Land, Belief, Exchange

How geography and trade shaped early African societies

SS24.7.9 "Compare and contrast the economic and cultural structures of early African societies. 9a Explain how physical geography, including natural resources, contributed to the economic and cultural practices of early African societies..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one way the land shaped work in each society. Circle beliefs and number two ways trade could connect communities.

Different Places, Connected Lives

1. Imagine walking from the wooded lands of West Africa toward a dry, rocky plateau. In the forest region where the Ashanti lived, people could gather kola nuts and obtain gold, valuable goods for trade. Farther east, many Igbo communities grew yams in lands with enough rainfall for farming. On the Bandiagara Plateau, Dogon farmers worked with thinner soils and less reliable rain, growing hardy millet. These different settings shaped work: forest goods could be traded, while farmers adapted crops to local conditions. No single landscape describes all of Africa.

2. Spiritual life also showed both common patterns and important differences. Many communities honored ancestors and believed in a powerful creator, but their traditions were not identical. Ashanti traditions speak of Nyame, a supreme creator, and honor ancestors. In Igbo traditions, Chukwu is the supreme creator, while alusi are spirits connected to parts of life and the natural world. Dogon traditions speak of Amma as creator and include stories about the Nommo, beings linked to water. These beliefs helped people explain their world and guided community ceremonies.

3. Trade connected people with different resources and customs. Long before the Iron Age, people exchanged useful materials; during the Iron Age, iron tools and other goods also moved through African networks. Some accounts describe silent barter: one group left goods, stepped away, and waited while another group left goods in return. This let people trade without speaking face to face. Other exchanges involved conversation, so travelers could learn words and farming methods from one another. Goods could move without talk, but spoken contact helped languages and practices spread.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did rainfall and soil help shape the crops grown by Igbo and Dogon farmers? Compare both.

2. What belief do Ashanti and Igbo traditions have in common? Describe one difference mentioned in the passage.

3. How could silent barter move goods without a conversation? What kind of exchange could help words spread?

4. Why might Ashanti and Dogon communities have different goods to trade? Use a detail about each landscape.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine traders from two societies in the passage meeting to exchange goods. In four sentences, describe what each brings because of its landscape, a belief one trader might explain, and how their meeting could spread words or farming practices.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 7 · SS24.7.9

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one way the land shaped work in each society. Circle beliefs and number two ways trade could connect communities. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did rainfall and soil help shape the crops grown by Igbo and Dogon farmers? Compare both.	**Igbo farmers grew yams where there was enough rain. Dogon farmers grew hardy millet on a plateau with thinner soils and less reliable rain.**
2	What belief do Ashanti and Igbo traditions have in common? Describe one difference mentioned in the passage.	**Both have a supreme creator. The passage says Ashanti traditions honor ancestors, while Igbo traditions include alusi, spirits connected to life and nature.**
3	How could silent barter move goods without a conversation? What kind of exchange could help words spread?	**Groups took turns leaving goods for each other without speaking face to face. Exchanges involving conversation could help travelers learn and spread words.**
4	Why might Ashanti and Dogon communities have different goods to trade? Use a detail about each landscape.	**The Ashanti lived in a forest region with kola nuts and gold. Dogon farmers grew millet on a drier plateau, so their available goods differed.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At a meeting place, an Ashanti trader brings kola nuts from the forest, while a Dogon farmer offers millet grown on the dry plateau. As they exchange goods, the farmer explains how millet grows with less reliable rain. The farmer also tells a story about Amma, the creator in Dogon tradition. When the traders leave, each may use a new farming word learned during their conversation.

Accept other passage-based comparisons that distinguish shared beliefs from specific traditions. For the open task, look for a plausible imagined exchange grounded in two landscapes, an accurately described belief, and a way conversation could spread words or practices.