

# MANSA MUSA: KING OF MALI

## Mark It on the Map

Have students turn to the map pages 24–25 and locate Africa, Mali, and where the United States is in relation to Africa. Have them point out the land Mansa Musa controlled, shown on the inset map on page 24. Then have them turn to page 3 and note the present-day countries of Africa, especially those within the boundaries controlled by Mansa Musa. Use the maps as references throughout the issue.

## Vocabulary

Malinke	bullion
Berbers	griot
mushrif	epic poetry
pilgrimage	medieval
mosque	emigrants
oasis	Sahel
atlas	nomads

## Introduction

Read the article “Where Does History Begin for You?” on page 2—taking time out to allow students to answer the three questions posed in the first paragraph.

## Questions for Discussion

- ➔ What policies did Mansa Musa implement to make Mali strong and prosperous?
- ➔ What does the name “Mansa Musa” actually mean?
- ➔ What were the principal factors that contributed to Mali’s decline after Mansa Musa?
- ➔ Why did Mansa Musa travel to Mecca?
- ➔ What influence did the architect al-Sahili have on Mali’s buildings? Use the image on page 15 to help illustrate your answer.
- ➔ Why are camels good pack animals in the desert of north Africa?
- ➔ What is the Catalan Atlas, and what clues in the section of North Africa reveal the map-maker’s identity as European?
- ➔ How did Mansa Musa’s rule affect the spread of Islam in North Africa?
- ➔ How did Mali’s prosperity under Mansa Musa affect the spread of ideas in North Africa?
- ➔ What were Mali’s principal exports?
- ➔ What else besides gold did Mali export to Europe? Give specific examples. (See pages 28–29.)
- ➔ What role has and does the griot play in Malian society?
- ➔ What years are considered the Middle Ages in Africa?
- ➔ What similarities do you notice among the sculptured objects shown on pages 38–41? Explain your answers.
- ➔ Why did Bilal’s family have to move? How does Bilal help his family?
- ➔ What are historians’ sources for information about the people of ancient Mali? Be specific.

## Writing Workout

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- ➔ Ask each student to consider in what way(s) his or her feelings about a historical event or about an outstanding person have changed after reading more about the event or person. Make sure students give specific answers and explanations.
- ➔ Make a list of the adjectives al-Umari used to describe Mansa Musa. (See page 8.) Then use the information found on pages 9–11 to explain why the adjectives are accurate.
- ➔ Choose the illustration that you like best in the issue and explain why.
- ➔ Explain the relationship between the Renaissance in Europe and West African gold.
- ➔ Explain in what ways the American folktales mentioned on page 32 can be compared with the tale of Sundiata.
- ➔ Of the eight sculptured objects pictured on pages 38–41, which one do you like best? Write an essay explaining why.

## Think About It

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- Read the article “Making Sense of History” on pages 6–7. Then have students suggest current events that require an awareness of the past to be fully understood.
- Scholars do not agree on the exact year Mansa Musa became king of Mali. (See page 9.) Why do you think this is so? What problems do you think scholars meet when they try to date events that occurred hundreds of years ago?
- After reading “Traditions at Ancient Mali’s Royal Court” (pages 12–13), how would you describe the relationship between a king of Mali and his people?
- Why do you think Mansa Musa promoted the spread of Islam, yet at the same time encouraged the keeping of ancient religious beliefs?
- Look at the image on page 16. Why do you think the commercial life of Cairo’s old neighborhoods has and continues to cluster around mosques?
- Why was Mansa Musa’s visit to Cairo important to Mali’s political position in Africa?
- Folktales, such as that of Sundiata, mix history and myth. Give examples that support this statement. Then answer the question “Why do you think this is so?” Be specific with your answer.
- Make a copy—but without the captions—of each of the sculptured objects shown on pages 38–41. Show the images—one by one—to the class. Ask them to describe what they think each sculpture represents. Read the caption after discussing each object, and let students discuss the clues that led them to their answers.
- What do the sculptured objects on pages 38–41 reveal about the ancient Malians?
- Consider the images of Bilal and his friends on pages 42–43. Do they tell the story better than the text? Does the text make the story more real, or do you need both? Explain your answers and be specific.

## Then and Now

Students may complete one or both of the following activities:

- Look at the two photos on pages 4 and 5 and compare and contrast the structures. What do the structures tell you about the Malian sense of tradition and the Malian feeling toward the past?
- Bring books to class that tell of protocol at a state capitol, the Capitol in Washington, and the White House concerning visiting dignitaries. Have students compare and contrast the rules observed today in the United States with those observed in Mali during Mansa Musa’s time.

## Class Map Project

Divide the class into three groups. Draw an outline of Africa on a large piece of paper; include the Niger, Congo, and Nile Rivers. Cut the map into three sections — southern, central, and northern—and give each group a section. Read the article “African Kingdoms During the Middle Ages” on pages 34–37. Have each group gather information about its section and label its map section accordingly. Have a spokesperson from each group describe its section during the Middle Ages. Then reassemble the three sections and display on the wall.

## Play the Part

Discuss Sundiata’s life, dividing it into periods of time. Divide the class into groups and ask each to write a skit, incorporating the details of its period, and present each skit in chronological order.

## Get Into Art

Students may complete one or both of the following activities:

- Illustrate Sundiata’s life and contributions to Mali. Accompany each illustration with a brief description or explanation.
- Divide the class into three groups. Divide “Traditions at Ancient Mali’s Royal Court” on pages 12–13 into three sections, and assign each group a section to illustrate. Have groups accompany each illustration with a brief written explanation of the tradition and ask each to present and explain its illustration to the rest of the class.

## Research Projects

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- Assign students, individually or in groups, to research how Malians make and build with mud bricks, including the use of short wooden branches. Have the students present their findings to the class.
- Bring books to class that show the terrain of northern Africa. Assign students to map the routes Mansa Musa could have taken to reach Cairo and Mecca. Explain which would have been the fastest route, the slowest, the most dangerous, the most practical, and the safest—with an explanation for each descriptive adjective.
- Assign students to research the Renaissance, as well as its impact on western civilization. Have students present their findings to the class.
- Assign students to research ancient Zimbabwe and the people who lived there. Have students present their findings.
- Have students research the Christians in Ethiopia who cut their churches from living rock. Let them present their findings.

## Just for Fun

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- Find the hidden pictures and complete the match on page 19.
- Use the 30 clues on page 21 to solve the word search puzzle.
- Pretend you are a merchant in Mansa Musa’s Mali. Follow the directions on pages 22–23 and make and test the weights you will use on your trading journey.

## Follow These Footsteps

Sundiata

Mansa Musa

Bilal