Wealth and Words

How trade and learning shaped Mali

SS24.8.5c "Evaluate the economic and cultural contributions of key leaders and trade centers in African kingdoms, including Mansa Musa and the city of Timbuktu."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details about economic effects, circle two details about cultural effects, and write a matching 1 beside one underlined and one circled detail that you think are connected.

Trade, Wealth, and Learning in Mali

1. Imagine a caravan approaching Timbuktu with blocks of salt from the Sahara. In the Mali Empire, the city stood near the Niger River and connected desert routes with river travel. Merchants exchanged salt, gold, and other goods there, while boat crews and traders carried purchases onward. The city's location made it a meeting place for people from different regions, not just a stop for goods. Trade brought work and wealth, but its benefits depended on safe routes and buyers willing to make the journey.

2. Mansa Musa ruled Mali in the early 1300s, when the empire benefited from gold-producing areas and important trade routes. During his 1324 pilgrimage to Mecca, he traveled through Cairo and gave away large amounts of gold. Accounts report that this spending affected gold's value in Cairo for a time, showing how Mali's wealth could matter beyond its borders. His journey also drew attention to Mali in the wider Islamic world. Back home, he supported mosques and Islamic learning, linking royal wealth to religious and scholarly life.

3. Timbuktu grew as a center of Islamic study as well as commerce. Teachers and students gathered around mosques and schools, and scribes copied books on religion, law, and other subjects. Merchants could bring books and paper across the same routes that carried salt and gold. Learning attracted visitors, who also needed food, lodging, and supplies. Yet Timbuktu was not the only center of trade or learning in Mali, and not everyone shared equally in its wealth or access to education. Its influence came from both exchange and scholarship.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Timbuktu's location create both economic opportunities and cultural contact? Give one effect of each.

2. How did Mansa Musa use Mali's wealth to influence life both beyond Mali and within it?

3. Why might Timbuktu's trade routes have helped make it a center of learning? Connect two details from the passage.

4. Why would it be misleading to say Mali's trade wealth benefited everyone equally? Give one benefit and one limit from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A Mali ruler can fund either a new market near Timbuktu or the copying of books for its schools. Write four sentences advising the ruler: choose one, explain one economic effect and one cultural effect, name a possible trade-off, and use at least two details from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Wealth and Words

GRADE 8 · SS24.8.5c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details about economic effects, circle two details about cultural effects, and write a matching 1 beside one underlined and one circled detail that you think are connected. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Timbuktu's location create both economic opportunities and cultural contact? Give one effect of each.	**Its position near the Niger River and desert routes helped merchants exchange goods and find work. It also brought people from different regions together.**
2	How did Mansa Musa use Mali's wealth to influence life both beyond Mali and within it?	**Gold he gave away during his pilgrimage affected its value in Cairo for a time. In Mali, his support for mosques and Islamic learning strengthened religious and scholarly life.**
3	Why might Timbuktu's trade routes have helped make it a center of learning? Connect two details from the passage.	**Merchants used trade routes to bring books and paper, which supported the teachers, students, and scribes gathered around Timbuktu's schools and mosques.**
4	Why would it be misleading to say Mali's trade wealth benefited everyone equally? Give one benefit and one limit from the passage.	**Trade brought work and wealth, but the passage says not everyone shared equally in that wealth or in access to education.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would fund a new market near Timbuktu because merchants already bring salt and gold across desert routes and move goods along the Niger River. More places to trade could create work for sellers and boat crews. A busy market could also bring people from different regions together to share ideas and languages. This choice might leave less money for copying books, even though books helped the city's schools attract students.

Accept either funding choice if the four sentences use at least two accurate passage details, explain an economic and a cultural effect, and identify a plausible trade-off.