

UNIT 1 ADDENDUM

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UNIT SYNOPSIS

PURPOSE: Why study Early and Medieval African Communities?

Most scientists believe that the first humans emerged in Africa more than two million years ago. Over time, these peoples evolved, developing the earliest complex societies and cultures in human history. Today, Africa is the second-largest continent in the world, with more than 1.2 billion people speaking an estimated 2,000 languages. From deserts to fertile river valleys, mountains to oceans, the geography of Africa is as diverse as the many peoples who live there and who have adapted to this varied environment. These modern peoples trace their history to the early and medieval kingdoms that ruled the African continent more than 1,000 years ago, to civilizations like the Mali Empire or Great Zimbabwe. Much of what contemporary historians know about the history of these early and medieval African kingdoms is derived from the oral histories and stories griots told, stories which preserved the cultural beliefs and practices, histories and shared values of various African peoples.

This unit introduces first graders to their year-long study of communities around the world through some of the earliest folktales and legends, those from African civilizations. In this unit, students will first be introduced to the African continent's geography and the earliest peoples who lived there. Students will explore how Africa's vast and varied geography influenced daily life, culture, and traditions among early Africans. They will then dive into the history of medieval African kingdoms. Using African stories as their guide, students will explore the

importance of art, religion, conquest, trade, and education in African societies. Finally, students will conclude their study of medieval Africa by more deeply investigating the practice of storytelling, reading stories that have been passed down from generation to generation in African communities. Through their study of early and medieval Africa, students will begin to understand the many ways people have developed and sustained their cultures and communities.

Throughout this unit, it is important to guard against homogenizing the entirety and diversity of African history into a single narrative. Though there were broad commonalities across different kingdoms and regions of Africa, each region also has a distinct history and culture that we should acknowledge when teaching African history. While many of the expository books that students will read in this unit give a broad, survey-oriented overview of the common characteristics of African empires, the folktales hail from specific communities in Africa. As you read these stories with your students, use each one as an opportunity to highlight details that are distinct to the culture of origin and encourage students to notice what is similar and different across the many stories they read during this unit. Wherever possible, model using precise and specific language when referring to distinct kingdoms, regions, and contemporary countries to ensure students understand the diversity across the whole of Africa.

Throughout this unit, you will use highly engaging whole-class Read Alouds to introduce and reinforce key ideas about early and medieval Africa. Students will then showcase their knowledge through project work—including by writing trickster tales inspired by the stories of West Africa!

Content Connections: Your students will begin their historical studies this year by investigating life in early and medieval communities in Africa in this unit. After this unit, students will continue to explore communities throughout world history, turning next to the study of medieval communities across Europe, then to the diverse Indigenous communities of the Americas—including the Aztecs of Mesoamerica—and, finally, to the historical and present-day communities of Mexico.

This unit begins students' studies of communities at the cradle of human civilization—in Africa—taking students on their first real journey into early world history. This will feel like a significant transition after our kindergarten scope and sequence, when students studied themselves and their own communities, past and present, including families and school communities. As you begin this Social Studies unit, reorient your students to what they have learned about families and schools around the world. This approach will help your students begin to think about how the world is made up of many different cultures, each with distinct histories and belief systems, as they wade into the history of the world's communities.



Mansa Musa, king of Mali, taken from Wikipedia.

By the end of your semester-long Insight Social Studies™ sequence, your first graders will be able to explain the most important characteristics of medieval African, European, Indigenous American, and Mexican communities. This knowledge provides an essential foundation from which to build upon as students turn to the themes of diversity and the cultural heritage of the United States as second graders.

Goals: Throughout this unit, students will develop a deep understanding of the history, daily life, and culture of early and medieval Africa. They will also understand the key empires, the vast traditions, and the rich stories that defined medieval African kingdoms.

This unit develops students' understanding of standards-based concepts listed below. These Essential Questions and key ideas are based on the National Standards for History listed in Appendix A, and they are foundational understandings that will prepare your students for their historical studies about diverse communities in the United States as they prepare to enter second grade and beyond. This unit focuses on inspiring curiosity about early and medieval Africa and the many cultures that thrived there. Returning often to the following key ideas and Essential Questions and understanding how each lesson introduces or deepens students' understanding of these ideas will help you keep instruction focused on the most important standards in this unit.

- **Who lived in early and medieval Africa?** How did geography affect life in early and medieval Africa? Africa is the second-largest continent in the world and is home to distinct climates and cultures. Beginning thousands of years ago, the first humans established communities across Africa, adapting to their natural environments to build complex early societies. While Nile Valley cultures adapted their lives and society based on the Nile River's floods, Sahara Desert cultures built complex irrigation systems to survive in the harsh desert environment. African folklore often focuses on aspects of the natural world, reflecting the significance geography and the environment had on the daily lives of early and medieval Africans.
- **What kingdoms and empires ruled early and medieval Africa?** What was life like in early and medieval Africa? Throughout early and medieval African history, many empires ruled across the continent, from Mali in northwest Africa to Zimbabwe in the southeast. Many early and medieval Africans lived in villages, where families lived together and used natural resources to care for their homes and community. The empires of medieval Africa had valuable natural resources, such as gold and salt, that they traded with eager merchants in Europe and Asia, making these kingdoms very wealthy. African trade with Europe and Arabia brought European and Arabic cultural and religious influences to Africa. As a result, many African empires mixed their traditional religious beliefs with the beliefs of Christianity and Islam. In many African cultures, music and art captured the importance of the natural world and of religion in daily life, and many early and medieval empires, such as Zimbabwe, built large, beautiful cities that reflected this influence.

CONTENT STANDARDS

Below are the standards taught and assessed in this unit.

Unit Standards (UCLA National Standards)

- **Standard 1A:** The student understands family life now and in the recent past; family life in various places long ago.
- **Standard 1B:** The student understands the different ways people of diverse racial, religious, and ethnic groups, and of various national origins have transmitted their beliefs and values.
- **Standard 7A:** The student understands the cultures and historical developments of selected societies in such places as Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe.

Texas Alignment (TEKS)

Geography

- 1.3 : The student understands the relative location of places.
(B) locate places using the four cardinal directions.
- 1.4 : The student understands the purpose of geographic tools, including maps and globes.
(A) create and use simple maps such as maps of the home, classroom, school, and community; and
- 1.5 : The student understands physical and human characteristics of place to better understand their community and the world around them.
(A) identify and describe the physical characteristics of place such as landforms, bodies of water, Earth's resources, and weather; and
(B) identify and describe how geographic location influences the human characteristics of place such as shelter, clothing, food, and activities.

Economics:

- 1.6 : The student understands how families meet basic human needs.
(B) describe similarities and differences in ways families meet basic human needs.
- 1.7 : The student understands the concepts of goods and services.
(A) identify examples of goods and services in the home, school, and community;
(B) identify ways people exchange goods and services;
(C) identify the role of markets in the exchange of goods and services.

Government:

- 1.11 : The student understands the role of authority figures and public officials.
(A) identify the responsibilities of authority figures in the home, school, and community;

Citizenship:

- 1.12 : The student understands characteristic of good citizenship as exemplified by historical figures and other individuals
(A) identify characteristics of good citizenship, including truthfulness, justice, equality, respect for oneself and others, responsibility in daily life, and participation in government by educating oneself about the issues, respectfully holding public officials to their word, and voting;

Culture:

- 1.14: The student understands the importance of family and community beliefs, language, and traditions.
(A) describe and explain the importance of beliefs, language, and traditions of families and communities; and
(B) explain the way folktales and legends reflect beliefs, language, and traditions of communities.

Social Studies Skills:

- 1.16: The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources, including technology.
(A) gather information about a topic using a variety of valid oral and visual sources such as interviews, music, pictures, symbols, and artifacts with adult assistance; and
(B) sequence and categorize information.

- 1.17: The student communicates in oral, visual, and written forms.
- (A) use a simple timeline to distinguish among past, present, and future;
 - (C) express ideas orally based on knowledge and experiences;
 - (D) create and interpret visual and written material; and
 - (E) use social studies terminology correctly.

1.18: The student uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others. The student is expected to use problem-solving and decision-making processes to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution.

Louisiana Alignment (Louisiana Student Standards)

History:

- 1.1: Create a chronological sequence of events using appropriate vocabulary
- 1.2: Differentiate between primary and secondary sources
- 1.3: Select and use appropriate evidence from primary and secondary sources to support claims
- 1.4: Construct and express claims that are supported with relevant evidence from primary and/or secondary sources, content knowledge, and clear reasoning
- 1.6: Describe how past events can affect the present
- 1.7: Compare the lives of Louisianans today in urban, suburban, and rural parishes
- 1.8: Identify examples of Louisiana's culture
- 1.9: Identify cultural groups that influenced Louisiana

Civics:

- 1.14 Describe civic virtues including voting, running for office, serving on committees, and volunteering
- 1.15: Describe the importance of fairness, responsibility, respect, and hard work

Economics:

- 1.17 : Differentiate between producers and consumers
- 1.18 : Identify examples of an economic cost or benefit of a decision or event
- 1.20: Explain why and how goods and services are produced and traded
- 1.21: Describe how scarcity requires people to make choices

Geography:

- 1.24 : Create and use maps or models with cardinal directions, keys, and scale
- 1.25 : Identify where Louisiana is within the United States and on the globe
- 1.26 : Differentiate between the town, parish, state, and country in which the student lives on a political map
- 1.31: Explain how and why people and goods move from place to place

Florida Alignment (NGSSS)

American History:

Historical Inquiry and Analysis: SS.1.A:

- SS.1.A.1.1 - Develop an understanding of a primary source.
- SS.1.A.1.2 - Understand how to use the media center/other sources to find answers to questions about a historical topic.

Historical Knowledge: SS.1.A.2

- SS.1.A.2.1 – understand history tells the story of people and events of other times and places
- SS.1.A.2.2 – compare life now with life in the past
- SS.1.A.2.4- Identify people from the past who have shown character ideals and principles including honesty, courage, and responsibility
- SS.1.A.2.5 – distinguish between historical fact and fiction using various materials

Chronological Thinking: SS.1.A.3

- SS.1.A.3.1 – use terms related to time and sequentially order events that have occurred in school, home, or community

Geography:

The World In Spatial Terms: SS.1.G.1

- SS.1.G.1.2 - Identify key elements (compass rose, cardinal directions, title, key/legend with symbols) of maps and globes .
- SS.1.G.1.3 –Construct a basic map using key elements including cardinal directions and map symbols.
- SS.1.G.1.4 - Identify a variety of physical features using a map and globe.
- SS.1.G.1.5 – Locate on maps and globes the student's local community, Florida, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Gulf of Mexico
- SS.1.G.1.6 - Describe how location, weather, and physical environment affect the way people live in our community.

Economics:

Beginning Economics: SS.1.E.1

- SS.1.E.1.1 - Recognize that money is a method of exchanging goods and services
- SS.1.E.1.2 - Define opportunity costs as giving up one thing for another
- SS.1.E.1.3 - Distinguish between examples of goods and services.
- SS.1.E.1.4 - Distinguish people as buyers, sellers, and producers of goods and services.
- SS.1.E.1.6 - Identify that people need to make choices because of scarce resources.

Civics and Government:

- 1.CG.1.2 - Describe how the absence of rules and laws impacts individuals and the community
- 1.CG.3.2 - Explain responsible ways for individuals and groups to make decisions

ROADMAP

Below is the recommended sequence of instruction for this unit.

At a Glance Unit 1: Early & Medieval African Communities

Day	Lesson	Type	Day	Lesson	Type	Day	Lesson	Type
1	1	Read Aloud	16	8	Read Aloud	31	16	Read Aloud
2	1	Read Aloud	17	8	Read Aloud	32	16	Read Aloud
3	2	Content Booster A	18	9	Content Booster D	33	17	Content Booster F
4	2	Content Booster A	19	9	Content Booster D	34	17	Content Booster F
5	3	Read Aloud	20	10	Read Aloud	35	18	Read Aloud
6	3	Read Aloud	21	10	Read Aloud	36		Review
7	4	Project: African Map	22	11	Content Booster E	37		Assessment
8	4	Project: African Map	23	11	Content Booster E	38		Flex Day 1
9	4	Project: African Map	24	12	Read Aloud	39		Flex Day 2
10	5	Content Booster B	25	12	Read Aloud	40		Flex Day 3
11	5	Content Booster B	26	13	Read Aloud	41		Flex Day 4
12	6	Read Aloud	27	13	Read Aloud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use and move flex days around as needed! • Reference your Scope and Sequence for scanning deadline! 		
13	6	Read Aloud	28	14	Project: Camel Caravan			
14	7	Content Booster C	29	15	Project: Camel Caravan			
15	7	Content Booster C	30	15	Project: Camel Caravan			