Land Shapes Life

Read how rivers, deserts, and coasts shaped early African societies.

SS24.7.9a "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 In each paragraph, underline two physical features or natural resources and circle one kind of work they support. Write 1, 2, and 3 beside a cultural practice in the first, second, and third paragraphs.

Three Places, Three Ways of Life

1. Each year, the Nile rose and spread water and rich mud across nearby fields. In ancient Egypt, farmers planted wheat and barley after the floodwaters fell. They dug canals to move river water to fields farther away, then stored part of the harvest for drier months. Boats carried grain and stone between towns because traveling on water was easier than hauling heavy loads across land. Egyptians also marked the flood season on their calendars and held ceremonies to honor the river's life-giving power.

2. South of the Sahara, the savanna offered routes between desert traders and communities near the forests. The kingdom of Ghana grew powerful by controlling part of this trade. Traders brought salt across the desert on camels, while gold came from lands farther south. Salt helped preserve food, and gold bought other goods. Ghana's rulers collected taxes on traded goods. In market towns, Muslim merchants prayed and used Arabic for business. Some local people adopted Islam, while others kept their own religious traditions.

3. Along East Africa's Indian Ocean coast, natural harbors sheltered trading boats. Seasonal monsoon winds helped sailors cross the ocean and return months later. Coastal families caught fish, while merchants exchanged ivory from inland regions for cloth and other goods brought by visitors. Builders used coral stone from the coast for houses and mosques. Contact with merchants from Arabia and other places helped spread Islam in these towns. Over time, Swahili developed as a Bantu language with words borrowed from Arabic, reflecting life shaped by both the coast and long-distance trade.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Nile's yearly flood shape both farming and a cultural practice in ancient Egypt?

2. How did Ghana's location between the desert and lands farther south help its rulers earn wealth, and what cultural practice spread in its market towns?

3. How did coastal geography help people earn a living in East African towns, and how did ocean travel change cultural life there?

4. Why might a trader in Ghana depend on travel across dry land while a trader on the East African coast depended on travel by water? Give one cultural effect of each trade route.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four- or five-sentence journal entry as a young person in one of the three societies. Show how a local feature or resource shapes your work and a cultural practice, and add one believable detail of your own.

ANSWER KEY

Land Shapes Life

GRADE 7 · SS24.7.9a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

In each paragraph, underline two physical features or natural resources and circle one kind of work they support. Write 1, 2, and 3 beside a cultural practice in the first, second, and third paragraphs. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Nile's yearly flood shape both farming and a cultural practice in ancient Egypt?	**The flood left water and rich mud for growing crops. Egyptians marked the flood season on calendars and held ceremonies honoring the river.**
2	How did Ghana's location between the desert and lands farther south help its rulers earn wealth, and what cultural practice spread in its market towns?	**Ghana's rulers taxed trade in salt from the desert and gold from farther south. Some people in market towns adopted Islam through contact with Muslim merchants.**
3	How did coastal geography help people earn a living in East African towns, and how did ocean travel change cultural life there?	**Harbors sheltered trading boats, monsoon winds aided travel, and the coast supplied fish and coral stone. Contact with visiting merchants helped spread Islam and Arabic words.**
4	Why might a trader in Ghana depend on travel across dry land while a trader on the East African coast depended on travel by water? Give one cultural effect of each trade route.	**Ghana's traders crossed the Sahara by camel to bring salt to trading routes, while coastal traders used harbors and monsoon winds for ocean voyages. Muslim merchants brought Islam to Ghana's market towns, and ocean trade helped bring Islam and Arabic words to East African towns.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At dawn, I help my uncle stack cloth in our coastal market while boats wait in the sheltered harbor. My aunt catches fish nearby, and we sell some at the market. A sailor tells me the monsoon winds will carry his boat home in a few months. At midday, I walk past a mosque built of coral stone from this coast. I practice an Arabic word I learned from a visiting merchant as I count the bundles.

Accept other accurate links between geography, work, and cultural practices stated in the passage. For the journal entry, look for a believable invented detail and clear explanations of both links.