

## Overview

- Student: 13-year-old (grade 7-8)
- Topic: Ghana and Mali in Medieval Africa (geography, politics, economies, religions, social structures)
- Duration: One week (5 lessons). Each lesson is designed for ~45-75 minutes but is flexible for homeschooling schedules (can be shortened or extended).
- Perspective: Respectful, historically accurate content with opportunities for Christian reflection (ethical parallels, compassion, stewardship, interfaith understanding).
- Materials: See daily sections. Most items are household or freely available online.

Week plan (chronological): Day 1 — Setting the Scene: Geography & Timeline of West Africa Day 2 — The Ghana Empire: Power, Politics, and Social Life Day 3 — The Rise of Mali: Sundiata, State Building, and Leadership Day 4 — Gold, Salt, and Trade: Economy & Daily Life Day 5 — Religion, Learning, and Legacy; Project Presentations & Faith Reflection

Each day contains: lesson title, SMART objectives, materials, introduction, instructional procedures (Exploration, Explanation, Application, Reflection), assessment, integration with other subjects, differentiation, real-life/field activities, resources. Parental tips, multi-age notes, and classroom environment suggestions follow the daily plan.

### Day 1 — Setting the Scene: Geography & Timeline of West Africa

- Suggested time: 45-60 minutes

#### Learning objectives (SMART)

- By the end of this 45-60 minute lesson, the student will be able to locate and label the Sahara, Sahel, Niger River, Ghana and Mali regions on a blank West Africa map and place three key events on a timeline (Ghana's rise, Ghana's decline, Mali's founding) with at least 80% accuracy.

#### Materials needed

- Blank map of West Africa (print or digital)
- Colored pencils or markers
- Ruler and pencil
- Timeline strip (long paper or digital timeline tool)
- Atlas or online map (Google Maps, National Geographic)
- Short map-reading guide (one-page)
- Notebook or journal

#### Lesson introduction (5-10 minutes)

- Hook: Ask, "Imagine you had one camel and needed to travel across the region to trade goods — where would you go and why?" Show a photo of the Sahara and the Niger River.
- Connect to prior knowledge: Ask what the student already knows about deserts, rivers, or long-distance trade. Relate to family travel or local geography.

#### Instructional procedures

- Exploration (15 minutes)

- Activity: Student studies an unguided blank map for 3 minutes, then uses atlas/online map to find and mark Sahara, Sahel, Niger River, modern Ghana, Mali, Timbuktu region. Encourage coloring zones (desert, grassland, river).
- Create a 3-slot timeline strip and write approximate centuries for Ghana Empire (c. 300s–1200s), decline (~11th–12th c.), Mali rise (13th c.).
- Explanation (10–12 minutes)
  - Teacher/parent explains how geography (Sahara, Sahel, Niger River) shaped movement, food production, and settlement. Define key terms: Sahel, trans-Saharan, savanna.
  - Show map examples of trade routes and mention why gold and salt were located where they were.
- Application (10–15 minutes)
  - Short mapping quiz: Parent points to features off-student’s view; student labels and explains why traders would follow the Niger River or skirt the Sahara.
  - Timeline activity: Student places three events and writes a one-sentence description for each.
- Reflection (5–10 minutes)
  - Journal prompt: “How did geography help kingdoms grow in this region? How might living near the Niger River differ from living in the Sahara?”
  - Faith reflection prompt: Read Proverbs 4:7 (value of wisdom) or Psalm 104:10–13 (God’s care for land/water). Discuss stewardship of creation and how people depend on geography created by God.

#### Assessment and evaluation

- Informal map check and timeline review. Use a simple rubric: correct labels (Sahara, Sahel, Niger = 3 pts), correct placement of Ghana/Mali (2 pts), accurate timeline notes (2 pts). Adjust next lesson if foundational geography needs reinforcement.

#### Integration with other subjects

- Geography (map skills), science (ecosystems), Bible (creation/stewardship), art (map coloring), writing (timeline descriptions).

#### Differentiation & personalization

- Struggling learner: Use a labeled map to match stickers instead of drawing.
- Enrichment: Have the student research modern climate differences in the same regions and compare to medieval descriptions.
- Multi-age tip: Younger siblings can color zones; older sibling can create a detailed climate chart.

#### Real-life applications & field activity

- Walk to a nearby river or stream and discuss how rivers support communities.
- Virtual field trip: National Geographic maps or Google Earth tour of West Africa.

#### Resources for further learning

- Britannica Kids (online): West Africa geography
- Khan Academy - introductions to African geography
- Maps from National Geographic Kids
- Bible passages: Psalm 104; Proverbs 4

## Day 2 — The Ghana Empire: Power, Politics, and Social Life

- Suggested time: 60–75 minutes

### Learning objectives (SMART)

- By the end of this 60–75 minute lesson, the student will explain the political structure of the Ghana Empire (king, nobles, provincial leaders) and describe at least three social roles (farmers, traders, griots) in a short written or oral summary (5–7 sentences) with one historical example.

### Materials needed

- Short reading: age-appropriate summary of Ghana Empire (printout)
- Role cards (king, merchant, griot, farmer, blacksmith, enslaved person)
- Paper, markers
- Large paper for social pyramid diagram
- Excerpt from al-Bakri or adapted primary-source description (age-appropriate)
- Notebook for reflection

### Lesson introduction (5–10 minutes)

- Hook: Tell a short, vivid story based on a historical description of an audience with the Ghana king (from al-Bakri's description adapted). Ask: "What do you notice about the king's power and the people around him?"

### Instructional procedures

- Exploration (10–12 minutes)
  - Role-sort: Spread role cards and have the student group them into categories (political, economic, cultural, enslaved/labor).
  - Create a social pyramid on large paper placing roles in levels.
- Explanation (15 minutes)
  - Teach key facts: Ghana's ksar/king (sometimes called the Ghana or Wagadu king), power based on control of gold trade and taxation, use of provincial rulers, army, and alliances. Explain griots' role as oral historians and the presence of matrilineal elements in succession patterns (note historical debate; present cautiously).
  - Discuss slavery in medieval West Africa (contextualize — often local and different roles; still recognize injustice).
- Application (15–20 minutes)
  - Role-play: Parent reads a short scenario (market dispute, tribute delivery, a feast) and student acts responses for two or three roles. Alternatively, student writes a 5–7 sentence "day in the life" from point of view of chosen role.

- Create a one-page “profile” for the Ghana king: duties, sources of power, ties to trade.
- Reflection (5–10 minutes)
  - Discuss: “What made a ruler respected? How did trade and wealth affect justice and daily life?” Faith tie-in: Discuss Biblical examples of leadership (e.g., King Solomon’s wisdom) and responsibilities of leaders to serve fairly (Micah 6:8).

#### Assessment and evaluation

- Check social pyramid and role-play notes. Use short rubric: accuracy of roles (3 pts), explanation of king’s duties (3 pts), inclusion of one historical example (2 pts).
- If misunderstandings appear (e.g., confusing modern nation-state with medieval kingdom), plan a brief review.

#### Integration with other subjects

- Social studies (political systems), language arts (writing, role-play), music/arts (griot storytelling), Bible (leadership ethics).

#### Differentiation & personalization

- Visual learner: Encourage a colorful poster version of the social pyramid.
- Auditory learner: Expand the role-play into a longer oral story.
- Enrichment: Research and present about griots, or compare Ghana’s political structure to a contemporary country’s government.

#### Real-life applications & field activity

- Interview a family member about how leadership is chosen in your community or church and compare traits.
- Visit a local museum website for African artifacts or watch a video about griots (YouTube or museum resources).

#### Resources for further learning

- Excerpted primary accounts (adapted) from al-Bakri’s Book of Routes and Realms (age-appropriate).
- “African Kingdoms” age-appropriate history texts (library).
- PBS/Smithsonian online museum collections on West African kingdoms.
- Bible passages: Micah 6:8, Proverbs on leadership.

#### Day 3 — The Rise of Mali: Sundiata, State Building, and Leadership

- Suggested time: 60–75 minutes

#### Learning objectives (SMART)

- By the end of this 60–75 minute lesson, the student will summarize Sundiata Keita’s role in founding the Mali Empire and analyze one example of how Mali centralized power (e.g., control of trade routes or provincial governance) in a 6–8 sentence written response.

#### Materials needed

- Short biography of Sundiata (adapted from the Epic of Sundiata)
- Map of Mali Empire at height
- Timeline extension from Day 1
- Art supplies for small poster
- Excerpt or summary of Mansa Musa’s later rule (set up for Day 4)
- Notebook/journal

#### Lesson introduction (5–10 minutes)

- Hook: Read a short, dramatic opening from the Epic of Sundiata (adapted). Ask: “Why do stories like this matter for remembering history?”

#### Instructional procedures

- Exploration (10–15 minutes)
  - Read the adapted Sundiata story together. Ask the student to underline or note Sundiata’s key actions (uniting states, military victories, establishing laws).
  - Map activity: Show how Mali expanded from earlier territories.
- Explanation (15 minutes)
  - Explain Sundiata’s historical role (c. 13th century), consolidation of smaller chiefdoms, use of cavalry and alliances, creation of administrative structure, importance of oral tradition for preserving history.
  - Discuss how oral epic blends history with legend; highlight how historians corroborate stories with archeology and contemporary sources.
- Application (15–20 minutes)
  - Create a 1-page “founder’s charter” from Sundiata’s perspective listing three laws or priorities for the new empire (e.g., protect trade routes, fairness in tax, maintain oral history).
  - Add Sundiata event to timeline and draw arrows to show Mali replacing Ghana’s influence.
- Reflection (5–10 minutes)
  - Journal prompt: “How does a leader’s vision change people’s lives? What responsibilities does a leader have to God/people?” Christian tie-in: Relate to servant leadership (Mark 10:42–45) and discuss humility and justice.

#### Assessment and evaluation

- Evaluate the founder’s charter for historical plausibility and understanding. Check timeline placement. If student struggles to distinguish myth from history, plan a mini-lesson on sources and evidence.

#### Integration with other subjects

- Literature (epic storytelling), civics (state-building), art (poster), Bible (servant leadership).

#### Differentiation & personalization

- For students who are more analytical: ask for evidence sources supporting Sundiata’s historicity.
- For creative students: adapt the Sundiata story into a short dramatic scene or comic strip.
- Multi-age: younger siblings can draw Sundiata; older can research specific battles or administrative reforms.

#### Real-life applications & field activity

- Family activity: Create a household “governance” plan modeled on Sundiata’s charter to manage chores fairly for a week.
- Museum/online: Explore Mali artifacts (manuscripts) in digital collections.

#### Resources for further learning

- “Sundiata: The Epic of Old Mali” — retellings for younger audiences (look for age-appropriate versions).
- Scholarly summary pages (Britannica) about Sundiata and Mali Empire.
- Bible passages: Mark 10:42-45; Proverbs about justice.

#### Day 4 — Gold, Salt, and Trade: Economy & Daily Life

- Suggested time: 60-90 minutes (can be extended for hands-on activities)

#### Learning objectives (SMART)

- By the end of this 60-90 minute lesson, the student will explain how the trans-Saharan gold-salt trade functioned (routes, goods, and participants) and create a simulated trading ledger that records at least five exchanges showing profit or tax, with an explanation of the role taxes played in funding kingdoms, achieving at least 80% completeness.

#### Materials needed

- Small trade item tokens (coins, dried beans, salt cubes made from rock salt), index cards for “goods”
- Large map with trade routes (print or digital)
- Notebook for ledger
- Calculator or pencil for simple arithmetic
- Optional: camera to document activity
- Short readings about Mansa Musa’s pilgrimage (for Day 3 lead-in) and accounts of caravans

#### Lesson introduction (5-10 minutes)

- Hook: Show a golden coin image and a block of salt. Ask, “Which one is more valuable? Why?” Briefly tell the story of caravans crossing the Sahara.

#### Instructional procedures

- Exploration (15-20 minutes)
  - Simulation: Set up three “towns” (Sahara oasis, goldfield, Niger market). Give the student tokens for gold, salt, cloth, and allow them to simulate trading with a parent or sibling acting as merchant, taxing official, or caravan leader. Have them record trades in a ledger (what traded, value, taxes).

- Explanation (10-15 minutes)
  - Discuss how caravans operated, role of camels, timing (seasonal), and how kingdoms taxed trade to fund armies and administration. Introduce Mansa Musa's wealth as an example of empire based on gold.
  - Clarify why salt and gold were both crucial (preserving food, human health vs. wealth/currency).
- Application (15-20 minutes)
  - Create a short poster or digital slide showing the steps of a typical trade journey (start, oasis, crossing, arrival) and annotate where taxes and tolls are collected.
  - Math activity: Using ledger totals, calculate tax rates (e.g., 10%) and net profit.
- Reflection (5-10 minutes)
  - Journal prompt: "How did trade help kingdoms grow? What ethical issues arise from wealth and taxation?" Faith tie-in: Read Matthew 6:24 and discuss stewardship; consider how wealth can be used to bless others (e.g., schools, mosques, infrastructure) and the Christian call to generous use of resources (2 Corinthians 9:6-7).

#### Assessment and evaluation

- Review the ledger for correct recording of at least five exchanges and correct tax calculations. Discuss any mistakes and reteach specific points.
- If the student struggles with conceptual idea of taxation or value exchange, use more concrete examples (allowance and savings).

#### Integration with other subjects

- Economics (trade, taxation), math (percentages), geography (routes), history (empire wealth), Bible (stewardship).

#### Differentiation & personalization

- Kinesthetic: Expand the physical simulation into a longer scavenger-hunt style trade across the yard.
- Advanced: Research Mansa Musa's pilgrimage and calculate the modern equivalent of his wealth (estimate).
- Support: Use simplified tokens and smaller numbers for math.

#### Real-life applications & field activity

- Visit a local farmer's market or set up a family market to practice negotiation and simple accounting.
- Virtual museum shows on Mali gold artifacts and trade routes.

#### Resources for further learning

- Khan Academy articles on trans-Saharan trade.
- Museum online collections (British Museum, Smithsonian) showing gold artifacts.
- Videos: short educational clips on medieval West African trade (BBC or educational YouTube channels).

- Bible passages: 2 Corinthians 9; Matthew 6.

#### Day 5 — Religion, Learning, and Legacy; Project Presentations & Faith Reflection

- Suggested time: 60-90 minutes

#### Learning objectives (SMART)

- By the end of this 60-90 minute lesson, the student will describe how Islam influenced Mali (education, law, scholarship) and compare it to Christian values in a 1-page reflection. The student will also present a short project (3-5 minute oral presentation or 1-2 page poster) summarizing a chosen aspect of Ghana or Mali (politics, trade, religion, social life).

#### Materials needed

- Short readings or handouts about Timbuktu, Islamic scholarship (Sankore University), Mansa Musa's pilgrimage
- Materials for project (poster board, markers, slide software)
- Rubric for presentations (simple)
- Bible or Bible passage printouts for reflection (e.g., James 1:5 about wisdom, Proverbs)

#### Lesson introduction (5-10 minutes)

- Hook: Show an image of a Timbuktu manuscript or Sankore mosque. Ask, "What do you think people studied here?"

#### Instructional procedures

- Exploration (10-15 minutes)
  - Read a short vignette about a student at Timbuktu learning math and Quranic studies. Have the student list subjects taught (religious studies, law, astronomy, math).
- Explanation (10-15 minutes)
  - Explain Islamic influence: spread via trade and leaders converting, establishment of centers of learning, Arabic as scholarly language, manuscripts, and how rulers (like Mansa Musa) patronized learning.
  - Emphasize religious pluralism and respect: many regional leaders adopted Islam while local religious practices continued. Present Christianity as another faith tradition with shared concerns for justice and learning; highlight interfaith respect.
- Application (20-30 minutes)
  - Student presents their project: 3-5 minute oral presentation or poster. Topics suggested earlier (Day 1-4) could be chosen.
  - After presentation, parent and student engage in Q&A and add one notable historical fact to a class "legacy" list.
- Reflection (10-15 minutes)
  - Written faith reflection (1 page): Compare how Islamic scholars in Timbuktu pursued knowledge with Christian calling to love God and learn (James 1:5, Proverbs 2). Discuss how

Christians can respect other faiths and learn from them.

- Closing prayer or moment of gratitude (optional; guided by family preference) thanking God for diversity and wisdom.

#### Assessment and evaluation

- Presentation rubric: content accuracy (5 pts), clarity (3 pts), creativity (2 pts). Written reflection evaluated for understanding (5-8 sentences, thoughtful comparison).
- Provide feedback and note areas for follow-up (e.g., deeper research into manuscripts or legal systems).

#### Integration with other subjects

- Religious studies (Islamic learning), language arts (presentation and reflection), art (manuscript designs), social studies (cultural exchange).

#### Differentiation & personalization

- For shy students: allow recorded video presentation or a poster instead of oral.
- Enrichment: Research and transcribe a short excerpt from a Timbuktu manuscript (use translations).
- Support: Parent co-presenting or prompting during Q&A.

#### Real-life applications & field activity

- Family reading night: read folktales from West Africa and discuss morals.
- Visit or virtually tour a museum with African manuscripts; contact local church for interfaith learning opportunities.

#### Resources for further learning (for the week)

- Books (age-appropriate):
  - “Mansa Musa and the Empire of Mali” (children’s/YA history retellings) — check library for appropriate titles.
  - Retellings of the Epic of Sundiata (adapted versions).
  - General texts: Britannica, World History summaries on Ghana and Mali.
- Online:
  - Khan Academy — trans-Saharan trade lessons
  - BBC Bitesize (history sections)
  - British Museum/Smithsonian online collections (Mali artifacts, manuscripts)
  - World Digital Library — Timbuktu manuscripts (images)
- Videos:
  - Short educational clips from PBS, BBC, or school-friendly YouTube channels about medieval West Africa
- Christian resources:
  - Bible passages: Proverbs 1-4 (wisdom), James 1:5, Mark 10:42-45, 2 Corinthians 9 on giving/stewardship
  - Discussion guides on Christian responses to wealth and cultural diversity (church resources)

#### Practical homeschooling notes

- Flexibility: Each lesson can be split across multiple shorter sessions. Hands-on activities can be paused and resumed. Swap order if family schedule demands (e.g., do trade day on a weekend)

with longer time).

- Parental involvement:
  - Role: facilitator, reader, role-play partner, questioner, assessor.
  - Prep: print maps/handouts, gather trade tokens, read short background for each day (15 minutes).
  - Support assessment by using rubrics and by giving oral feedback.
- Learning environment:
  - Create a comfortable learning corner with maps, timeline strip on the wall, and a small display of “artifacts” (trade tokens, coins, printed images).
  - Encourage breaks and movement during role-plays/simulations.
- Multi-age family tips:
  - Younger children: give coloring maps, simple role cards, and a simplified story to listen to.
  - Older children: assign research projects (primary sources, comparison essays).
  - Group activities: assign different age-appropriate roles in the trade simulation.

#### Cultural and personal relevance

- Present Islamic faith and African traditions respectfully and accurately.
- Encourage curiosity and respect for differences; avoid portraying medieval Africa as monolithic — emphasize internal diversity, achievements in learning, art, governance.
- Tie Christian reflections to grace, stewardship, learning, and service, not to judgment of other faiths.

#### Extensions and next steps

- Longer project: research a figure like Mansa Musa or a Timbuktu scholar and produce a 3–5 page report.
- Community connection: invite a local historian or a church member with West African heritage to speak.
- Creative extension: make illuminated “manuscript” pages with geometric designs inspired by West African manuscripts (no religious copying).

If you’d like, I can:

- Prepare printable handouts (map, timeline, role cards, rubric).
- Adapt the plan into shorter daily blocks (20–30 minutes) for busier days.
- Suggest specific child-friendly book titles available in your local library or online.