

Early Societies in West Africa

What was the most significant factor in the development of early societies in West Africa?

PREVIEW

Examine the following images.

The Savanna



Climate: The savanna has hot, dry winters and warm, wet summers. The year-round temperatures remain warm, ranging from 70°F to 100°F.

Vegetation: At places where there is more rainfall, there are trees and grasses. In the drier spots, bushes replace trees.

The Forest



Climate: The forest is wetter than the savanna and gets rainfall year-round. Temperatures vary greatly between the summer and the winter months.

Vegetation: Many trees and shrubs grow here, such as oil palms, yams, and kola trees.

In which environment do you think a city was most likely to develop?
Give two reasons for your answer.

Accept all reasonable answers. Student should provide two reasons that clearly illustrate their argument.

READING NOTES

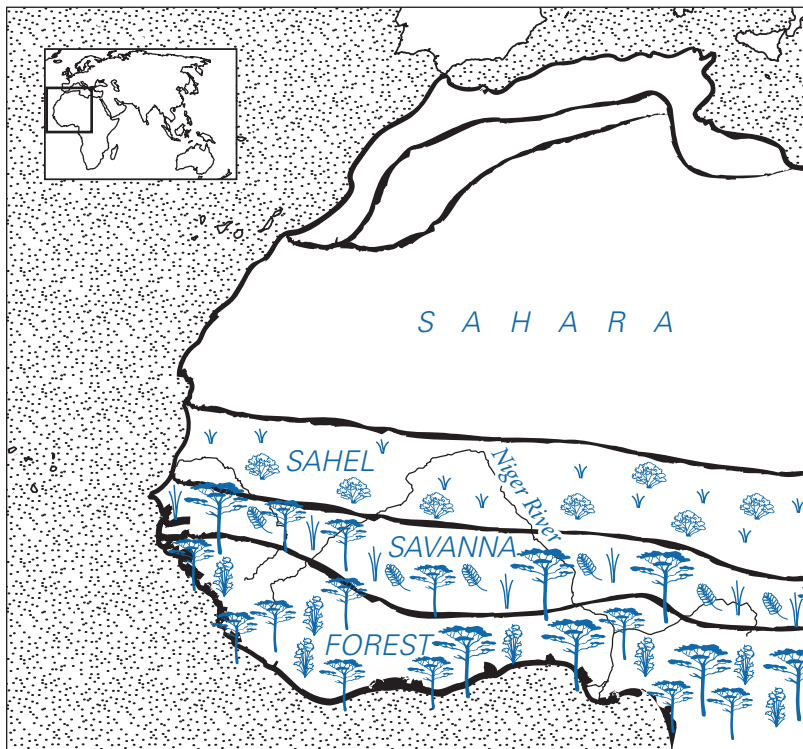
Social Studies Vocabulary

As you complete the Reading Notes, use these terms in your answers.

Sahara	Niger River	smelting
Sahel	Nok	Jenne-jeno
savanna	artifact	tribute

Section 1

- Below is an outline map of West Africa. Label the Sahara, the Sahel, the savanna, and the forest. Then draw and label the types of vegetation found in each area. Also label the Niger River. You can use the maps in the Setting the Stage feature at the beginning of this unit to help you.



Use the completed map to check that students have labeled the Sahara, the Sahel, the savanna, the forest, and the Niger River. For vegetation drawings, students might indicate that short grasses, small bushes, and trees grow in the Sahel; tall grasses, trees, and grains grow on the savanna; and that trees and shrubs, including oil palms, yams, kola trees, mahogany, and teak, grow in the forest.

- How did geography affect trade in West Africa?
Because different types of food grew in different vegetation zones, people had to trade to get things they could not produce themselves.

Sections 2 to 4**Section 2**

1. Create a drawing and caption that describe the earliest communities in West Africa.

Accept all reasonable answers. Possible answer: Early communities in West Africa were made up of extended families that worked together to survive.

2. Create a drawing and caption that describe how and why villages formed from these early communities. Be sure to include the reasons why family-based communities joined together to form villages.

Accept all reasonable answers. Possible answer: Sometimes extended-family communities banded together in villages to control flooding rivers, to mine for iron or gold, or for defense.

Section 3

1. Create a drawing and caption that describe how and why some villages became trading sites and eventually grew into larger towns and cities.

Accept all reasonable answers. Possible answer: Villages located along rivers or other trade routes became trading sites. By taxing trade, villages became wealthy. Wealth led to an increase in population, and villages often grew into towns and cities.

2. Describe the process of smelting used by the Nok to make iron tools.

The Nok used enormous amounts of charcoal to fuel the furnaces that would melt ore to extract the iron. Once the iron was red-hot, it was then hammered and bent into shape by skilled workers called blacksmiths.

3. How did the ability to make iron tools affect food production and the types of jobs that villagers performed in West Africa?

With iron tools, farmers cleared land and grew crops more efficiently. Abundant food supported larger villages where more people were free to take up other jobs, such as weaving, metalworking, and making pottery.

4. How did the location of Jenne-jeno cause it to become a large, busy city?

Jenne-jeno was located at the intersection of the Niger and Bani rivers. Its ideal location allowed for farming, fishing, and trade, which helped it to become a large city.

Section 4

1. Create a drawing and caption that describe how and why some of the wealthiest cities were able to conquer more territory and become a kingdom.
Accept all reasonable answers. Possible answer: Rulers taxed goods that were traded in their cities, and then used this wealth to raise large armies. With these armies, they could conquer other cities and become even wealthier. Gradually, as kings conquered more territory, kingdoms formed.

2. What is *tribute*? What did it mean when a conquered group paid tribute?
Tribute is a payment from a conquered group collected by the conquering ruler. It meant that the conquered people accepted the ruler's authority.

3. List at least one advantage and one disadvantage of being part of a kingdom.

Advantage	Disadvantage
<p><i>Possible answer: Armies made sure that trade routes were safe. They kept out foreign armies and raiders. Wars between small cities ended.</i></p>	<p><i>Possible answer: People living in conquered areas had to pay tribute, and the men had to serve in the army.</i></p>

PROCESSING

Several factors led to the development of early societies and kingdoms in West Africa. These factors include geography, the spread of ironworking, the specialization of labor, and increased local trade. Which of these factors do you think was most important to the development of a settlement into a city and, later, a kingdom?

In the space below, write a paragraph in which you argue what factor you think was most significant in the development of early societies in West Africa. Your paragraph should include:

- a topic sentence that clearly states your choice
- at least two specific examples that show how your choice was important
- a closing sentence that restates your position

Make sure that your paragraph is free of spelling and grammatical errors.

Use this rubric to evaluate your paragraph. Make changes to your work if you need to.

Score	Description
3	Student's topic sentence clearly states which factors were the most important for the development of settlements. Paragraph includes two specific examples that support his or her choice. Student includes a closing sentence that effectively restates the position. There are no spelling or grammar errors.
2	Student's topic sentence states at least one factor that was important for the development of settlements. Paragraph includes at least one example that supports his or her choice. Student includes a closing sentence that restates the position. There are some spelling or grammar errors.
1	Student's doesn't include a topic sentence that states factors that were important for the development of settlements. There are no examples supporting the topic sentence. Student is missing a closing sentence. There are many spelling or grammar errors.