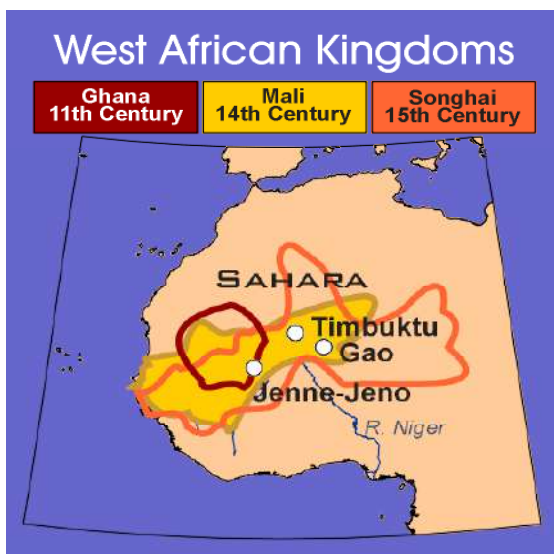


Oakland Unified School District
7th Grade –World History Assessment Pilot
Fall Semester, 2007-2008

Topic: **WEST AFRICA**

Question: “Which factor, geography or Islam, contributed more to the development of states, towns, and trade in the empires of Ghana, Mali and Songhai between the 10th and 15th centuries?”



Part I – Getting Started

What Makes Us Who We Are?

All of us are influenced by many things, our families, our friends, our churches, our education, the movies we see, the people who live in our neighborhood, and much more. If someone were to ask you, “What influences you the most – your family or the world outside your family?” – What would you say? To answer this question, try answering “Family” or “Outside the Family” for each of the statements below:

Influences on who I am – “family” or “outside the family”	Personal qualities, likes, and skills
	1) Where I learn right from wrong
	2) Where I learn how to read and write
	3) Deciding what is most important for my future
	4) Deciding what kinds of clothes to wear
	5) Deciding what kinds of food I like to eat
	6) Deciding what kinds of games I like to play
	7) Deciding what I like to read
	8) Where I learn how to cook
	9) Where I learn how to respect other people
	10) Deciding what kind of music I like

Looking at how you filled out the above chart, think about which influence is more important in making you who you are – the family or the world outside the family? Use the scale below to illustrate your answer to this question. If you think your family is the only influence on who you are, place yourself at number “1.” If you think that the world outside your family is the only influence on who you are place yourself at number 10. But if you think it is a combination of the two influences place your self yourself somewhere in between. For example, if you think that your family is more of an influence, but that what your friends think is also important, you may place yourself at a “3” or “4”

What do you think?

Place yourself on the scale below. Circle the number you choose and then explain your thinking in the space below.

Family ← 1---2----3-----4-----5-----6-----7----8----9----10→Outside of the Family

Why did you place yourself at that spot on the above scale? _____

PART II - GEOGRAPHY

What is the geography of West Africa?

Use the maps on page 113 and 114 in the Medieval to Early Modern Times textbook to answer the following questions.

1) On page 114, look at the green part of the map area marked #3. What kind of natural environment is the green area?

2) On page 115, look at picture #3. How might living in this area influence how people lived in terms of what they ate, the type of homes they built, the types of clothes they wore, the kind of work they might have done, or how they connected to people living in neighboring areas. In the spaces below write down three things you either know or could guess about how people lived in this climate.

i. _____

ii. _____

iii. _____

3) On page 114, look at the map area marked # 1. What kind of natural environment is this area? _____

4) On page 114, look at picture #1. How might living in this area influence how people lived in terms of what they ate, the type of homes they built, the types of clothes they wore, the kind of work they might have done, or how they connected to people living in neighboring areas. In the spaces below write down three things you either know or could guess about how people lived in this climate.

i. _____

ii. _____

iii. _____

5) Using the map on page 114, what kind of land is between the rain forests (part of #3) and the desert (#1) _____

6) On page 115, look at picture #2. What might be the advantage of living in the savannah rather than the desert or the rain forest? List and explain two possible advantages.

i. _____

ii. _____

7) On the map on page 114 you can see a river in the yellow area of #2. Look at the map on page 113. What is the name of this river?

8) Three great kingdoms and empires arose and developed in West Africa. These kingdoms were called Ghana, Mali and Songhai. Make a guess where you think those kingdoms were located. Do you think it was region #1, #2 or #3?

Explain why you think this would be the best place for a kingdom and empire to locate and develop.

Part III – Geography

What natural resources were available?

One of West Africa’s resources was the land itself. Due to the variety of environments, the land produced many different resources and crops. Read the following documents to learn about the natural resources of this area. Answer the questions that follow.

Source #1

“In this location (West Africa) they were in a good position to trade in the region’s most valuable resources – gold and salt. Gold came from the south, from mines near the Gulf of Guinea and along the Niger. Salt came from the Sahara in the North. People wanted gold for its beauty (*examine of the picture of the woman wearing gold on page 133 of your textbook*). But they needed salt in their diets to survive. Salt, which could best be used to preserve food, also made bland food tasty. These qualities made salt very valuable. In fact, Africans sometimes cut up slabs of salt and used the pieces as money.”



-Medieval to Modern Times, Holt, p. 131.

Source #2

“Some towns thrived by trading gold and koala nuts...for dates, copper, horses, cloth, and weapons that the Berbers (people from the Sahara) brought from the oases of the desert and from North Africa...”

-African and Mid-East World (pg104) Oxford

Source #3

“Through these lands flows a very large river, which at certain times of the year floods all these lands...There are many boats on it, by which they carry on trade.”

-An Italian merchant, letter in which he describes the Niger River, 1447

Questions: (Use sources #1, #2, & #3 to answer the following questions.)

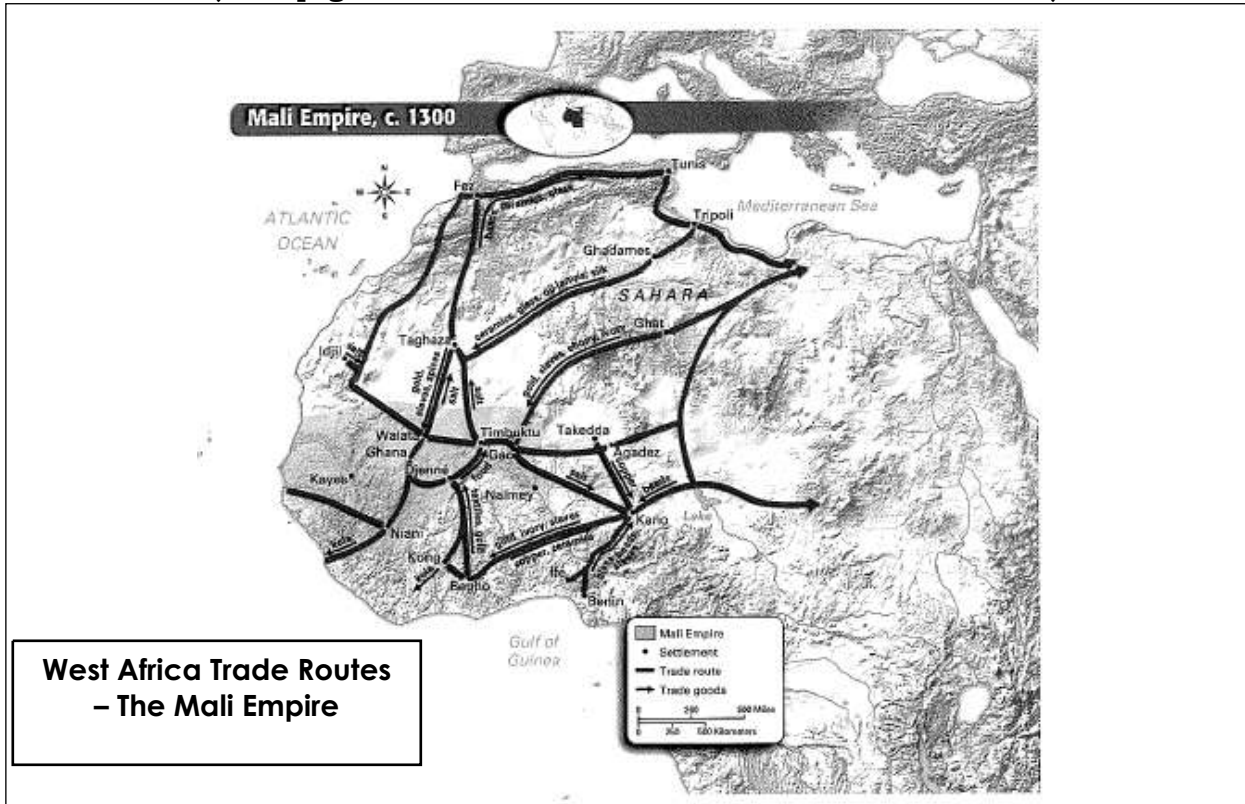
1) What natural resources helped these kingdoms gain wealth? How did they help? _____

2) Why was the Niger River important? How did it help the people gain wealth? _____

Part IV - Impact of Geography and Resources
What about trade? How did trade increase wealth?

Western African kingdoms of the Middle Ages (Ghana, Mali, and Songhai) controlled the trade routes from western and southern Africa to eastern and northern Africa by taxing merchants making sales in this region. The most profitable was the gold trade.

Source #4 (from page 134 of the “Medieval to Modern Times” textbook)



Question:

1) What goods were traded in the Mali Empire of West Africa in the 1400s? _____

2) Circle the following cities on the above map: Taghaza, Timbuktu, Djenne

3) Name two of the traded items that traveled south across the Sahara desert? _____

4) What items might have been traded in Timbuktu?

Source #5

Although Djenne was never as famous as its sister, the legendary city of Timbuktu - 350 kilometers (210 miles) to the north, it played an important role in trans-Saharan trade.

“Merchants bring salt from the mines of Taghaza (a desert oasis) and those with gold from the mines from the south meet at Djenne. These two marvelous mines have no equal in the entire universe. Everyone going to Djenne to trade reaps large profits and this acquires fortunes whose amount can be known only to God. (May he be praised!) Because of Djenne, many caravans have also come to Timbuktu, making it a wealthy city as well.

al-Sa'di ,17th century historian from Timbuktu

Question:

5) Why does the historian al-Sa'di state that Djenne was an important city in West Africa? _____

Source #6

Taxes collected on every trade item entering the kingdom were used to pay for government, a huge army which protected the kingdom's borders and trade routes, and the upkeep of the capital city and major markets.

<http://mali.pwnet.org> **“Mali, Ancient Crossroads of Africa”:**

Questions:

6) How, according to source #6, did trade help African kingdoms gain wealth? _____

7) What did the wealth pay for? _____

8) What other reason(s) beside gaining more wealth might have made trade important to the empires of West Africa? _____

Source #7

The ancient Arab world contained many large expanses of sand and rock – the Sahara in North Africa...Such terrain (land) meant that every traveler making an overland journey had to cross a wide expanse of desert. Nobody who embarked (started) on such a dangerous adventure ever did so without risking death by thirst, exposure, or exhaustion. This explains why all voyages were made in groups, or caravans.

“A World in Transition”, pg 35

Questions:

9) This source you tells us why it was very difficult to cross the Sahara desert. Why you think people were willing to take the risks of crossing the desert? What are two possible reasons?

a) _____

b) _____

10) The Sahara desert was on the northern edge of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai. Can you think of any advantage to the people of these empires of having the Sahara as their border? Below are three possibilities. Circle the letter of the one that you think provides the best explanation. Explain your selection.

a) It was important to have the Sahara as a border because water could be brought from there to the capital cities.

b) It was important to have the Sahara as a border because it would be difficult for people who lived there or above the Sahara to attack Ghana, Mali and Songhai.

c) It was important to have the Sahara as a border because it meant that many interesting people came to visit the kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai.

Why?

Part V - Impact of Islam

How did the spread of Islam effect education, custom, customs, and architecture in West Africa?

The religion of Islam spread to West Africa through trade. The influence of Islamic culture was seen at every level of West African society. The following sources provide information about how the influence of Islam was experienced and seen throughout this area.

Source #8

For centuries Timbuktu flourished because it sat between the great superhighways of the era — the Sahara, with its caravan routes carrying salt, cloth, spices and other riches from the north, and the Niger River, which carried gold and slaves from the rest of West Africa.

Timbuktu was home to the University of Sankore, which at its height had 25,000 scholars. An army of scribes, gifted in calligraphy, earned their living copying the manuscripts brought by travelers. Prominent families added those copies to their own libraries.

“Astronomy, botany, pharmacology, geometry, geography, chemistry, biology,” said Ali Imam Ben Essayouti, the descendant of a family of imams that keeps a vast library in one of the city’s mosques. “There is Islamic law, family law, women’s rights, human rights, laws regarding livestock, children’s rights. All subjects under the sun, they are represented here [in our library].”

-<http://www.africaresource.com/content/view/402/68/>

Questions:

1) What kinds of topics were of interest to people at this time?

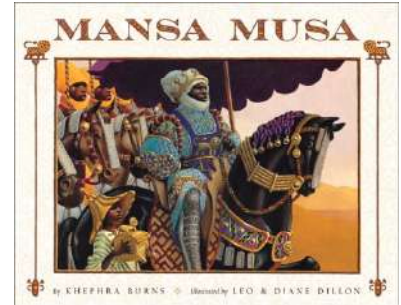
2) Why do you think the libraries were located in Islamic mosques? What might be a connection between the libraries and Islam?

Source #9

Mansa Musa brought the Mali Empire to the attention of the rest of the Muslim world with his famous pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324.

The Mali king Mansa Musa brought back from his pilgrimage to Mecca the architect al-Sahili, who is often credited with the creation of the African-Islamic building style (see source #13 for an example of this architecture). Musa's brother followed his path and encouraged the building of mosques, as well as the development of Islamic learning. Islam brought to Africa the art of writing and new techniques of weighting [measuring weight].

http://www.metmuseum.org/TOAH/HD/tsis/hd_tsis.htm



Question:

3) As a Muslim, Mansa Musa went on a pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca. What did he bring back with him that illustrates Islam's influence on West Africa?

Source #10

"All Africa's cultural heritage is either Arab or written in Arabic alphabet...The Arab culture helped African languages become languages of culture and science and enabled them to make a cultural contribution, by providing them with an alphabet."

<http://www.garbadiallo.dk/indedu.htm>

Question:

4) What does author of this quote believe about Islam's influence on West Africa?

5) What evidence would convince you that he is correct? What you want to see or read?

Source # 11

"[Mali] women are of surpassing beauty, and are shown more respect than the men. These people are Muslims, punctilious [correct] in observing the hours of prayer, studying the books of law, and memorizing the Koran...

...On Fridays, if a man does not go early to the mosque, he cannot find a corner to pray in, on account of the crowd. It is a custom of theirs to send each man his boy [to the mosque] with his prayer-mat; the boy spreads it out for his master in a place befitting him [and remains on it] until he comes to the mosque. Their prayer-mats are made of the leaves of a tree resembling a date-palm, but without fruit...

...Another of their good qualities is their habit of wearing clean white garments on Fridays. Even if a man has nothing but an old worn shirt, he washes it and cleans it, and wears it to the Friday service. Yet another is their zeal for learning the Koran by heart."

- Ibn Battuta: Travels in Asia and Africa 1325-1354

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1354-ibnbattuta.html>

Question:

- 6) According to this passage, does Ibn Battutah admire and respect the Muslims of Mali? How can you tell from this passage? Underline the words the show this respect or admiration.**

Source #12

"Merchants transported more than valuable trade goods along the trans-Saharan routes. Islam reached...West African through Arab merchants on Saharan caravan routes. During the Ghana, Mali, and Songhai empires Arab merchants brought the Koran and the Arabic written language to the traditionally oral cultures of West Africa. Although the common citizens were not required to convert to Islam, kings and merchants often did convert in order to improve relations with the Arab traders. Kings and merchants understood the importance of extensive trade to their region.

-library.thinkquest.org

Question:

- 7) Besides the exchange of good, what else was spread through trade in West Africa?**

Source #13

The first Great Mosque of Djenne was built by Djenne's first Muslim ruler; Koy Konoboro. For six centuries the large mosque dominated the center of town.



<http://www.islamicarchitecture.org/architecture/thegreatmosquemali.html>

Question:

8) What three words would you use to describe Great Mosque of Djenne? 1)_____ 2)_____ 3)_____

The Great Mosque of Djenne Today

The most notable days at the Great Mosque of Djenne are market days, when the square in front of the Mosque fills with vendors and shoppers. People of the various ethnic groups of Mali come together at this weekly market to purchase everything from cattle, meat, fish, vegetables, rice, and all sorts of household



http://www.pps.org/great_public_spaces/one?public_place_id=817

Question:

9) What does this photo tell us about Islam's influence on Mali life and culture today?

goods.

Part VI - Demonstrating Understanding

Drawing Conclusions

You have finished studying about two major influences on West Africa – geography and Islam. Next to each of the characteristics below mark it either G for geography or I for Islam

G or I	Characteristics
	1) The Niger river is a source of water, food, and transportation.
	2) People in West Africa learned to write in Arabic.
	3) Mansa Musa built beautiful mosques in Timbuktu and Dejenne.
	4) There were gold mines
	5) There were salt mines
	6) There were laws that told people how to behave
	7) Ghana, Mali and Songhai were located between the deserts and the rain forests.
	8) Rulers became Muslim to be on better terms with the peoples from Northern Africa.
	9) The Sahara desert protected the empires below it from constant attack and allowed the empires to grow.
	10) Muslims need to learn how to read the Qur'an, which encourages education
	11) Winter floods allowed boats to reach Timbuktu from the Niger River.
	12) Arabic scholars recorded African history.

Below is a scale to show which influence which had more of an influence on the development and civilization of West Africa.- geography or Islam.

If you think geography had the greatest influence circle a number between “5” and “1,” depending on how great an influence you think it was. If you think that Islam had the greatest influence circle a number between “5” and “10,” depending how great and influence you think it was.

Geography ←1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10→ Islam

Name _____ School _____
Teacher _____

Final Assignment

III. Your final task will be write an essay that explains your thinking on the question of which had more influence on the development of the West African societies of Ghana, Mali, or Songhai – geography or Islam. The question...

“Which factor, geography or Islam, contributed more to the development of states, towns, and trade in the empires of Ghana, Mali and Songhai between the 10th and 15th centuries?”

Your “thesis statement” or “controlling idea” will be a sentence stating which you believe had more of an influence – geography or Islam.

1. Write your statement in the space below.

2. What evidence will you use to support or backup your statement? (Jot down 2-4 pieces of evidence from the packet)

- 1.** _____
- 2.** _____
- 3.** _____
- 4.** _____

3. You will write a focused essay about the effect of geography and Islam on the West African kingdoms during the Middle Ages (Medieval time period). You must help your reader understand the specifics of West African geography and resources, how they impacted the growth of the West African kingdoms, and how Islam affected the wealth, power, and education in these kingdoms. Additionally, you must defend your opinion about which had more influence – geography or Islam.

- The first paragraph of this five-paragraph essay is written for you (almost!) on the next page. .**
- In the second paragraph, describe the geographic features and resources of the medieval West African kingdoms.**
- In the third paragraph, describe the influence of Islam in the medieval West African kingdoms.**
- In the fourth paragraph, justify your opinion about whether geography OR Islam contributed most to the growth of these**

medieval West African states. (In this section, also include a counterargument that recognizes the other choice.)

- In the fifth paragraph, write a brief conclusion to your essay.

Essay

(Below is a possible introduction to the essay that you may use to start writing – just fill in the blanks to begin. Then continue writing your essay on the following pages. (You may recopy the introduction if you'd like, but you don't have to.)

You may write, if you want to say this in a different way, your own introduction

Possible Introduction

The medieval West African kingdoms were influenced by both geography and Islam. There is historical debate about which of these two factors contributed more to the growth and culture of the West African kingdoms, towns, and trade. In my opinion,

_____ was the more significant factor. To understand this position, it is important to know the geographical features and resources of the medieval West African kingdoms, and how Islam contributed to the growth and culture these kingdoms.
