Goods on the Move

How exchange connected African communities

SS24.7.9c "Describe how trade, including silent barter, facilitated exchange of economic practices, language, and culture across Africa from prehistory through the Iron Age."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ways goods moved between communities. Circle one way people could share a skill, a word, or a custom through trade.

More Than Goods Changed Hands

1 Long before iron tools, people in parts of Africa carried useful materials across long distances. Archaeologists have found obsidian, a dark volcanic glass, far from some of its natural sources. A sharp obsidian blade could be valuable to a group that lived where the stone was scarce. People might have obtained it through trade, gifts, or travelers moving to new homes; the stone alone cannot tell us which. When groups traded, they could also learn how others shaped blades or chose what to offer in return.

2 People who did not share a language could still exchange goods. In silent barter, one group leaves goods at a meeting place and steps away. Another group examines the offer and leaves goods of its own. The groups can adjust their offers until both accept the exchange. Each then takes the other group's goods. This method lets people trade without speaking or meeting face to face. It could move useful materials between communities, but an ancient blade cannot prove that silent barter was used.

3 During the Iron Age, people in parts of Africa used iron tools for farming and iron blades for other work. Communities exchanged iron goods, crops, and other products along local and longer routes. Traders who met repeatedly could learn words for goods or prices from one another. They might also notice new ways to grow crops or prepare food and share those practices at home. Trade did not make every community alike. It connected people who could choose which tools, words, and customs to adopt or change.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How might trading obsidian spread a practice as well as a material?

2. How can silent barter help groups that do not share a language exchange goods?

3. Why would finding an ancient obsidian blade far from its source not prove that silent barter took place?

4. How could Iron Age trade spread a language feature, a farming practice, and a food custom?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine two Iron Age communities trading iron tools for crops. Write four or five sentences showing how silent barter could help them trade at first, then how a later meeting could spread a farming practice, a word for a good, and a food custom.

ANSWER KEY

Goods on the Move

GRADE 7 · SS24.7.9c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways goods moved between communities. Circle one way people could share a skill, a word, or a custom through trade. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How might trading obsidian spread a practice as well as a material?	**Traders could obtain obsidian and learn how another group shaped blades or chose what to offer in exchange.**
2	How can silent barter help groups that do not share a language exchange goods?	**The groups leave offers at a meeting place, adjust them until both agree, then take each other's goods without speaking.**
3	Why would finding an ancient obsidian blade far from its source not prove that silent barter took place?	**The blade might have arrived through trade, a gift, or travelers. It does not show how any exchange happened.**
4	How could Iron Age trade spread a language feature, a farming practice, and a food custom?	**Traders who met could learn words for goods, observe new ways to grow crops, and bring home new ways to prepare food.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

One community leaves iron hoes, and the other leaves baskets of millet at a meeting place. Silent barter lets them exchange goods before they can speak to each other. When they later meet, a trader shows how to use a hoe to loosen soil before planting. The traders learn a new word for millet by pointing to a basket. One family tries the visitors' custom of cooking millet as porridge.

Accept plausible ways trade could spread practices, words, and customs. Students should not claim that an ancient object proves silent barter occurred.