

Wonders of the African World: The Road to Timbuktu Handout 1

Discussion Questions

1. During the Middle Ages, why did Africans go to Timbuktu?
2. Why were Europeans interested in Timbuktu?
3. What is the process of mining gold?
4. What evidence of slavery was seen in the video?
5. How do women show their family wealth in the city of Mopti?
6. Was salt valuable in Ancient Africa? Support your answer.
7. How did Mansa Musa have a negative effect on the value of gold?
8. What evidence is there of Mansa Musa's belief system?
9. What is used for textbooks in the city of Djenne?
10. What is the literacy rate of Djenne?
11. What evidence is there that a town existed across the flood plains from Djenne that dates back to 250 B.C.?
12. The Dogon people, south of Djenne, hold on to an older way of life. What legend supports where they live?
13. What are the paintings on the walls at the "Sacred Place" of the Dogon people?
14. Why is Timbuktu still hard to get to?
15. Why had no Europeans reached Timbuktu until the 19th Century?
16. What evidence is there that Timbuktu was Africa's center of learning?

Answer key:

1. Universities and gold
2. Gold mines—stories of great wealth in gold.
3. Dig shafts, mine soil, bring up soil in buckets, women wash it
4. Next to the ferry heading to Timbuktu, Dr. Gates had a conversation with a gentleman who explained slavery in modern West Africa. The man was preparing to load salt onto the ferryboat.
5. By wearing their wealth in gold on them. Specifically, the woman shown had \$4,000 worth of gold hanging from her ears.
6. Yes. At one time it was sold for the same price as gold.
7. Each one of his slaves that went to Mecca with him carried a staff of gold. In his travels he gave it all away. They gave so much away, it is said to have caused its price to slump for five years.
8. His pilgrimage to Mecca, and the fact that he ordered a Mosque to be built each time his boat stopped on a Friday as he was returning from Mecca. (Friday is the Muslim holy day.)
9. Wood tablets that are used over and over again. They are whipped and sanded down for the next person to use, and have been used for centuries.
10. 100%
11. Pottery shards, Iron working debris, bone remains found in pottery shards, skulls.
12. A snake is their oldest ancestor, led them to this place, and gave them the gift of language.
13. Drawings left by Dogon boys which relate to complex theories of heaven and earth.
14. Ferryboats run six months of the year only, and roads are possible only during the dry season.
15. Because Muslims fiercely defended their lucrative trade routes.
16. Huge libraries of books, university, numerous scholars.