

## Study Guide

### To pass the test you will need to know ...

<b>AFRICAN GEOGRAPHY</b>	The most important river in West Africa / What the Sahara, Sahel, Savannah, and Rain Forest are / Why salt was an important product.
<b>EARLY CULTURE &amp; TRADE</b>	What animism is / The importance of Iron and who first made it / The salt and gold trade / How silent barter worked.
<b>THE GHANA EMPIRE</b>	Where the Ghana empire was and its size / Why the Ghana empire was able to grow larger / How the empire grew rich / What rules the empire had about gold / How the empire ended (who, when, why)
<b>THE MALI EMPIRE</b>	Where the Mali empire was and its size / Who founded the empire / What foods the empire grew / Which cities were in the empire / Where Mansa Musa travelled to and what he did on his journey / How the empire ended (who, when, why)
<b>THE SONGHAI EMPIRE</b>	Why Berbers traded with Songhai / Who founded the empire / What Askia the Great did to help the empire / How the empire ended (who, when, why) / Why West African trade declined.
<b>WEST AFRICAN ART &amp; CULTURE</b>	Why West Africa followed oral history / Who Griots were / What the Dausi and Sundiata were / Why statues and masks were made and what they looked like / What the Dogon made masks for / What Kente cloth is and what it looks like / What West African music influenced / What West African instruments looked like.
<b>MAPS</b>	Where West Africa, Arabia, China, Japan, and Europe are.
<b>WRITING</b>	You will need to be able to write a short summary about West African art and culture
	You will need to be able to write about one of the following topics  A) The stories of the West African epics B) The beliefs and practices of West African religions

### IMPORTANT VOCAB

**The Niger** - The major river of West Africa      **The Sahara** - World's largest desert

**Sahel** - An area of dry land south of the Sahara      **Savannah** - Grassland south of the Sahel      **Rain Forest** - Area of wet land

**Salt** - Mineral found in dried lakes used to preserve food      **Age Sets** - Groups of young people born around the same time

**Animism** - Traditional West African religion worshipping ancestors and nature spirits

**Iron** - Important metal first made by the Nok and used to make weapons and tools

**Silent Barter** - A way that gold and salt were traded without speaking      **Ghana** - The first major empire in West Africa

**Almoravids** - Invaders from North Africa who conquered Ghana      **Sundiata** - Founder of the Mali Empire

**Mansa Musa** - Important ruler of Mali      **Timbuktu** - Important city in West Africa famous for its schools

**Tuareg** - Invaders from North Africa who conquered Mali      **Songhai** - Last large West African empire

**Sunni Ali** - Founder of Songhai      **Askia the Great** - Ruler of Songhai who helped education and the army

**Morocco** - North African nation which conquered Songhai      **Oral History** - History passed down by mouth rather than writing

**Griots** - West African story tellers      **The Dausi** - An epic story telling the history of Ghana

**The Sundiata** - An epic story telling the history of Mali      **Kente** - Brightly colored African cloth

**The Dogon** - A West African people famous for the masks and sculpture

## WEST AFRICAN GEOGRAPHY

made up of four regions - the Sahara, Sahel, Savannah and rain forest. The Sahara is the largest desert in the world with huge dunes and high temperatures. The Sahel is an area of dry land between the desert and the savannah which can support small animals when it occasionally rains. The Savannah is an area of grassland that supports many grazing animals. Lastly the forest is a hot, wet area with many plants and animals. The Niger river flows through West Africa providing water, food, and transport to the people living there. The most important resources in West Africa were gold and salt. Salt was mined from dried up river beds in the Sahara and Sahel. Gold was found in various areas near the coast.

## EARLY CULTURE & TRADE

Thousands of years ago the area that is now the Sahara was much wetter than it is now. People and animals lived there. Then the climate changed and it became dry. People were forced to move South into smaller areas where they formed villages based on extended families and began farming. They also developed religions based on animism - the belief that natural objects and places have spirits. They made offerings to keep these spirits happy.

One of the first people called the Nok learned how to make iron by heating iron ore. Using iron they could make strong tools and weapons that helped them to farm more land as well as defeating their enemies who were only using stone tools.

Trade routes were established using gold, wood, and bone weapons. Another important development that occurred around 200BC was the introduction of the camel to West Africa by the Phoenicians. Camels and traders could cross the Sahara desert carrying salt and goods between West and North Africa. This trade was often done using a process called barter in which neither side actually spoke to each other during trading.

## THE GHANA EMPIRE

The Ghana Empire was the first large empire in West Africa. It gained control of the gold and silver trade routes and made it rich and powerful. Using this wealth they built a powerful army.

They used iron weapons to defeat their rivals and take over even more land.

They taxed all trade that passed through their lands. They also made it illegal for any ordinary person to own gold nuggets. Instead ordinary people were allowed to own gold dust. Under a king called Tunka Manin the empire reached its greatest height and wealth.

## THE MALI EMPIRE

According to legend the Mali Empire was founded by Sundiata Kelefa in 1234 after the collapse of the Ghana Empire. Sundiata fought to free his people and then used his army to farm the land introducing many crops such as rice, wheat, and onions. Like Ghana, Mali also took control of the gold and salt trade routes and the city of Timbuktu which became a center for this trade.

The Mali Empire reached its greatest heights under Mansa Musa. He was a Muslim and in 1324 he went on a pilgrimage to the city of Mecca. On his journey he gave away so much gold that its value dropped in many places. His wealth helped to make Mali famous throughout Europe and the Middle East. When he returned Mansa Musa devoted himself to encouraging the spread of Islam and education by building many mosques and schools.

After Mansa Musa died the empire went into decline as a weak ruler took over. In 1431 a North African people called the Tuareg captured and looted Timbuktu. Other parts of the empire began breaking away. By 1500 Mali had almost completely disappeared.

## THE SONGHAI EMPIRE

The people of Songhai had once been ruled by Mali but as that empire declined they broke away.

In 1462 a Muslim leader called Sunni Ali helped to enlarge the empire by capturing several important cities and building a stronger army.

Sunni Ali died in 1492 and was succeeded by his son - Sunni Baru. He was a Muslim people in Songhai, Sunni Baru was not a Muslim. People were worried that this would affect their trade with the Muslim Berbers. A rebellion overthrew him and a new leader called Askia the Great who then became king. Askia created the first standing army in West Africa. He was also a huge supporter of art and culture and oversaw the construction of many schools and mosques in Timbuktu. After his death the empire began to decline.

In 1591 a Moroccan army invaded the Songhai Empire and captured Timbuktu.

The wealth of the Ghana empire made it a target for invaders. In 1068 a North African people called the Almoravids invaded Ghana in an attempt to take control of their trade and convert the people of Ghana to Islam. They captured several important cities and looted them. Their animals were killed and large amounts of farmland were destroyed creating a famine.

iron weapons. Although the Moroccan army left Songhai was  
y changing trade patterns. Europeans began sailing to the coast  
directly to get gold. Traders no longer had to go through West  
a. The age of West Africa's empires came to an end.

## **WEST AFRICAN ART & CULTURE**

The people of West Africa never developed a written language of  
result stories and histories were handed down orally - by word of  
most important people in this process were called Griots. They  
songs, and dancing to tell stories to audiences of people. The m  
stories in West Africa were the Dausi and the Sundiat

the story of the history of Ghana. According to the story a snake-da promised to protect Ghana so long as a young woman was every year. One year a warrior killed Bida but before it died the snake 'eople said that it was this cruse that caused Ghana to fall.

Is the story of the founding of Mali. When Sundiata was young he crippled. When Mali was invaded his entire family was killed but he was ras not seen as a threat. When he grew up he created a huge army and e. He then became king of the new Mali empire.

s an important artform in West Africa. Statues were made from onze, wood, bone, and ivory. They were made to honor peoples' were often found near shrines or at religious festivals. The most n West Africa were made by the Dogon people who used them in nce of death" to honor recently departed family members.

West African product was Kente cloth. This cloth was made on a hand strips. These strips were then stiched together into clothes. was made with bright colors that symbolized different ideas or hes made of Kente were very expensive and were usually worn only by royalty on special occasions.

so important in West Africa. Griots often used it to help tell their stories. d for dances during festivals. West African instruments such as the on were made of natural materials. The rhythms of usic have directly influenced modern styles of music such as the blues.

