Beliefs and Belonging

Compare shared beliefs and distinct practices in three African traditions.

SS24.7.9b "Describe common tenets of indigenous religion practiced in Africa, including the beliefs of the Ashanti, Dogon, and Igbo religious traditions."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the belief about a creator in each paragraph, and circle one reference to ancestors or other spiritual beings in each. Put a star beside one practice or belief that makes each tradition distinct.

Three Traditions, Shared Questions

1. Across Africa, Indigenous religious traditions are diverse, not one single religion. Many connect a creator, other spiritual beings, ancestors, and everyday duties. Among the Ashanti of Ghana, Nyame is the supreme creator. People may honor abosom, spiritual beings linked to aspects of the world, and remember ancestors who still matter to family life. At a gathering, someone might pour a small drink onto the ground as a libation, a way to address spiritual beings or ancestors. These practices link respect for family with care for the living.

2. In Mali, many Dogon communities speak of Amma as the creator. Stories also tell of the Nommo, spiritual beings associated with water and the ordering of the world. Dogon families honor ancestors, whose place in community memory continues after death. During some funeral ceremonies, masked dancers take part in rites that help the community respond to a death. These masks are not simply decorations or entertainment. Meanings and practices differ among Dogon communities, but the ceremonies show how spiritual beliefs can shape shared responsibilities when a family grieves.

3. Among the Igbo of Nigeria, Chukwu is recognized as a supreme creator. Many Igbo traditions also honor alusi, spiritual beings linked with parts of life and nature. Ala, an earth deity, is associated with the land, fertility, and moral rules. Families may honor ancestors through prayers or offerings, connecting those who live now with earlier generations. Ashanti, Dogon, and Igbo traditions share attention to a creator and to ancestors or other spiritual beings. Yet their names, stories, and rituals differ. No single description captures every family or community.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do Ashanti beliefs and the practice of libation show a connection between spiritual beings or ancestors and the living?

2. Describe a Dogon belief about ancestors and explain how a funeral ceremony can reflect it.

3. How do Igbo beliefs connect the spiritual world to the land, moral rules, or family life? Give two examples.

4. Name one belief shared by the Ashanti, Dogon, and Igbo traditions. Then describe one way two of the traditions differ.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A museum label says, "All African Indigenous religions have the same gods and ceremonies." Write a replacement label of 4 to 5 sentences. Describe two beliefs shared by the three traditions, give one distinct example from each, and make clear that practices can vary.

ANSWER KEY

Beliefs and Belonging

GRADE 7 · SS24.7.9b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the belief about a creator in each paragraph, and circle one reference to ancestors or other spiritual beings in each. Put a star beside one practice or belief that makes each tradition distinct. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do Ashanti beliefs and the practice of libation show a connection between spiritual beings or ancestors and the living?	**Ashanti people may honor spiritual beings and remember ancestors who matter to family life. Pouring a libation is one way to address them.**
2	Describe a Dogon belief about ancestors and explain how a funeral ceremony can reflect it.	**Dogon families honor ancestors after death. Masked dancers take part in some funeral rites that help the community respond to a death.**
3	How do Igbo beliefs connect the spiritual world to the land, moral rules, or family life? Give two examples.	**Ala is an earth deity associated with land and moral rules. Families may also honor ancestors through prayers or offerings.**
4	Name one belief shared by the Ashanti, Dogon, and Igbo traditions. Then describe one way two of the traditions differ.	**All three recognize a creator. Ashanti gatherings may include libation, while some Dogon funeral rites include masked dancers.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Ashanti, Dogon, and Igbo traditions are distinct, yet each includes belief in a creator. All three also recognize ancestors or other spiritual beings as important. In some Ashanti gatherings, a person pours a libation to address ancestors or spiritual beings. Some Dogon funeral rites include masked dancers, while Igbo traditions associate Ala with the land and moral rules. Beliefs and practices can differ among families and communities, so no one label describes everyone.

Accept other accurate shared beliefs and distinct examples supported by the passage. Look for language that avoids treating any tradition as identical across all its communities.