the people who follow the king's religion only he and his heir apparent (who is the son of his sister) may wear sewn clothes. All other people wear robes of cotton, silk, or brocade, according to their means. All of them shave their beards, and women shave their heads. The king adorns himself like a woman (wearing necklaces) round his neck and (bracelets) on his forearms, and he puts on a high cap decorated with gold and wrapped in a turban of fine cotton. He sits in audience or to hear grievances against officials in a domed pavilion around which stand ten horses covered with gold-embroidered materials. Behind the king stand ten pages holding shields and swords decorated with gold, and on his right are the sons of the (vassel) kings of his country wearing splendid garments and their hair plaited with gold. The governor of the city sits on the ground before the king and around him are ministers seated likewise. At the door of the pavilion are dogs of excellent pedigree who hardly ever leave the place where the king is, guarding him. Round their necks they wear collars of gold and silver studded with a number of balls of the same metals. The audience is announced by the beating of a drum, which they call *duba*, made from a long hollow log. When the people who profess the same religion as the king approach him they fall on their knees and sprinkle dust on their head, for this is their way of greeting him. As for the Muslims, they greet him only by clapping their hands. . . .

Their religion is paganism and the worship of idols. . . .

On every donkey-load of salt when it is brought into the country their king levies one golden dinar and two dinars when it is sent out. . . . The best gold found in his land comes from the town of Ghiyaru, which is eighteen days' traveling distance from the king's town over a country inhabited by tribes of the Sudan whose dwellings are continuous. . . .

The king of Ghana, when he calls up his army, can put 200,000 men into the field, more than 40,000 of them archers.



UShistory.org is an online website that summarizes important historical events.

Between the ninth and eleventh centuries CE, the kingdom of Ghana was so rich that its dogs wore golden collars, and its horses, which were adorned with silken rope halters, slept on plush carpets. Based on animal luxuries alone, it is no wonder that foreigners touted Ghana's kings as the richest men in the world.

Certainly they were living the high life . . . but how did they do it?

Located within the present-day borders of Mauritania, Mali, and Senegal, medieval Ghana literally sat on a gold mine. The land's abundance of resources allowed Ghana's rulers to engage in years of prosperous trading. Strategic governing coupled with great location led to the rapid emergence of a very wealthy empire.

Most of what we know about ancient Ghana—which is more accurately called Wagadugu—is based on writings of Arab travelers who came in contact with the nation's peoples. "Ghana" was actually the title given to Wagadugu kings and was used by the Islamic "reporters" to describe the rich and mysterious place they observed.

Evidence of Ghana's occupation dates back to the 4th century, but it was several hundred years later that it became established as a nation by a tribe known as the Soninke, whose leaders have been credited with the early strengthening of the Wagadugu state and the expansion of its territories.

By 1000 BCE, the nation had undergone strategic expansion and taken control of a large pocket of land between the upper Niger and Senegal Rivers. The region was rich in gold, and its acquisition meant that Ghana would become a leading force in the trans-Saharan trade network.

The leader of all leaders was the king, who was also known as the *ghana*, or war chief. His word was law. He served as the commander in chief of a highly organized army, the controller of all trade activities, and the head administrator of justice. Mayors, civil servants, counselors, and ministers were appointed by the king to assist with administrative duties—but at all times, the king was in charge.

Each day, the king assembled his court and allowed people to publicly voice their complaints. Beating drums that resounded throughout the area signaled the courts assemblage and people gathered to speak their minds. Whether they were neighborly conflicts, or cases of violated rights, the king listened to the complaints and gave his judgment.

Such hearings were reportedly peaceful, unless they involved issues of criminal nature. Two of the most serious criminal offenses were the denial of debt and the shedding of blood. These crimes were tried by ordeal.

According to Islamic reports, the criminally accused was given a foul concoction to drink that consisted of sour and bitter-tasting wood and water. If he vomited after tossing back the nasty brew he was declared innocent and was congratulated for passing the test. If he did not vomit, and the beverage remained within, he was considered guilty as charged and suffered the king's wrath.

Ghanaian citizens were not the only ones put to the king's test. Inhabitants of its conquered lands were examined for their good behavior and loyalty as well. In territories where order and obedience prevailed, and taxes were properly paid, autonomy was granted. But in areas which struggled for independence or defied the king's laws, Ghanaian governors were appointed as watchdogs and little went unreported to the king.

When the king was not busy enforcing his power among the people, he was spreading it internationally through trade. At its peak, Ghana was chiefly bartering gold, ivory, and slaves for salt from Arabs and horses, cloth, swords, and books from North Africans and Europeans.

As salt was worth its weight in gold, and gold was so abundant in the kingdom, Ghana achieved much of its wealth through trade with the Arabs. Islamic merchants traveled over two months through the desert to reach Ghana and "do business." They were taxed for both what they brought in and what they took out.

With this system, it is no wonder that Ghana got rich quickly. The wealth that the kingdom acquired did not, however, serve in its favor forever. Competition from other states in the gold trade eventually took its toll.

Fear, anger, and jealousy of Ghana's power prompted its neighbors to stand up against the kingdom. Their efforts were at first weak and insignificant, but eventually, in the mid-eleventh century, a Muslim group known as the Almoravids launched a devastating invasion on the capital city of Koumbi Saleh. Though territories were seized, and a tribute tax was enforced, Ghana recovered and forced the invaders to withdraw.

A little less than 200 years later, however, Ghana was not so lucky. Weakened by subsequent attacks, and cut-off from international trade, the kingdom was vulnerable and unable to prevent defeat. In 1240 CE, Ghana was absorbed into the growing nation of Mali, which would soon become the next great empire.

$\frac{1}{2}$ 

1. List two facts that are mentioned in both sources.
2. List two facts that are mentioned only in "Abu Ubayd al-Bakri."
3. List two facts that are mentioned only in "UShistory.org."
4. What is a detail that is presented as a fact, but that you think might not be true. Explain.

5. Why might al-Bakri have devoted so much time to discussing the mosques?
6. What about how al-Bakri got this information makes his account unreliable? What about it makes it reliable?
7. The Ghana Empire was not located where the modern-day country of Ghana is. Why might the name “Ghana” have been chosen for the modern-day country?

## THE GHANA EMPIRE SUMMARY

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1. Write a paragraph summarizing five to seven key facts about the Ghana Empire.
2. What does the adult you will share the reading with already know about the Ghana Empire?
3. What are two questions about the Ghana Empire that the adult has? Record them below and give possible answers to their questions.





# Writing Standards

**ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING**

Were Africans in the Americas before Columbus?

**WHST.6-8.1**  
**WHST.6-8.7**  
**WHST.6-8.8**  
**WHST.6-8.9**  
**WHST.6-8.10**

**INFORMATIVE WRITING**

Current Event from West Africa

**WHST.6-8.2**  
**WHST.6-8.6**  
**WHST.6-8.7**  
**WHST.6-8.8**  
**WHST.6-8.9**  
**WHST.6-8.10**

**NARRATIVE WRITING**

Griot Folk Tale

**W.6.3–W.8.3**  
**WHST.6-8.5**  
**WHST.6-8.9**  
**WHST.6-8.10**

## Were Africans in the Americas before Columbus?

### COMMON CORE STANDARDS

#### **WHST.6-8.1**

Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

#### **WHST.6-8.7**

Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

#### **WHST.6-8.8**

Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

#### **WHST.6-8.9**

Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

#### **WHST.6-8.10**

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

### DIRECTIONS

- Students are placed into three- or four-person groups. The teacher gives each group the information pages (five handouts total) and one to two laptops.
- Students use the information pages and the Internet to fill in “Africans in the Americas Chart.” Students should keep track of any new sources they find.
- Each group discusses the four questions in “Analysis: Were Africans in the Americas before Columbus?”
- Students independently answer the four questions in “Analysis: Were Africans in the Americas before Columbus?”

## WERE AFRICANS IN THE AMERICAS BEFORE COLUMBUS?

### Overall

In 1492 Columbus sailed across the Atlantic Ocean and landed on an island in the Americas, mistaking the inhabitants as being from his intended target, India. But you already knew that. What you may not have known is that many people believe that Columbus was not the first person from the “Old World” (Europe, Asia, or Africa) to make it to the Americas. There is evidence that the Chinese, Vikings, and Africans beat him there. For this assignment, you will focus on the evidence supporting the African claim. You will read evidence for and counterarguments against this claim, research this claim on your own, and then write about how strong the case is. It is important in this activity for you to maintain an open yet critical mind.

### Requirements

- Write a one-paragraph answer for all four questions in “Analysis: Were Africans in the Americas before Columbus.”
- A Works Cited page for sources from additional research.

### Rubric

	Exceeding	Proficient	Developing	Beginning
Argument	Uses logical reasoning and solid support to write highly convincing arguments and dispute a counterclaim.	Uses logical reasoning and solid support to write convincing arguments. Brings up a counterclaim but may struggle to successfully dispute it.	At times arguments are solid, but needs to improve reasoning, support, and/or counterclaim.	Arguments are weak due to issues with reasoning, support, and/or counterclaim.

## THE OLMECS

The Olmecs inhabited today's Mexico from around 1200 to 400 BCE. Among their more famous remaining artifacts are giant heads carved from stone. For years, people have claimed that the facial features of these statues more closely resemble those of people from sub-Saharan Africa than those of Mexico's indigenous people. Is this because the Olmec people were descended from, or possibly even ruled by, Africans? Ivan Van Sertima wrote a book, *They Came before Columbus*, arguing that this might be the case. He also found that many of the Olmec cultural practices were similar to African ones, writing, "A study of the Olmec civilization reveals elements that so closely parallel ritual traits and techniques in the Egypto-



Olmec statue

Nubian world of the same period that it is difficult to maintain all these are due to mere coincidence." In support of these theories, Polish professor, Andrzej Wiercinski believed he found African skeletons and skulls at Olmec sites in 1972. He estimated that 13.5 percent of the skeletons at the Olmec site Tlatilco and 4.5 percent at Cerro de las Mesas were of African origin.

The Olmec civilization also is known for its pyramids, math, and written language (contributions that also influenced the Maya civilization). Perhaps traders from Egypt or Nubia came over and spread this knowledge among the Olmecs. Although it seems very early in history for someone to make such a long trip, Herodotus, the great Greek historian, wrote in the fifth century

BCE about the impressive navigational skills of the Egyptians. Van Sertima also posited that ancient Phoenicians might have taken the Africans there; he believed that a stela found at an Olmec site shows the portrait of a Phoenician captain.

However, critics wonder why these journeys were not discussed in Egyptian documents. They also note that Egyptians and Nubians at this time probably did not look like the statues either. Because Egyptians and Nubians were from North Africa, and interacted more with the Middle East, Europe, and Asia, neither were known to have sub-Saharan attributes. Additionally, the reason the faces may not have looked like the indigenous people of the area may have been because they were carved on huge rocks.

Archaeologists have also noted that the dates do not line up well. Radiocarbon dating estimates that the Olmecs were making the giant heads hundreds of years before the Egyptians/Nubians were supposed to have arrived. Furthermore, at the proposed times that this interaction happened (between around 1100 BCE and 700 BCE), it had been around a thousand years since the Egyptians had made their giant pyramids. And although the Nubians were building small pyramids during this time, they were quite different from the Olmec pyramids in terms of the materials and manner in which they were built. Most importantly, the purpose of the Olmec pyramids appears to be ceremonial, and not for burial. It seems unlikely that the Olmecs would build and use their pyramids so differently from the people they supposedly learned about them from.

## WESTERN AFRICAN ACCOUNTS

Mansa Musa told the following to the son of a Cairo sultan. It was printed by Al-Omari, a Cairo historian, in 1340. The predecessor Mansa Musa is discussing was Abu Bakr.

If I have become the master of Mali, it is only because my predecessor refused to believe that the ocean was infinite. . . . My predecessor sent a preliminary reconnaissance fleet of four hundred ships towards the unknown and shadowy horizon. Only one returned, but that one told stories of a mysterious river in the middle of the ocean. . . . Not in the least discouraged, the emperor ordered the building of two thousand more vessels, a thousand for the men, a thousand for supplies. . . . He assigned to me his authority and power until such day as he should return, but to this day no one has ever seen him again.

Most sailing done by the West Africans was done down the Niger River. Their primary boat was a dug-out (or a canoe). In modern times, however, people have shown that it is possible to go much farther than the 1,600 miles from Africa to South America on one of these boats, if they get into a current. Some posit that the river Musa referred to was one of these currents. Had Abu Bakr's people gotten their boats into a major current, they could have made it across the Atlantic Ocean.

Skeptics have argued that one would think an important event like this would have been mentioned in the extensive Mali oral tradition or in other literature about this time period. Defenders of the theory note that Abu Bakr's decision to leave the country was deemed a shameful act, and so it may have been forbidden to speak about it. Of course, even if Mansa Musa's account is true, there is no way to know that Abu Bakr and his fleet actually made it. Judging by how the first voyage went, it seems quite possible that the bigger venture could also have been a failure.

*Quotation Source: Villiers, Marq de, and Sheila Hirtle. Timbuktu: The Sahara's Fabled City of Gold. New York: Walker and Company, 2007.*



## SPANISH EXPLORERS

Bartolomé de Las Casas, who traveled with Columbus, wrote the following about Columbus on his third journey.

[Columbus] thought to investigate the report of the Indians of this Espanola [Haiti] who said that there had come to it from the south and southeast black people, who brought those spear points made of a metal which they call *guanin*, of which he had sent to the king and queen for assaying, and which was found to have 32 parts, 18 were of gold, 6 of silver and 8 of copper.

Not only would West Africans have come from the southeast to get to the Caribbean Islands, where Columbus was located, but the word “guanine” was also the same word West Africans used for their gold alloy. Additionally, Columbus sent some spear points back to metallurgists in Spain, who said it was the same as used in Africa.

There are other Spanish men who believed that Africans were there before them. Peter Martyr, a sixteenth century historian, discussed Africans already in the “New World” and theorized that they were shipwrecked Ethiopian pirates. Gabriel Garcia, a sixteenth century Dominican priest, also discussed these people, saying, “These are the first [black people] we have seen in the Indies.” Vasco Núñez de Balboa, a Spanish explorer who made it to the Pacific Ocean through the Americas, claims to have seen two black men living among an indigenous tribe in the early sixteenth century.

Critics bring up that neither Columbus nor Las Casas saw these “black people.” Columbus was only told about them, and the people from the Caribbean Islands may have been referring to a darker-skinned person native to the Americas rather than a person from Africa. Also, the Spanish claims to have seen Africans in the Americas are all from the sixteenth century, after the Spanish had already been there. Even if it is true that Africans were there, they may have been brought over by other European explorers.

Source: Weiner, Leo. *Africa and the Discovery of America*. Vol. 2. Philadelphia: Innes and Sons, 1920.

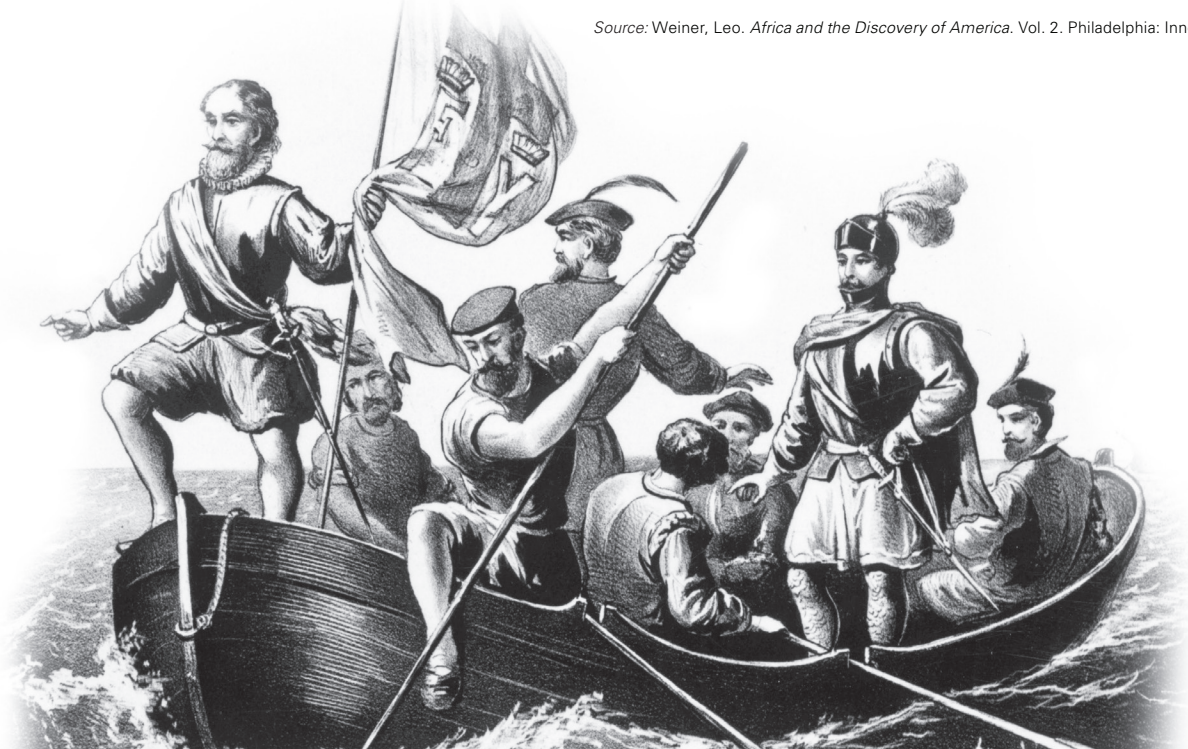


Image source:  
Illustration of Columbus Ashore.  
By iStock.com/HultonArchive

## DRUGS AND MUMMIES

In 1992 drugs native only to the Americas, cocaine and nicotine, were found in Egyptian mummies. The researchers claim that out of nine mummies they studied, all contained cocaine and eight of the nine had nicotine. These drugs may have been in the mummies because the mummified people had used these stimulants while they were alive. Or, maybe these drugs were part of the mummification process; for example, the nicotine might have worked as a bug repellent. Because these mummies are estimated to be from between 1070 BCE and 395 CE, the only way these substances could have gotten to Egypt would have been if there were trade between the South American and African continents well before Columbus crossed the Atlantic Ocean. In 1995, Nerlich et al. also discovered a mummy, dated from approximately 950 BCE, with nicotine and cocaine compounds in its stomach.

Critics have wondered if the mummies could have been tampered with or been fake mummies. Others have posited that a chemical the Egyptian priests used may have changed over time to appear similar to cocaine or nicotine, but did not actually start as one of those two chemicals. Some also wonder if accidental contamination, such as people smoking in museums, might be the culprit.



## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE IN THE AMERICAS

Russell Burrows claims he was hiking in Southern Illinois in 1982 when he came upon a section of a cave that had carvings, coins, statues, weapons, scrolls, and more. Engravings in many of the artifacts appeared to be in ancient Egyptian and ancient Greek. It was proposed that this could be King Juba II's tomb, who was from North Africa. In 44 CE his body and treasure was removed before the Romans invaded. Could it have been transferred to Southern Illinois?

In Arizona inscriptions have been found that appear to be in the Malian language, Mandinka. One translates to, "Birds are numerous, white." Another reads, "The elephants are sick and angry. At present sick elephants are considerable." The only reason Mandinka would be in America is if people from Mali had made the crossing. That the translated text discusses elephants, an animal native to Africa, makes it even more likely. It seems too much of a coincidence that a language would appear to be from Africa and discuss an African subject.

Critics do not take the cave evidence seriously at all. Archaeologists consider it to be a hoax. The few artifacts they have been allowed to see are not actually in an ancient language or have been deemed forgeries. The only question they have is whether Burrow was tricked or was doing the tricking. Many are also unconvinced by the inscriptions in Arizona. If these truly have been translated accurately, the writers seem to be talking about elephants in the present tense. Then where are these elephants? It is hard to imagine that elephants were in America but no remains would have been found. Also, how would they have even gotten elephants here? The inscriptions could be a hoax or a mistranslation of a Native American language.

AFRICANS IN THE AMERICAS CHART

Summarize Argument	Counterargument	How Convincing Do You Find This Argument? Explain. (1 = not convincing at all, 10 = completely convincing)



## ANALYSIS: WERE AFRICANS IN THE AMERICAS BEFORE COLUMBUS?

Use a separate sheet to respond to the items below. Your answers for each should be at least one paragraph.

1. Do you think Egyptians/Nubians were in the Americas before Columbus? Support your answer with facts and quotations.
2. Do you think West Africans were in the Americas before Columbus? Support your answer with facts and quotations.
3. Summarize and dispute a counterargument someone could make against what you argued in your answer to either question 1 or question 2.
4. On a scale of 1 (definitely not) to 10 (definitely), do you think Africans were in the Americas before Columbus? Explain.

## Current Event from West Africa

### COMMON CORE STANDARDS

#### **WHST.6-8.2**

Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.

#### **WHST.6-8.6**

Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas clearly and efficiently.

#### **WHST.6-8.7**

Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

#### **WHST.6-8.8**

Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

#### **WHST.6-8.9**

Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

#### **WHST.6-8.10**

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

### DIRECTIONS

- Students go to news sites and find a current event in West Africa that they would like to learn more about. There are numerous good sites, but Country Reports has current events organized by country. (As of 2015, a subscription is not required for the part of this site.)
- Students research the current event, recording facts on the research table. Students should make sure to keep track of their sources.
- Students use information from the research table to write the paper.
- Students are given a map of Africa and then meet in groups of four. Students place a star on the map where each group member's current event took place. Students share highlights from their paper, as group members complete the "Current Event Share" chart.



## CURRENT EVENT FROM WEST AFRICA

### Overall

West African countries cover more than 3 million square miles, and in 2013, had an estimated population of more than 330 million. The countries there have a great deal of diversity and fascinating modern histories. For this paper you will choose a current event from The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast (Cote D'Ivoire), Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, or Togo. You will research the event, write about it, and share what you learned with your classmates. Papers should be one to two pages and include a Works Cited page.

### Requirements

- Basics
  - Who
  - What
  - Where
  - When
- Analysis (choose three)
  - Why it is important
  - Connection to Western African empires
  - Connection to your life
  - Connection to a current event America is involved in
- What it says about West Africa
- How it shows similarities or differences to America
- The role geography played

### Possible Topics

- Economy
- Crime
- Politics
- Technology
- Environmental issues
- Education
- Democracy
- Protests
- Civil war
- Natural disasters
- Relations with a neighbor
- Relations with Europe, the United States, or China
- Poverty reduction
- Natural resources (e.g., oil, gold, diamonds, uranium)
- Boko Haram
- Jihadists
- Ebola
- Sports or entertainment (check with teacher)

### Rubric

	Exceeding	Proficient	Developing	Beginning
<b>Informative</b>	Covers a current event from West Africa comprehensively and efficiently, describing important aspects in detail and leaving out superfluous facts.	Sufficiently covers the basics of a current event from West Africa.	Includes many accurate facts about a current event from West Africa, but does not cover all the basics in enough detail.	Includes few to no accurate facts about a current event from West Africa.
<b>Analysis</b>	Is able to make accurate connections, comparisons, and/or conclusions from a current event for three of the analysis questions.	Is able to make accurate connections, comparisons, and/or conclusions from a current event for two of the analysis questions.	Is able to make accurate connections, comparisons, and/or conclusions from a current event for one of the analysis questions.	Is not able to make accurate connections, comparisons, and/or conclusions from a current event for any of the analysis questions.

CURRENT EVENT RESEARCH TABLE

<b>Who?</b> (e.g., People involved, groups involved, jobs of the people, roles those people played)	
<b>What?</b> (e.g., Details, causes, possible effects)	
<b>Where?</b> (e.g., City, region, geography of area, other relevant places)	
<b>When?</b> (e.g., Date, time of day, how time was a factor, duration)	
<b>Analysis</b> (e.g., Importance, connections, conclusions, comparisons)	

CURRENT EVENT SHARE

	Basics	Most Surprising Fact	Connections You Can Make <small>(e.g., to your current event, to your life, to America)</small>
Current Event #1			
Current Event #2			
Current Event #3			

## Griot Folk Tale

### COMMON CORE STANDARDS

#### W.7.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

#### WHST.6-8.5

With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

#### WHST.6-8.9

Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

#### WHST.6-8.10

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

### DIRECTIONS

- The teacher shows the class a video of a griot telling a story.
- Students form groups of no more than four. The teacher makes sure that every group has at least one person willing to dance and one person willing to play music.
- The teacher gives each group a West African folk story. Teachers can find these through Internet searches. Students particularly like Anansi stories. Also, if the class did not complete **Activity 4**, sections of the Epic of Sundiata can be used.
- Students read their assigned story independently. Students answer the first six questions of “Paper Planning Page” independently. Students share what they wrote with their group and then answer the last four questions.
- Students rewrite their folk tale from the perspective they chose.
- Groups fill out one “Presentation Planning Page” together.
- Students use the “Presentation Planning Page” to help them create their presentation.
- Groups practice their presentations.
- Groups make their presentation. Students fill out “Presentation Notes” while they watch the presentations.

## GRIOT FOLK TALE

### Overall

A griot is a storyteller. In medieval West Africa it was common for each village to have an official griot who was in charge of preserving the town's history and entertaining the town with stories. During the Mali Empire, griots were so respected that they advised kings, tutored royal children, and were considered the experts on law and history. Much of what we know about the Western African empires comes from these oral traditions, which were passed down over time. There are still griots, and although they focus on telling a story, they often add singing, dancing, or music to enhance their presentations. For this assignment you will write your own version of a West African folk story, and then present one with a group.

### Requirements for Paper

- Write your assigned folk tale from one particular perspective
- Length of  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 page

### Requirements for Presentation

- Groups consist of three to four people.
- Each group has at least one storyteller, dancer, and musician.
- The goal is to tell a story enhanced with music and dance. The goal is not to act out your story.
- The music can be from a musical instrument or created by clapping, snapping, and sound effects.
- Groups are allowed to record their presentation as a video.

### Rubric

	Exceeding	Proficient	Developing	Beginning
<b>Writing</b>	Writes an extremely engaging story by using vivid word choice, sensory details, and a strong voice.	Writes an engaging story that includes solid word choice, a believable voice, and sufficient sensory details.	Story is at times engaging, but has issues with ordinary word choice, a weak voice, and/or a lack of sensory details.	Story is not engaging due to significant issues with word choice, voice, and/or sensory details.
<b>Presentation</b>	Comprehensively covers the folk tale and makes it more engaging by a creative use of music and dancing.	Covers the essential aspects of the folk tale and has music and dancing that fits the story.	Has music, dancing, and a story, but either is missing some essential aspects of the story or the music/dancing do not fit the story.	Is either missing music/dancing and/or significant aspects of the story are not included or are inaccurate.

# PAPER PLANNING PAGE <sup>1/2</sup>

1. What is the name of the story?
2. Use bullets to summarize the five to seven main events of the story.
3. What is the moral of the story?
4. Choose one character and tell the story from his or her perspective.
5. Choose a different character and tell the story from his or her perspective. A new character can be made up if his or her addition seems reasonable.

6. For your final draft, you will choose between your stories from questions 4 and 5. Which do you think is stronger? Why?
7. Read your first story (question 4) to your group members. What changes did they think you should make?
8. Read your second story (question 5) to your group members. What changes did they think you should make?
9. Which perspective do they think you should use for your final draft? Why?
10. Which perspective will you write from?



1. How will the presentation start? Options include things such as a sound, an explanation of what the audience will learn, in the middle of the action, and so on.
2. How will the presentation end? Options include things such as an explanation of the moral, full circle (a connection to how the presentation started), a dance, and so on.
3. What role will each group member have?

4. How will you integrate music into the presentation?

5. How will you integrate dancing into the presentation?

6. Plan your presentation below.

PRESENTATION NOTES

Folk Tale Name	What Happened?	How Is It Similar/Different to Yours?



# Selected Answers

## ACTIVITY 1

### Timbuktu Questions

1. Located near gold mines, trade routes converge there, on the Niger River, and other similar answers.
2. Not on an ocean, borders the Sahara Desert, many miles inland, and other similar answers.
3. Salem Ould Elhadj: "Which sent here a large number of businessmen and men of letters." Leo Africanus: "There are in Timbuktu numerous judges, teachers, and priests."
4. Leo Africanus: "The inhabitants are very rich." "The royal court is magnificent."
5. It is a secondary source because he is discussing the history of the city. Also, he wrote in the seventeenth century, well after the events he is discussing occurred.
6. Stories passed down through oral tradition can be unreliable because they might have changed over time. On the other hand, if they have never been changed, they can be very reliable because they come from people who experienced firsthand what is being passed down.
7. "Is believed to have gone to Timbuktu." The word "believed" lets the reader know that he may not have been to Timbuktu.
8. Answers will vary.

## ACTIVITY 2

### The Songhai Empire Questions

1. Sequentially—It starts with the Songhai Empire's origins and ends when they have been completely taken over by the Moroccans and French.
2. The Songhai people were at one point part of the Mali Empire. Later, the Songhai Empire conquered the Mali Empire.
3. Horses, slaves, spice, gold, salt, and other similar answers.
4. The Songhai Empire's army was well equipped with horses and canoes.
5. Sonni Ali's son took over the leadership from his father, but Muhammad I Askia overthrew him.
6. The empire grew, trade increased, more schools were built, the government became centralized, and other similar answers.
7. The Moroccans had cannons and primitive guns, which had never been seen before.
8. The Dendi Kingdom
9. France
10. Answers will vary, but the following is one possible answer: (1) Began as fishermen along the Niger River; (2) people began to congregate in the city, Gao; (3) Gao rebelled against the Mali Empire; (4) the Songhai Empire took over the Mali Empire and more; and (5) the Moroccans took over.

**ACTIVITY 3****Gold and Salt Questions**

1. The process of land drying out.
2. The part of Africa south of the Sahara Desert.
3. Usually food bought in boxes or cans.
4. The first paragraph introduces the paper by discussing trade in general in the area.
5. Answers will vary.
6. The last paragraph concludes the paper by updating the reader on the roles of gold and salt in society today.
7. The West Africans traded gold for salt, both were traded a great deal in that area, both were highly valued, and other similar responses.
8. "Salt was scarce in much of sub-Saharan Africa."
9. "Salt also could be found in Africa outside the Sahara."
10. Supported empires, made the area a trade center, the rulers became rich, and other similar answers.
11. When Ghana no longer monopolized the gold mines, its empire declined. Morocco took over the Songhai empire to gain control of the gold mines.
12. Gold was used for currency in medieval times, and today it is used for jewelry and electronics.
13. Salt is still to flavor food. In the past, though, salt was often used to preserve foods that could go bad; today, people use refrigerators for that.

## ACTIVITY 4

### The Epic of Sundiata Chart

	Three to Five Main Events	Lines or phrases that make Sundiata sound like he will be a great king	Lines or phrases that show Sundiata faced many challenges to become king	Details mentioned that you think are facts about Sundiata or Mali at that time
<b>Sundiata's Childhood</b>	<p>A seer predicted that the king would father a powerful king if he married a specific woman with a hump on her back.</p> <p>The king married her and they have Sundiata.</p> <p>Sundiata couldn't walk until he was seven.</p> <p>The king was worried about Sundiata, but his adviser told him it would work out.</p>	<p>"Greater conqueror than Alexander the Great."</p> <p>"Incredibly strong."</p>	<p>"At the age of three he was still crawling."</p> <p>"The other children poked fun at Sundiata"</p>	<p>Maghan Kon Fatta was king of Kangaba.</p> <p>Kings in that time had more than one wife.</p>
<b>The Lion's Awakening</b>	<p>The king died.</p> <p>Sundiata's brother was made king.</p> <p>Sundiata's family was moved out to the backyard.</p> <p>Sundiata first walked to get his mom a baobab tree.</p> <p>Sassouma tried to get some witches to kill Sundiata, but her plan failed.</p>	<p>"He pulled the whole tree out of the ground as if he was pulling up a weed."</p> <p>"This led to Sundiata becoming more and more popular."</p>	<p>"For food they had to make do with table scraps from the palace feasts they were no longer allowed to attend."</p> <p>"She called up the nine great witches of Mali and promised them a cow, lots of rice, and hay if they killed Sundiata."</p>	<p>Baobab was used to flavor food.</p> <p>Sundiata's brother became king.</p>
<b>Sundiata's Exile</b>	<p>Sundiata's family went into exile so Sassouma wouldn't kill them.</p> <p>No one would take them in for years.</p> <p>One man who took them in got bribed by Sassouma to kill Sundiata, but Sundiata was too clever for the man.</p> <p>A different king had Sundiata's family go to Ghana to be safe.</p> <p>Sundiata learned that Soumaoro had taken over Kangaba.</p>	<p>"The crafty Sundiata."</p>	<p>"People refused to open their homes to Sundiata and his family."</p>	<p>They played a game called "wori."</p> <p>Gold was used as money.</p>
<b>Sundiata versus Soumaoro</b>	<p>Sundiata raised an army to take on Soumaoro.</p> <p>Sundiata defeated Soumaoro's son.</p> <p>Sundiata met Soumaoro in battle, but Soumaoro used magic to escape.</p> <p>Sundiata's army beat Soumaoro's in battle and a magic arrow took away Soumaoro's powers.</p> <p>Sundiata became the first king of Mali.</p>	<p>"Personally led his men" into battle.</p> <p>"Showing no fear."</p>	<p>"Sundiata now knew that Soumaoro was too powerful of a sorcerer to be simply beaten on the battlefield."</p> <p>"Soumaoro's soldiers outnumbered Sundiata's."</p>	<p>Sundiata is the first king of Mali.</p> <p>Sundiata defeats Soumaoro in battle.</p>



## The Epic of Sundiata Questions

1. Sundiata had trouble walking as a child, became king of Mali, defeated Soumaoro, and other similar answers.
2. They played a game called “wori,” kings had more than one wife, Sundiata led his army into battle, and other similar answers.
3. That a seer predicted that he’d be a great king, that an arrow took away Soumaoro’s powers, that Sundiata pulled out a tree with his bare hands, and other similar answers.
4. There are not many written sources about Sundiata. Most of what we know about him is from Mali’s oral tradition.
5. Muslim chroniclers may have preferred to write about kings that only practiced Islam. Sundiata practiced a mix of Islam and traditional religions.
6. Answers will vary, but the following is one possibility: According to many passed-down stories, Maghan Kon Fatta died, his son took over, and then Soumaoro took over. According to a book, Soumaoro took over when Maghan Kon Fatta was king and then killed every one of his sons except for Sundiata.
7. Answers will vary.
8. Answers will vary.
9. Answers will vary.
10. “Evil king,” “sat on a skin throne,” “arrogant as always,” and other similar answers.
11. Evil does not pay, struggles makes a person stronger, be patient, and other similar answers.

## ACTIVITY 5

### Mansa Musa Questions

1. Answers will vary.
2. Answers will vary.
3. This chart compares people from different centuries, when gold had different values. Whoever created the chart had to take this inflation into consideration. The chart also has to greatly estimate to figure out each person’s net worth. On the other hand, two different charts both place Mansa Musa as the richest ever.
4. Answers will vary, but the following is one possible answer: “[He] treated me with the greatest courtesy” (al-Umari). This is an opinion because others could argue that there is greater courtesy than how Mansa Musa treated him. It is also probably an exaggeration.
5. If there is an abundance of a resource, the value for that resource will drop. It appears that Mansa Musa added so much gold to the Cairo economy that the price of gold dropped there.
6. The introduction to the Al-Umari excerpt mentions that he came to Cairo years after Mansa Musa’s visit. Abd al-Sali was writing in the sixteenth century, whereas Mansa Musa’s visit was in the fourteenth century.
7. Mansa Musa used his wealth to build mosques, libraries, and universities.
8. Mansa Musa grew so rich by taxing the trade of gold and other goods in one of the world’s wealthiest empires.
9. Answers will vary.

## ACTIVITY 6

### The Ghana Empire Questions

1. Answers will vary.
2. Answers will vary.
3. Answers will vary.
4. Answers will vary.
5. Al-Bakri was a Muslim writer, so he might have focused on the aspects of Ghana that tied in to Islam and showed how devout they were.
6. Al-Bakri's information is reliable because he based his books on accounts by people who had been to these places. It is unreliable because it sounds like he rarely, if ever, went to the places himself to see firsthand what he was reporting on.
7. Ghana is located in West Africa, so they are close to where the Ghana Empire was. Also, it makes sense that they would want to connect themselves to such an impressive kingdom.

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