Unit 4/Week 3

Title: The Royal Kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RI.6.1-5, RI.6.6, RI.6.8; W.6.1, W.6.2, W.6.4, W.6.9; SL.6.1; L.6.1, L.6.2

Teacher Instructions

*Refer to the Introduction for further details.*

**Before Teaching**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis. Please do **not** read this to the students. This is a description for teachers, about the big ideas and key understanding that students should take away **after** completing this task.

Big Ideas and Key Understandings

The Soninke people of northwest Africa established Ghana, the first great empire of the Western Sudan.

Synopsis

The selection is about Ghana, an ancient culture that was one of Africa’s great trading empires in the third century A.D. Gold mines, extensive trading, and advanced farming villages all contributed to the rise and success of Ghana.

1. Read entire main selection text, keeping in mind the Big Ideas and Key Understandings.
2. Re-read the main selection text while noting the stopping points for the Text Dependent Questions and teaching Vocabulary.

**During Teaching**

1. Students read the entire main selection text independently.
2. Teacher reads the main selection text aloud with students following along. (Depending on how complex the text is and the amount of support needed by students, the teacher may choose to reverse the order of steps 1 and 2.)
3. Students and teacher re-read the text while stopping to respond to and discuss the questions and returning to the text. A variety of methods can be used to structure the reading and discussion (i.e.: whole class discussion, think-pair-share, independent written response, group work, etc.)

Text Dependent Questions

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| **Text Dependent Questions** | **Answers** |
| Which ancient people established Ghana? Which details in the text show it was a wealthy kingdom? | The Soninke people established Ghana in the western Sudan in the third century A.D. Details showing the empire’s wealth include ordinary people wore gold jewelry and wore cloth “spun with strands of gold.” The king’s hitching post was a gold nugget and al-Idrisi wrote that after Wangara flooded, “gold could be lying on top of the ground” and that its inhabitants were rich. The residents of Ghana traded gold for “productions which are brought to them from the most distant countries of the world.” |
| Re-read al-Idrisi’s description of the city of Wangara as he saw it in the twelfth century. Describe the city in your own words. Which details may have led people to assume the gold mines were located in the vicinity of Wangara? | The city of Wangara is growing and the people are very rich as they have a lot of gold and they have many items brought in from countries around the world.Because Wangara was so wealthy, people thought the gold mines were located nearby. Gold could be found lying on top of the ground after flooding, deep mines were found at Bambuk and Bure. They were secretive about the locations of the mines. |
| Explain how the system of dumb bartering took place. | When traders came to Wangara, they spread goods (grains, leather, cloth and salt) for trade near a thicket. They beat on a drum called a deba and then went away. The Wangaran miners would come out from hiding and leave gold dust to pay for the items they wanted to trade. When the traders returned, they would either accept the amount of gold dust and leave, making the trade final, or they would go away again and wait for the miners to leave more gold dust as a counter offer. This pattern would continue until the traders were satisfied with the amount of gold dust. Through regular exchanges the traders came to know what amounts would be accepted and the system worked smoothly. Even if the shy miners were captured, they would remain “dumb” and not reveal the locations of their mines. |
| Based on everything read so far, what details support the idea that trade was the “lifeblood” of Ghana? What does lifeblood mean?  | The location of the gold mines was protected, the king’s soldiers helped to protect the trading caravans that came into the kingdom, and traders came from all over the country. Al-Idrisi described the towns as “flourishing” with famous fortresses. Traders from all over the world – Egypt, Arabia, Palestine and even Asia – brought “rare and wonderful treasures” and even news. Trade being the “lifeblood” means that this is what kept the residents of Ghana well, rich and alive. They wanted to protect the trade system and valued it. |
| What do the details on the map help you understand about the routes and distances the caravans travelled?  | The paragraph describes the routes, and the reader can trace the routes on the map, to see exactly where they are. Using the map key, the reader can understand the great distances that were travelled and that several trading cities were inside the almost 600 mile-wide Ghana empire. |
| Explain the analogy “The camel was to the Berbers what the bison was to the Native Americans.” What evidence does the author provide to support this statement? | The camel was extremely important to the Berbers and just as the Native Americans had many uses for the bison, the Berbers had many uses for the camel. The camels provided transportation, milk, wool, hides, and meat. The author states, “everything centered around the camels, which made trans-Saharan travel possible.”  |
| Make a t-chart showing the challenges the desert travelers endured and how they overcame them. What impact does including this information have on the story?  | The trade caravans brought “rare and wonderful treasures like jewels, silk, and furs from everywhere in the Islamic world” but travel was difficult. Some of the challenges faced included: the hot, dry, sandy desert conditions, the “ill-tempered” camels, and thieves. Caravans, which provided “safety in numbers,” used camels, animals suited to desert travel, cameleers to handle them and experienced guides to address these challenges. Inside Ghana the “royal patrols maintained order and guaranteed safe passage to all visitors.” Including this detailed information in the story shows how important trade was to Ghana and how it contributed to the “great empire.” |
| Use details in the text and in the illustrations to compare and contrast daily life in the city and in the villages of farming compounds. | In the city, the people wore expensive clothing and owned many items, including foreign products. The illustration shows the cities as being crowded. In the farming compounds, where 80% of the population lived, people worked cooperatively to farm the land. They lived simply and had few belongings, which were usually homemade. Trading was important though to both. |
| Find details that suggest how the Soninke villagers might have contributed to the strength of Ghana’s empire. | Soninke compounds made up the villages and were run cooperatively with leadership and a grievance process. The villagers used advanced farming skills (irrigational systems and management) which enabled them to grew enough crops to support cities. The local trading system also helped to unite the various groups within the empire and men and women worked cooperatively to share the workload. “Pooling talents and resources” included men serving one month per year in the military and women “processing the food for storage and sale.” Farmers were respected and enjoyed a “good standard of living” and a “respected place in society.” The villages valued family as shown in the proverb, “Kings may come and go, but the family endures.” This cooperative spirit and the care for all community members allowed there to be “no orphans or homeless people” and elders “rich beyond measure.” Thus, the villages contributed to the strength of the empire by keeping all the community members cared for, by working together cooperatively, by doing military service and by supporting cities with food.  |
| “Song of the Turtle” expresses disapproval of greed and envy. How did the Soninke demonstrate these values in daily life?  | The poem says, “dissent was never heard.” The people all shared the workload. They valued community ties more than wealth, and they always welcomed visitors. The extended family structure where “cousins were brothers and sisters,” a “simple but adequate diet” and “meager” possessions are all evidence of disapproval of greed.  |

Vocabulary

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|  | **KEY WORDS ESSENTIAL TO UNDERSTANDING** | **WORDS WORTH KNOWING** General teaching suggestions are provided in the Introduction  |
| **TEACHER PROVIDES DEFINITION** not enough contextual clues provided in the text | trans-Saharan | medievaloasisgame proverbmaternal, paternal |
| **STUDENTS FIGURE OUT THE MEANING**sufficient context clues are provided in the text | flourishinginhabitantsabundanceproductionvicinitybarteringlifebloodcaravancompoundsdissentbelligerence | ladenedexchangeendureentouragepooled (resources)appointedallocatedadequatemeager |

Culminating Task

* + - * Re-Read, Think, Discuss, Write
* *The Soninke people of northwest Africa established Ghana, which became the “first great empire of the Western Sudan.” Using the main ideas from the text, explain which factors contributed to the rise and success of this empire.*

Answer: Support the focus statement “The Soninke people had abundant resources and were able to trade successfully and work cooperatively to help Ghana become the “first great empire of the Western Sudan” with evidence from the text. A graphic organizer may be used to collect and organize details for writing.

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| **Abundant resources** | **Trade successfully** | **Work cooperatively** |
| -gold-salt mines-rivers-camels-acacia wood, stones for homes | -caravans-king’s soldiers guarded trade routes-dumb bartering-used experienced guides-camels and cameleers-merchants, slaves, scholars, poets… | -caravans “pooled resources”-“inhabitants are rich” and ordinary people adorned themselves with gold-leaders allocated to meet needs-farmland managed well-men and women shared the workload-military duty was shared-families valued children and elders and took care of everyone-meager possessions, adequate diet-good standard of living for all |

Ancient Ghana fist grew rich from its secret gold mines. Keeping the mines secret prevented others from stealing the gold. The cities grew as extensive trading routes developed as people from all over the country brought in goods and supplies to trade for the gold. The farming compounds also contributed to the success as their advance farming techniques helped to provide enough food for the larger cities.

Additional Tasks

* Using evidence from the text, outline what a “typical caravan from Arabia to the Sabel” trip would entail.

Answer: This roughly 40-day journey would begin with preparations such as enlisting a guide and cameleer and the loading and accounting of goods. Details should include the challenges faced while crossing the desert (thieves, shifting sands, high temperatures) and the rest stops made.

Note to Teacher

* The Get Set to Read piece, The Rise of Ghana, might be helpful to read with students prior to reading the selection. The timeline and present-day map of Africa will help define the context for the non-fiction story. It might also be interesting, if time permits, to have groups of students delve into more exploration around the resources, trade and daily life sections of the text.