Ghana, Mali and Songhay

Student research simulation task

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Date _____ Class _____

Grades 6 to 12 • Five lessons • Geography, ELA, mathematics and science

Inquiry question

How did geography, trade and leadership shape Ghana, Mali and Songhay, and what can evidence tell us about Mali’s reported Atlantic expedition?

NJSLS Social Studies

6.2.8.GeoHE.4.a geography and imperial centers; 6.2.8.GeoPP.4.b trade routes and cities; 6.2.8.CivicsPI.4.a governing diverse populations.

NJSLS ELA and CCLS

RI.CR.6.1 textual evidence; RI.CI.6.2 central ideas. CCLS RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.7 and WHST.6–8.2 support source analysis, maps and explanatory writing.

Interdisciplinary connections

CCSS 6.RP.A.3 ratio reasoning; MS-ESS2-6 conceptual connection to ocean circulation. Science task is a model analysis, not full performance expectation mastery.

Amistad alignment

Study African state building, scholarship, enterprise and exploration before the Atlantic slave trade. Examine slavery where relevant without reducing African history to enslavement.

Standards target the middle grades core. Grades 9 to 12 use the source comparison extension in the teacher guide. The lesson does not claim complete high school standards coverage.

Ghana, Mali and Songhay

Day 1 • Ghana and the geography of power

Do Now

How could a community become wealthy by connecting two places with different resources?

1 Ghana, also called Wagadu, developed among Soninke communities in the western Sahel. It was located mainly in areas of present day Mauritania and Mali, rather than the modern country named Ghana. The Sahel forms a transition between the Sahara Desert and wetter grasslands to the south. This location connected communities with different resources. [A, B]

2 Ghana's rulers gained revenue by taxing commerce linking southern gold producers with northern markets and Saharan salt suppliers. Farmers, herders, metalworkers and merchants supported its economy. Control of routes and exchanges mattered as much as direct ownership of mines. Gold did not feed people, so agricultural production and access to water also mattered. [A, B]

3 The five themes help explain this civilization. Location identifies its position between resource zones. Place describes its communities and environment. Human environment interaction includes farming and travel adapted to rainfall. Movement includes goods, people and ideas. Region groups places sharing features such as Sahelian ecology or trade relationships. The themes overlap rather than compete.

Quick Write

Use two themes to explain Ghana's trading position. Cite one detail from the reading.