Ancient Mali Study Guide

Geography: Mali is located in Western Africa

Geography and Climate:
- Mali is located on the continent of Africa.
- The Empire of Mali was located in West Africa near rivers.
- Mali was located near the Niger River.
- Mali’s “climate” is very dry, desert-like conditions.
- Mali lies across the trade routes between the sources of salt in the Sahara Desert (north) and the gold mines region (south).
- Timbuktu was an important city in Mali. It had a famous university with a large library containing Greek and Roman books.

Government:
- Africa was home to many great empires. Mali was one of the wealthiest of them all.
- Kings of Mali were rich and powerful men who controlled the trade in West Africa. A king was called a Mansa.
- Sundiata (Sun-Jah-tuh) and Mansa Musa were 2 of the most popular kings.
Trade, Farming, and Resources:

- Salt was a natural resource for the people of Mali. People used salt to stay healthy and for preserving foods. Salt was needed to survive in the Sahara Desert. In hot weather, people lose the salt in their bodies through sweating. They needed to get salt back into their bodies so this is why they traded for it. Salt was found in the Sahara Desert.

- Miners found gold in Western Africa. The miners traded gold for salt. Gold was just as valuable as salt.

- Mali was an important trade center. Salt from the Sahara Desert was traded for the gold found in Western Africa. Mali was in between these locations and that is why it was called a “trade center.” Mali was near rivers, so the goods were transported by boats. Camels were also used!

- Ancient Mali grew in wealth and power because of all the trading.
- A group of Malians riding camels on trade routes were called “caravans.”
- There were farmers, miners, and traders in Mali.
- These words describe ancient Mali’s Empire: rich, wealthy, prosperous
- Excellent farm fields were near the Niger (NIE-jher) River.
- Capital resources, Natural Resources, and Human Resources of Mali:
  
  Capital Resources (tools used): camels, carts, mining tools, boats
  Human Resources (people): miners, farmers, and traders
  Natural Resources (items found in nature): salt, gold

Culture/Customs/Homes:

- Many storytellers in Mali passed on traditions and stories from one generation to the next. The storytellers were called griots. (GREE-ohs)

- The stories were important because they told the history of Mali and because they had no written language.

- Small family clans lived in the countryside where they lived in round clay houses with grass domed roofs. Most people were farmers.

How the people of Ancient Mali adapted to their environment:

- In Mali, salt was a natural resource for people in the desert. Salt was traded for gold.
- They farmed along the Niger River.