

# Ghana: A West African Trading Empire

***To what extent did trans-Saharan trade lead to Ghana’s wealth and success?***

P R E V I E W

You are traveling to Ghana with a few cattle to trade. In the “Original Rank” column in the chart below, rank the trade items by placing a “1” next to the item you would most want to trade for. Rank the other items based on how much you would want to trade for them until you place a “5” next to the item you would least want to trade for.

Trade Items	Original Rank	Scenario 1 Rank	Scenario 2 Rank
two ounces of gold			
one pound of salt			
a bundle of wool			
several hides of leather			
two sacks of grain			

*Student answers will vary.*

What factor or factors did you consider as you ranked these items?

*Accept all reasonable answers. Students should provide a clear explanation of the factor or factors that affected their rankings.*

**Scenario 1:** You live in a hot climate where food spoils easily. Re-rank the items based on this scenario. Did your rankings change? Why or why not?

*Accept all reasonable answers. Students should provide a clear explanation of the factor or factors that affected their rankings.*

**Scenario 2:** You live in a cold climate where you need shelter and warm clothing. Re-rank the items based on this scenario. Did your rankings change again? Why or why not?

*Accept all reasonable answers. Students should provide a clear explanation of the factor or factors that affected their rankings.*

## READING NOTES

**Social Studies Vocabulary**

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

Ghana

matrilineal

trans-Saharan trade

**Section 1**

1. Write three statements to describe Ghana's king.

a.

Possible answers: The king of Ghana was the head of the army and had the final say in matters of justice. The king was very wealthy, since he controlled the supply of gold. The king held court with his people daily.

b.

c.

2. What two groups helped the king govern? How?

Officials helped the king govern different parts of society, such as the armed forces and industry. Governors helped him rule different parts of the empire.

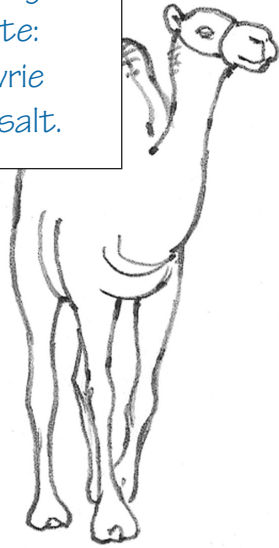
3. Who would inherit the throne after a king died? Why?

Because the royal succession was matrilineal, the son of the king's sister, his nephew, took the throne when the king died.

**Section 2**

1. Around the camel, draw or list three products a North African trader might bring to trade in West Africa. Around the Wangaran's basket, draw or list three products the people of the southern forest areas might bring to trade with the North African traders.

Students might draw or write: copper, cowrie shells, and salt.



Students might draw or write: kola nuts, hides, leather goods, ivory, slaves, or gold.



2. Why was travel across the Sahara challenging?

*Travel across the Sahara was challenging because the journey was long and travelers could lose their way or be unable to find water.*

3. What two factors led to the growth of trans-Saharan trade?

*The two factors that led to the growth of trans-Saharan trade were the introduction of the camel and the spread of Islam.*

**Section 3**

1. Fill in the chart below with details about the gold-salt trade in West Africa.

*Use the completed chart to check student answers.*

	Gold	Salt
Why it was valuable to West Africans	<i>Gold was important because it was used to make coins and to purchase silk and porcelain from China.</i>	<i>Salt was needed to replace body salt lost through perspiration. It also kept food from spoiling, the people liked its taste, and cattle needed it.</i>
Where it came from	<i>Wangara</i>	<i>Taghaza</i>

2. How did the gold-salt trade benefit Ghana?

*Trade made Ghana wealthy because Ghana taxed goods coming into and out of the empire. Taxes helped pay for armies to protect the kingdom and to conquer other territories.*

**Section 4**

1. Fill in the speech bubbles for the Wangaran gold miner and the North African trader. Have each explain what he does during silent bartering.

When I see the goods left by the North African trader, I leave what I think is a fair amount of gold dust. If the trader does not accept my offer, I add to the gold dust until both of us think we have a fair deal.



**Wangaran gold miner**

I spread my goods out along the river. I beat a drum to tell the Wangaran I am making an offer, and then I leave. If the Wangaran leaves enough gold dust, I take it and leave. If not, I leave my goods there until he makes an offer I can accept.



**North African trader**

2. What were two advantages of the silent-barter system?

Two advantages of the silent-barter system were that it allowed people who spoke different languages to conduct trade and it allowed the Wangarans to guard the secret location of their gold mines.

**Section 5**

List and describe two reasons why the kingdom of Ghana declined.

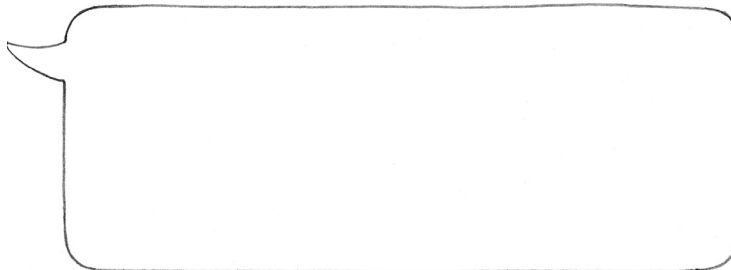
*Two reasons why the kingdom of Ghana declined were that Muslim warriors, called Almoravids, attacked Ghana and seized its capital city and that Ghana was further weakened by the loss of natural resources.*

**PROCESSING**

In the speech bubble for each figure below, write two sentences that the figure might say. The sentences should explain how that figure benefited from trans-Saharan trade.



**North African trader**



**Wangaran gold miner**

*Use this rubric to evaluate the Processing assignment.*

Score	Description
3	Student completes all three speech bubbles with clear information about how each figure benefited from trans-Saharan trade. Student uses supporting details that accurately back up the information. There are no spelling or grammar errors.
2	Student completes at least two speech bubbles with information about how each figure benefited from trans-Saharan trade. Student uses some supporting details to back up the information. There are some spelling or grammar errors.
1	Student does not complete the majority of speech bubbles. Student uses no supporting details to back up the information. There are many spelling or grammar errors.