Routes to Power

How trade shaped three West African empires

7.H.3 "Analyze how the control of trade routes and natural resources led to the rise of powerful empires in Sub-Saharan Africa."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the resources being traded, circle places or paths goods traveled through, and number one sentence in each paragraph that shows how control of trade helped rulers build power.

Gold, Salt, and Strong Kingdoms

1. The kingdom of Ghana grew powerful in West Africa between about 700 and 1200 CE. Gold came from regions to its south, while merchants carried salt across the Sahara from the north. Ghana's rulers controlled trading towns between these areas, where many caravans stopped to exchange goods. They charged traders taxes on goods entering and leaving. That income helped rulers pay soldiers to guard trade and defend the kingdom. More protected trade brought more merchants, giving Ghana's rulers even more income and influence.

2. By the 1200s, Mali had taken Ghana's place as the leading power in the region. Its rulers gained control of gold-producing lands and important paths across West Africa, including routes near the Niger River. Merchants brought gold north and returned with salt and other goods. Mali's rulers collected taxes from this trade, not simply from owning gold. Under Mansa Musa in the 1300s, Mali used its wealth to support an army and strengthen cities such as Timbuktu, where merchants and scholars gathered. Control of both resources and routes helped Mali extend its reach.

3. In the 1400s, Songhai grew around Gao, a city on the Niger River. Boats carried goods along the river, and desert caravans connected river cities to markets across the Sahara. Songhai's rulers seized key trading centers, including Timbuktu, and controlled routes used to move gold and salt. They taxed trade and used the revenue to maintain a large army. That army helped them hold more territory and keep merchants using Songhai's routes. Songhai's strength depended on controlling where valuable goods traveled, not just on finding those goods.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Ghana did not control the gold-producing regions to its south. How did it still gain income from gold trade?

2. Why did Mali's control of trade routes matter in addition to its control of gold-producing lands?

3. How did Songhai turn its position on river and desert routes into greater control of territory?

4. What chain of events helped both Ghana and Songhai grow powerful through trade?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose Ghana, Mali, or Songhai. Imagine merchants begin using a new route that avoids its trading centers, even though gold and salt are still available. In four or five sentences, predict two effects on the empire's power and support your reasoning with details from the passage.

Routes to Power

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the resources being traded, circle places or paths goods traveled through, and number one sentence in each paragraph that shows how control of trade helped rulers build power. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Ghana did not control the gold-producing regions to its south. How did it still gain income from gold trade?	**Ghana controlled towns where caravans exchanged goods and taxed traders on goods entering and leaving.**
2	Why did Mali's control of trade routes matter in addition to its control of gold-producing lands?	**Merchants carried gold and other goods along the routes, allowing Mali's rulers to collect trade taxes that helped support an army and strengthen cities.**
3	How did Songhai turn its position on river and desert routes into greater control of territory?	**Songhai controlled trading centers and routes, taxed the goods moving through them, and used the revenue to maintain an army that held more territory.**
4	What chain of events helped both Ghana and Songhai grow powerful through trade?	**Both controlled places where goods traveled, collected taxes from traders, and used that income to support soldiers or an army.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

If caravans bypassed Ghana's trading towns, its rulers would collect fewer taxes on gold and salt. With less income, they might struggle to pay soldiers to guard trade. Less protection could make even more merchants choose the new route. Ghana could lose influence although gold still came from the south.

Accept predictions that connect a change in routes to lost trade income and a specific effect on military strength, cities, territory, or influence. Reasoning should use accurate details about the chosen empire.