



West African Kingdoms: Ghana, Mali & Songhai

Current Louisiana Grade 5 Standard 5.11

SCOPE DECISION

This rebuild intentionally teaches current Standard 5.11 only. It does NOT cram current Standard 5.10 (Southwest Asia/North Africa) into this unit. Standard 5.10 remains on the Grade 5 Standards Gap Tracker until we find its best home in Units 4-6.

CURRENT LOUISIANA STANDARD 5.11

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|--------------|---|
| 5.11 | Describe the geographic, political, economic, and cultural structures of Medieval West African Kingdoms. |
| 5.11a | Identify and locate the Atlantic Ocean, Niger River, Djenne, Sahara, Gulf of Guinea, and Timbuktu. |
| 5.11b | Describe the growth of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai, including Djenne and Timbuktu as centers of trade, culture, and learning. |
| 5.11c | Describe the role of Trans-Saharan caravan trade in changing religious and cultural characteristics of West Africa and in exchanging salt, gold, and enslaved people. |
| 5.11d | Explain the importance of the Malian king Mansa Musa and his pilgrimage to Mecca. |

Assessment note: Unit 3 contributes to Content Reporting Category 1 (Standards 5.9-5.11), which accounts for approximately 30-37% of Grade 5 social studies test points. That percentage is for the combined category - not for this unit alone.

UNIT PURPOSE & SUCCESS CRITERIA

- Students locate required West African geographic features on an actual map and use spatial clues accurately.
- Students distinguish the growth and defining characteristics of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai without reducing each kingdom to one oversimplified fact.
- Students explain how caravan trade moved goods, people, ideas, language, and religious influences across regions.
- Students explain why Mansa Musa and his 1324 pilgrimage matter historically without treating an inference about his motives as a proven fact.
- Students use the exact 5-Step Detective Method throughout source, map, selected-response, two-part, technology-enhanced, and constructed-response practice.

TEACHER TEMPLATE NOTE

The DOCX is intentionally editable and should be opened in Microsoft Word or Google Docs for full formatting. The resource is designed to serve as a reusable template that teachers may duplicate and customize to create additional practice and test-prep sessions for their own classroom.



Teacher Vocabulary Quick Reference

Use for preteaching, intervention, small groups, or review.

TEACHER NOTE

Students should understand and APPLY these concepts. They do not need to memorize exact wording.

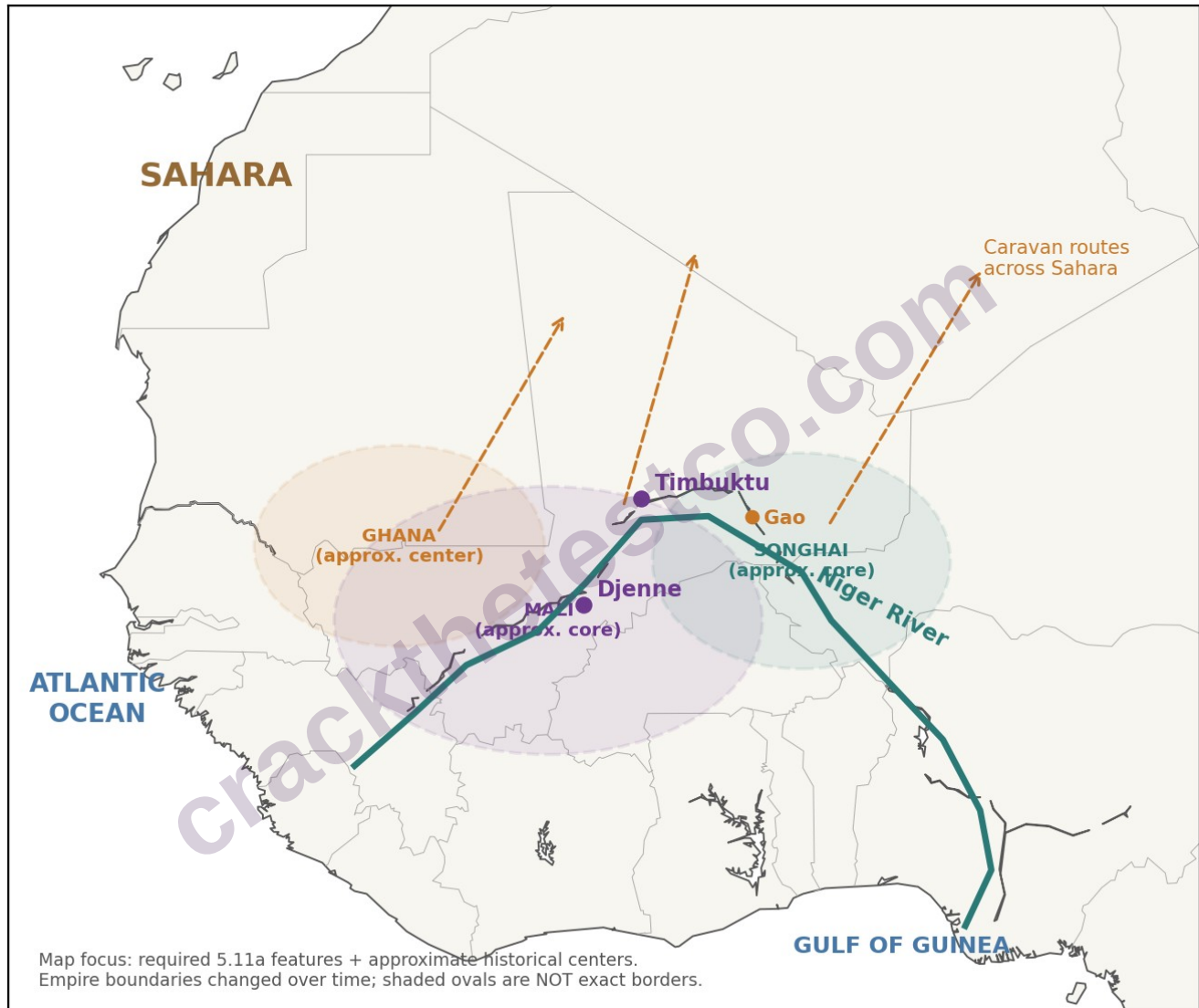
Sahara	A vast desert across North Africa that caravan traders crossed.	Islam	A monotheistic religion that spread into parts of West Africa through trade, scholarship, and political connections.
Niger River	A major West African river that supported farming, travel, and trade, especially in Mali and Songhai.	Arabic	A language used widely in Islamic scholarship, religion, and long-distance trade.
Gulf of Guinea	Part of the Atlantic Ocean along the southern coast of West Africa.	cultural exchange	The sharing and blending of ideas, customs, languages, beliefs, technologies, or arts between groups.
Djenne	A historic West African city known for trade and learning; also spelled Djenné.	enslaved people	People forced into slavery and treated as property; enslaved people were also traded through trans-Saharan networks.
Timbuktu	A major city of trade, scholarship, and Islamic learning in medieval Mali and Songhai.	evidence	Information from a source that supports an answer or claim.
caravan	A group of travelers and pack animals moving together, often for trade and safety.	inference	A reasonable conclusion based on evidence plus what you already know.
Trans-Saharan trade	Trade across the Sahara linking West Africa with North Africa and beyond.	point of view	The perspective of a source creator, shaped by time, place, role, and experience.
Ghana Empire	An early West African empire whose rulers gained wealth by controlling and taxing trade.	primary source	A source created during the time being studied, such as an artifact, letter, image, map, or account.
Mali Empire	A powerful West African empire that grew after Ghana and became famous under Mansa Musa.	secondary source	A later explanation or interpretation based on evidence from the past.
Songhai Empire	A later West African empire centered farther east along the Niger River; it became the largest of the three.	chronology	The order in which events happened.
Mansa Musa	Malian king famous for wealth, support of Islam and learning, and his 1324 pilgrimage to Mecca.	cause and effect	Why something happened and what happened as a result.
pilgrimage / Hajj	A religious journey. The Hajj to Mecca is an important duty in Islam for Muslims who are able to make the journey.	compare and contrast	Identify how two or more things are alike and different.

Student Practice: Map Detective

Standard 5.11a • Geography + spatial reasoning

DETECTIVE METHOD

1 READ THE CLUES → 2 ANNOTATE → 3 FIND EVIDENCE → 4 ANALYZE → 5 ELIMINATE & JUSTIFY



Map created for this resource using modern coastlines and an approximate Niger River route. Historical kingdom ovals show approximate centers, not fixed borders.

Use the map to answer Questions 1-3.

1. Which body of water lies along the southern coast of West Africa?

A	Black Sea
B	Gulf of Guinea
C	Persian Gulf
D	Mediterranean Sea

Detective cue: READ THE CLUES → FIND EVIDENCE on the map → ANALYZE what the map actually shows → ELIMINATE & JUSTIFY.

2. Which TWO places shown on the map were important centers of trade, culture, and learning? Select TWO.

Teacher Worked Example: Mansa Musa

Standard 5.11d + 3-5.SP1/SP2 • Primary + secondary source analysis

DETECTIVE METHOD

1 READ THE CLUES → 2 ANNOTATE → 3 FIND EVIDENCE → 4 ANALYZE → 5 ELIMINATE & JUSTIFY



SOURCE A - PRIMARY VISUAL

Detail from the Catalan Atlas (1375), attributed to Abraham Cresques. The map was created about 50 years after Mansa Musa's 1324 pilgrimage and depicts him holding gold.

SOURCE B - SECONDARY SUMMARY

Mansa Musa, a Muslim ruler of Mali, made the Hajj to Mecca in 1324. Accounts describe a large entourage and major gifts and spending of gold in Cairo. His journey connected Mali to the wider Islamic world and made Mali's wealth widely known far beyond West Africa.

Source A: public-domain detail from the Catalan Atlas, 1375, Bibliothèque nationale de France via Wikimedia Commons. Source B: grade-level secondary summary based on museum scholarship.

1 READ THE CLUES: The question asks what BOTH sources support. Do not add a motive that neither source proves.

2 ANNOTATE: Source A is a later map image. Source B explains the Hajj and its historical effects.

3 FIND EVIDENCE: A shows Mansa Musa associated with gold. B states that he made the Hajj and that Mali's wealth became widely known.

4 ANALYZE: A reasonable conclusion must fit both sources: religious pilgrimage + wider recognition of Mali's wealth.

5 ELIMINATE & JUSTIFY: Eliminate answers about conquest, total religious conversion, or gold being the only reason Mali grew; the sources do not support those absolutes.

Which conclusion is best supported by BOTH sources?

A	Mansa Musa made an important Muslim pilgrimage, and the journey increased awareness of Mali's wealth beyond West Africa.
B	Mansa Musa traveled to conquer Egypt and make Cairo part of Mali.
C	Mansa Musa's pilgrimage caused every person in Mali to adopt Islam.
D	Gold was the only reason the Mali Empire became powerful.



Student Practice: Trans-Saharan Trade

Standard 5.11c • True Two-Part Dependent (2 points)

DETECTIVE METHOD

1 READ THE CLUES → 2 ANNOTATE → 3 FIND EVIDENCE → 4 ANALYZE → 5 ELIMINATE & JUSTIFY

SOURCE - SECONDARY SUMMARY

Caravans crossed the Sahara carrying goods between West Africa and North Africa. Gold moved north from West African gold-producing regions. Salt from Saharan mines moved south. Enslaved people were also forced into trade networks. Rulers and cities gained wealth by protecting, controlling, and taxing trade. Merchants, travelers, and scholars also carried languages, beliefs, knowledge, and customs along the same routes.

Trade Network Clues

Movement	Examples	What changed?
South → North	gold; some enslaved people	West African goods and forced labor entered wider regional markets.
North → South	salt; cloth; manufactured goods	West African communities gained needed goods and new trade connections.
Both directions	people, language, beliefs, knowledge	Cultural and religious characteristics changed over time.
At trade centers	taxes, markets, services	Kingdoms and cities could gain wealth and influence.

PART A: Which conclusion BEST explains why trans-Saharan caravan trade mattered to West African kingdoms?

A	Caravan trade isolated West African kingdoms from other regions.
B	Caravan trade connected West Africa to wider markets and helped rulers and cities gain wealth and influence.
C	Caravan trade moved only salt and had no effect on cities or rulers.
D	Caravan trade caused every West African kingdom to have the same culture.

PART B: Which TWO details from the source BEST support your Part A conclusion? Select TWO.

A	Rulers and cities gained wealth by protecting, controlling, and taxing trade.
B	The Sahara is a desert.
C	All West African people followed exactly the same traditions.
D	Caravans carried goods between West Africa and North Africa.
E	The Niger River flows toward the Atlantic Ocean.

Dependent scoring reminder: Part B evidence earns credit only when Part A identifies the supported conclusion.



Student Practice: Mansa Musa

Standard 5.11d • Two-Part Independent (2 points)

DETECTIVE METHOD

1 READ THE CLUES → 2 ANNOTATE → 3 FIND EVIDENCE → 4 ANALYZE → 5 ELIMINATE & JUSTIFY



Source note

The Catalan Atlas was made in 1375, decades after Mansa Musa's Hajj. Its depiction of Mansa Musa holding gold shows that his wealth had become known to mapmakers far outside West Africa. Because it was created later and far away, the image cannot tell us exactly what Mansa Musa personally intended during his 1324 journey.

Primary visual source: Catalan Atlas (1375), attributed to Abraham Cresques. Public domain.

PART A: Which statement BEST explains why Mansa Musa's pilgrimage is important to the history of Mali?

- | | |
|---|---|
| A | It showed Mali was completely isolated from the Islamic world. |
| B | It connected Mali to the wider Islamic world and helped make Mali's wealth and importance known across distant regions. |
| C | It ended trans-Saharan trade by giving away all of Mali's gold. |
| D | It caused Songhai to disappear immediately. |

PART B: What can the 1375 Catalan Atlas image reasonably support?

- | | |
|---|--|
| A | Mali's wealth and Mansa Musa were known to some European mapmakers decades after the pilgrimage. |
| B | The image proves the exact number of people who traveled with Mansa Musa. |
| C | The image proves Mansa Musa traveled only to impress other rulers. |
| D | The image proves every person in Mali was wealthy. |

Independent scoring reminder: Part A and Part B are scored separately.



Answer Key: Student Practice

Teacher copy • Answers independently keyed to the rebuilt questions

PAGE 4 - MAP DETECTIVE

1. B - Gulf of Guinea. It lies along the southern coast of West Africa on the map.
2. A and B - Djenné and Timbuktu. Both are required 5.11a locations and important cities in 5.11b.
3. B - The map shows trade centers tied to the Niger River and caravan routes; it does not show fixed identical borders.

PAGE 5 - MANSA MUSA WORKED EXAMPLE

A - The Hajj was a Muslim religious pilgrimage, and the journey increased awareness of Mali's wealth beyond West Africa. Source A supports the later reputation for gold; Source B provides the pilgrimage context and broader effect. The sources do NOT prove conquest, total conversion, or that gold was Mali's only source of power.

PAGE 6 - THREE KINGDOMS

1. B - Ghana → Mali → Songhai. This is the simplified chronological sequence of their periods of greatest regional power.
2. A and B - Djenné and Timbuktu were important trade centers and places of learning. They were not capitals of every kingdom at the same time.

PAGE 7 - TRANS-SAHARAN TRADE TPD

Part A: B - Caravan trade connected West Africa to wider markets and helped rulers and cities gain wealth and influence.

Part B: A and D - Taxing/controlling trade supports the wealth/influence part of the conclusion, and moving goods between West and North Africa supports the connection-to-wider-markets part. Dependent scoring: Part B earns credit only if Part A is correct.

PAGE 8 - CULTURAL CHANGE

1. A and C - Trade helped spread Islam/Arabic literacy, while cultural change varied and older traditions could continue.
2. C - "People in a trade city could encounter ideas from travelers who came from far away" is a reasonable inference from the evidence; the other statements are directly stated in the source summaries.

PAGE 9 - MANSA MUSA TPI

Part A: B - The Hajj connected Mali to the wider Islamic world and helped make Mali's wealth and importance known across distant regions.

Part B: A - A later European map showing Mansa Musa with gold supports the conclusion that his wealth/reputation was known to some European mapmakers. It cannot prove exact entourage size, personal motive, or the wealth of every person in Mali.



Task Cards 5-8

Each card contains its own stimulus or context.

TASK CARDS 5-8

CARD 5 • 5.11d • MANSA MUSA

CLUE: Mansa Musa made the Hajj to Mecca in 1324. His journey connected Mali to the wider Islamic world and made Mali's wealth widely known.

Why is the pilgrimage historically important?

- A It isolated Mali.
- B It connected Mali to wider religious and trade networks and increased its fame.
- C It ended Islam in Mali.
- D It created the Ghana Empire.

CARD 6 • 5.11b • CHRONOLOGY

CLUE: Ghana rose first. Mali later became dominant. Songhai later expanded and became the largest of the three.

Which sequence is correct?

- A Mali → Ghana → Songhai
- B Ghana → Mali → Songhai
- C Songhai → Mali → Ghana
- D Ghana → Songhai → Mali

CARD 7 • 3-5.SP1 • SOURCE

CLUE: A 1375 European map shows Mansa Musa holding gold. It was created decades after his 1324 pilgrimage.

Which statement is the safest inference?

- A Mansa Musa's wealth was known to some European mapmakers.
- B The image proves his exact entourage size.
- C The image proves his private motive for traveling.
- D The image proves every Malian was rich.

CARD 8 • 5.11b • MATCH INTERACTION

MATCH each kingdom with the best characteristic. Write the letter beside each kingdom.

Ghana ____ **Mali** ____ **Songhai** ____

- A Mansa Musa and major trade/learning cities
- B Early empire enriched by controlling and taxing trade
- C Later empire that expanded along the Niger and became the largest



Google Forms Quiz Setup Guide

Standards 5.11a-d • Mix of auto-graded + manually scored items

IMPORTANT

This quiz is NOT fully auto-graded because the constructed response requires manual scoring. Release final scores after reviewing the CR and dependent Part B scoring.

Q1 • 1 pt • MC • 5.11a

Which body of water lies along the southern coast of West Africa?

A Black Sea | B Gulf of Guinea | C Persian Gulf | D Mediterranean Sea

KEY: B

Q2 • 1 pt • MS • 5.11b

Which TWO statements describe why Djenne and Timbuktu mattered? Select TWO.

A Trade centers | B Centers of learning | C European capitals | D Ended caravan trade | E Ural Mountain forts

KEY: A and B

Q3A • 1 pt • TPD Part A • 5.11c

Which conclusion best explains why trans-Saharan trade mattered?

A Isolated West Africa | B Connected markets and created wealth/influence | C Moved only salt | D Made every culture identical

KEY: B

Q3B • 1 pt • TPD Part B • 5.11c

Which TWO details best support Part A? Select TWO.

A Rulers/cities gained wealth by controlling or taxing trade | B Sahara is a desert | C Cultures were identical | D Caravans connected West and North Africa | E Niger flows to Atlantic

KEY: A and D. Teacher must remove Part B credit if Part A is wrong.

Q4 • 1 pt • MC • 5.11d

Why is Mansa Musa's pilgrimage historically important?

A Isolated Mali | B Connected Mali to wider Islamic world and increased its fame | C Ended trade | D Created Ghana

KEY: B

Q5 • 4 pts • Paragraph CR • 5.11c

Explain TWO ways trans-Saharan caravan trade changed Medieval West Africa: one economic effect and one religious/cultural effect.

MANUAL: Use the 4-point rubric from the student CR page.

TOTAL: 9 points (Q1 1 + Q2 1 + Q3A 1 + Q3B 1 + Q4 1 + Q5 4). Suggested settings: Quizzes ON • Shuffle OFF • Release grade after manual review • Collect email optional based on classroom policy.