

Chapter Summary

African Civilizations

Lesson 1 *The Rise of African Civilizations*

- Scientists believe that the first humans appeared in Africa between 150,000 and 200,000 years ago. About 7,000 to 8,000 years ago, hunters and gatherers began settling in one place in Africa. Africa's first civilizations began about 3,000 B.C.
- Africa's large size and varied geography and climates presented opportunities and challenges to people living there. The continent's geographic zones include rain forests, savannas (grasslands), deserts, and small areas of mild climate.
- Most of Africa is covered by plateaus. Movements in Earth's crust created the Great Rift Valley in East Africa. Civilizations developed along the Nile River and Niger River, two of the many large river systems in Africa.
- The Sahara kept North Africa from the rest of Africa for thousands of years. Then the Berber people used camel caravans to carry West African trade goods across the Sahara. These caravans also transported enslaved peoples captured in wars. These captives were sent to the Mediterranean and Southwest Asia to serve as soldiers and servants.
- As the Saharan trade brought prosperity to West Africa, rulers of city-states in the region began to build empires. Between the A.D. 500s and A.D. 1300s, these African empires were larger in size and wealth than most European kingdoms.
- Ghana was the first great trading empire in West Africa. Ghana became an important crossroads of trade between the Sahara salt mines and the West African gold mines.
- During the A.D. 1200s, Mali defeated Ghana, which had slowly declined. Mali built its wealth and power on the gold and salt trade. As Mali declined, the state of Songhai took over its territories and the gold and salt trade. Under Sunni Ali, Songhai became the largest empire in West Africa.

Chapter Summary *Cont.*

African Civilizations

- Rain forests prevented West African empires from expanding to the southern coast of Africa. People in these areas built the kingdoms of Benin and Kongo.
- Located on the Red Sea, the kingdom of Axum became an important trading center. Both Islam and Christianity brought many changes to Axum and other states along the eastern coast of Africa.
- For many years, Arab traders sailed to East Africa in sailboats called dhows. These traders established a string of trading ports along the East African coast.

Lesson 2 *Africa's Governments and Religions*

- Ghana and Mali had strong central governments. Rulers controlled trade and defended their empires in exchange for loyalty from their people.
- In Ghana, a council of ministers helped the king govern. As the kingdom grew, it was divided into smaller provinces. Mali had a similar government, but on a larger scale. The Songhai built upon the political traditions of Ghana and Mali.
- Many African societies shared religious beliefs, such as the belief in a single creator god. Religious beliefs provided rules for living and helped people honor their history. Religious practices, however, varied from place to place.
- Arab conquests introduced Islam to North Africa beginning in the A.D. 700s. Berber and Arab merchants eventually spread Muslim beliefs to West Africa.
- Ibn Batutta wrote about Islam in West Africa. Mansa Musa of Mali helped to spread Islam. Askia Muhammad of Songhai also supported the spread of Islam.
- Islam spread slowly in East Africa. It did not gain many followers until the A.D. 1100s and 1200s.
- Islam had a far-reaching effect on North Africa, West Africa, and eventually East Africa. Laws, ideas, and education, as well as art and architecture were influenced by Islam in much of Africa.

Chapter Summary *Cont.*

African Civilizations

Lesson 3 *African Society and Culture*

- The family formed the basis of African society. People often lived in extended families, which were part of larger social groups called lineage groups.
- Groups of people known as the Bantu migrated throughout the continent. Their migrations brought common beliefs and customs to many parts of Africa.
- Children were important in African society, and education was the duty of both family members and other villagers. While African men had more rights than women, some women served as soldiers and rulers.
- Slavery had been practiced in Africa since ancient times. The slave trade grew as contact increased with Europeans and the Muslim world.
- The European slave trade grew as countries such as Portugal began establishing plantations on Atlantic islands and when European countries established colonies in the Americas.
- Africans worked in a variety of different art forms. Music and dance especially served a vital role in African society. African arts often served religious purposes. Spirituals developed in the Americas by enslaved Africans who used music to remind them of home.