

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Hour: \_\_\_\_\_

### Comparing West African Empires

	What led to its rise and growth?	What led to its decline?
<b>Ghana</b>		
<b>Mali</b>		
<b>Songhay</b>		

## Comparing West African Empires – Sample Answers

	<b>What led to its rise and growth?</b>	<b>What led to its decline?</b>
<b>Ghana</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>! Location between the salt mines of the Sahara and the gold mines of the rainforest</li> <li>! Use of the camel for carrying goods</li> <li>! Control of the trade routes</li> <li>! Iron working that led to producing more food and making better weapons</li> <li>! Leaders who used taxation to raise money that could be used to expand the army.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>! Muslims from the North tried to take over Ghana</li> <li>! Loss of control over trade</li> <li>! Drought</li> <li>! Poor leadership</li> </ul>
<b>Mali</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>! Sundiata led a rebellion against Ghana and took over what was left of Ghana</li> <li>! Powerful kings with a powerful army</li> <li>! Control of the trade routes</li> <li>! Expansion of trade</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>! A struggle for power after Mansa Musa died</li> <li>! Poor leadership</li> <li>! Attacks by outsiders</li> <li>! Rebellions by kingdoms controlled by Mali</li> <li>! Loss of control over trade</li> </ul>
<b>Songhay</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>! Songhay pulled away from the empire of Mali under Sonni Ali</li> <li>! Songhay began to take land that had been part of Mali</li> <li>! Powerful kings and a powerful army and navy</li> <li>! Control of trade routes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>! Poor leadership</li> <li>! A civil war</li> <li>! It had become so large it was hard to control.</li> <li>! Areas of the empire rebelled</li> <li>! The Moroccan army invaded</li> </ul>

## Mali

As the empire of Ghana was declining a new empire, called Mali, was growing. Mali had been a small city-state under the control of Ghana. Under the leadership of a king named Sundiata, Mali rebelled against Ghana. He took control of what was left of the Ghana empire and then expanded into more territory. Mali came to control the gold trade that Ghana had controlled but added even more trading partners such as Egypt.

The kings of Mali divided their large empire into provinces, or smaller areas. Each province had a governor chosen by the king of Mali. In this way Mali could control its expanding empire. During its time Mali was probably the second largest empire in the world; only the Mongolian empire in Asia would have been larger.

The most famous ruler of Mali was Mansa Musa, or King Musa. He was a strong ruler who used the wealth of Mali to expand his army but also to build many incredible buildings. He also turned the city of Timbuktu into a famous place of learning where people studied areas like medicine, astronomy and mathematics.

Mansa Musa adopted the religion of Islam. Compared to Ghana more people in Mali had become Muslims. As part of his religion he made a pilgrimage, or religious trip, to the city of Mecca in southwest Asia. This city was the center of the Islamic religion. According to historical records he took 60,000 people with him and many, many camels, each loaded with gold. His trip drew world attention to Mali. As a result of the trip trade increased between Mali and the rest of the world.



When Mansa Musa died people fought over who should become ruler of Mali. There was a struggle for power. Mali was then ruled by a series of weak and ineffective kings. This weakened the empire. Outsiders found it a good time to attack Mali. This further weakened the empire. In addition, some of the small kingdoms that Mali controlled rebelled and became independent. As a result of all these factors Mali lost control of the trade networks. By 1400 the empire of Mali had fallen apart. A new empire called Songhay was rising to power.

*Mansa Musa, leader of Mali*

## Songhay



Songhay was a small kingdom which had been ruled by Mali. The people of Songhay were not happy under Mali's rule. After Mansa Musa died, Sonni Ali, the king of Songhay declared Songhay independent and started to take over territory that Mali had controlled. Sonni Ali built a huge army that included many horse soldiers as well as a navy of powerful canoes that controlled the rivers of West Africa. He took control of the trade routes and this made Songhay wealthy and powerful. He continued to expand Songhay until it was much larger than either Ghana or Mali had been. He ruled for over 25 years. When he died his son became king. He did not rule long because Askia Muhammad, a general in the army, decided to take power and become king of Songhay.

Askia Muhammad continued to expand Songhay and brought the empire to the height of its power. He expanded the military, encouraged learning and developed a new system of laws for the empire. Although he was a Muslim himself he did not force his people to become Muslims. While he ruled Mali Muslim scholars from many places came to study in Timbuktu which Askia Muhammad had expanded. He ruled Songhay for over 30 years. When he was in his eighties, one of his sons led a revolt against him and took over the empire.

Like Mali, Songhay then struggled under poor leadership. This led to a civil war in Songhay where groups within the empire were fighting each other. The empire had become so large it was hard to control. Some areas of the empire began to rebel and pull away. Seeing that Songhay's power had weakened, the Moroccan army from North Africa invaded Songhay. Geography played a role in Songhay's decline also. There was a serious drought at this time which affected farming. By 1600 Songhay like the other two great West African empires had declined and fallen apart.

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## Evaluating Different Types of Historical Evidence

	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<b>Archaeology</b>		
<b>Written History</b>		
<b>Oral History</b>		

## Evaluating Different Types of Historical Evidence – Sample Answers

	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>Archaeology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>! We can examine real objects from the past.</li> <li>! Artifacts can help us understand what people wore and what they did.</li> <li>! We can locate foundations of buildings and cities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>! Artifacts are often not complete and have pieces missing.</li> <li>! We can misinterpret what an artifact is</li> <li>! We only have a few things left from the past.</li> <li>! Places can be hard to find.</li> </ul>
<b>Written History</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>! We have actual words written in the past.</li> <li>! When writing is passed along it tends to stay the same.</li> <li>! Writing can have lots of detail and information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>! People's point of view can affect how they view and write about another culture.</li> <li>! Some historians write about places they never visited.</li> </ul>
<b>Oral History</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>! Oral historians try to choose the most important parts of history to remember.</li> <li>! Oral history often emphasizes people and important events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>! As history is passed through time things can be exaggerated</li> <li>! As history is passed through time parts of the story may be lost or changed</li> <li>! Since oral history is not written down it often does not have as much detail or references to years and dates as written history.</li> </ul>