

Mansa Musa worksheet

Mansa Musa was the leader of the empire of Mali from around 1280 to 1340. The Mali Empire covered roughly 500,000 square miles of land and was the largest empire West Africa has ever known. The empire's total area covered parts of the modern-day countries of Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, the Ivory Coast and Ghana.

Mansa Musa was the tenth Mansa of the Mali empire. The term Mansa is a military title meaning “conqueror” or “Emperor”. Mansa Musa inherited a kingdom that was already wealthy, but his work in expanding trade made Mali the wealthiest kingdom in Africa. He became rich through trade in gold, salt and elephant ivory and is still considered the richest person who ever lived. It is estimated that in modern terms he was worth over £300 billion – double the wealth of the richest person alive today.



Mansa Musa’s wealth was known across Europe and his image was included on the Catalan Atlas – a medieval map of the world created in 1375. The map depicts Asia, Europe, North Africa, and West Africa and includes illustrations of cities and ports. The inclusion of Mansa Musa on this map demonstrates his reputation and influence on the world at the time.

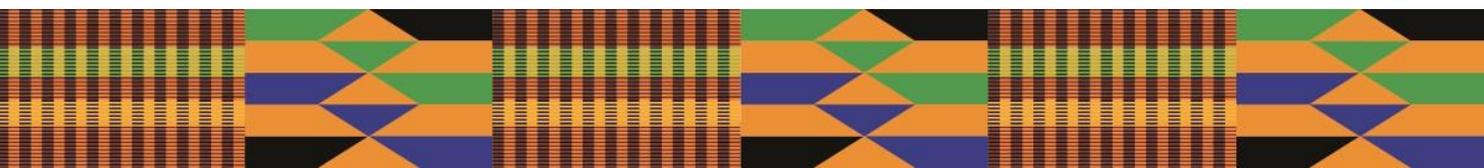


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Mansa Musa was a devout Muslim. Between 1324 and 1325 he observed one of the five pillars of Islam by undertaking a pilgrimage to Mecca (known as Hajj). This pilgrimage of 2,700 miles made him a well-known figure across Northern Africa and the Middle East. Mansa Musa reportedly travelled on Hajj with 60,000 men (12,000 of these men were slaves), 100 elephants and 80 camels. Between them, the men and animals carried 21,000 kg of gold. His journey was a spectacular one, and was documented by eyewitnesses who were impressed by his wealth.

During his pilgrimage Mansa Musa gave away a significant amount of gold, through spending and donations. In some of the cities he travelled through, including Cairo, Medina and Mecca, the influx of gold led to the metal being devalued. In Cairo particularly it affected the economy for many years after.

Musa's generosity led to the construction of many buildings. In Timbuktu Mansa Musa instructed the building of madrassas (educational institutions), libraries, archives and mosques. Timbuktu held hundreds of thousands of texts and became one of the most prominent cities in West Africa.



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Questions

After reading the text about Mansa Musa answer the following questions:

- What was the name of the empire Mansa Musa ruled over? What modern day countries does it cover?
- What natural resources made Mansa Musa wealthy?
- What map includes a depiction of Mansa Musa?
- When did Mansa Musa travel on Hajj?
- Name one of the cities where gold was de-valued.
- We believe that Mansa Musa was the wealthiest man ever to live. Research who is the wealthiest person alive today and how they made their money.

