
Unit: Cross-Cultural Exchange on the Trans-Saharan Trade Routes

HOW DO HISTORIANS KNOW ABOUT CULTURAL AND GEOGRAPHIC INTERSECTIONS?

Activity 1: Songs of Slavery Along the Trans-Saharan Trade Route

INDIVIDUAL REPORT

1. Why was it important to have portable (able to be carried) instruments on the trans-Saharan trade route? What words or phrases in the song give information about events that took place on the trans-Saharan trade route? Based on the song, what was an important resource traded along these routes?

2. What do the instruments, musicians, and the song lyrics show about how musical traditions developed and intersected between West Africa and Islam along the trans-Saharan trade route?

3. How are songs about historical events different from stories about historical events?

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Activity 3: Nomadic Lifestyle in the Saharan Desert and Atlas Mountains

INDIVIDUAL REPORT

1. What do these photographs and artifacts show you about how nomadic tribes lived? How did they survive and what did they do as part of a daily routine?

2. What does the architecture of the nomadic dwellings tell you about how nomads adapted to their environment? Why was it important for nomads to live and travel as a part of a tribe? What benefits did they gain by doing so?

3. What do you think were the roles of men and women in the tribe? What were the roles of children?

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Activity 4: Ibn Battuta's Account of Crossing the Desert by Caravan

INDIVIDUAL REPORT

1. What was the length of Ibn Battuta's journey and what supplies did he prepare or need to make it successfully through the desert? How did geographic conditions (e.g. climate, terrain, etc.) play a role in his journey?

2. What difficulties did travelers face when crossing the Sahara? What unusual places or resources did he encounter in the desert that you would not have expected?

3. Why do you think it was important to travel as part of a group (caravan)?

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Activity 5: Accounts of the Gold-Salt Trade between North Africa and the Kingdom of Mali

INDIVIDUAL REPORT

1. What geographic difficulties (climate and terrain) did the trading routes between North and West Africa pose to merchants and traders? And what resources and opportunities could be found there as well?

2. Why was the king of Mali so powerful and wealthy? What did he have that made him this way and how do you think he maintained his power?

3. If you wanted to convince a fellow merchant to make this difficult journey, what would you say to make him want to go to Timbuktu and the kingdom of Mali?

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Activity 7: The Intersection of Islam and West Africa in Trans-Saharan Designs

INDIVIDUAL REPORT

1. Based on the photographs, map, and artifacts, what special kinds of clothing did people wear on the trans-Saharan trade routes? What elements of their clothes helped them adapt to traveling through a desert?

2. According to the description of the King of Ghana and his court, how did people dress? What does this show about their status/importance and how did Islam intersect with the religion already there?

3. How do these craftworks and architectural designs show the influence of Islam on West Africa? Conversely, how do these craftworks and architectural designs show West Africa's influence on Islam?

Pick one of the primary sources or artifacts from your group and complete the primary source investigation.

Title of Source: _____

WHO?	WHEN & WHERE?
Author of Source:	Place and Time of Publication:
Audience:	Historical Context:

Description of Source: What I see... Evidence of...	Meaning: What the objects, words, etc. mean...
Message/Argument: The author is trying to tell me...	Questions I Still Have: I wonder... My reaction to the source is...

Focus Question: What does this source show about the topic our group explored?

The _____ by _____
 shows us that the author thought _____

 because in the source _____

 The relates to our group's topic because _____.