



Yale-New Haven
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2007 Volume II: Voyages in World History Before 1500

An African Pilgrim-King and a World-Traveler: Mansa Musa and Ibn Battuta

Guide for Curriculum Unit 07.02.06
by Christine Elmore

In this unit I plan to take a unique approach and teach world history by using the travel narrative of the famous 14th century Muslim globe-trotter, Ibn Battuta, who set off in 1325 to make a pilgrimage to Mecca and didn't return home until 29 years later. We will focus on his final journey in 1353 from Morocco to the kingdom of Mali, West Africa and see history unfold before his eyes. Along the way we will gain valuable insights into African and Muslim beliefs of that time and a special focus will be placed on studying the Hajj in all its detail. His travels will provide the larger context for exploring a variety of related topics of particular interest to my young learners including caravan travel by camel, the Tuareg, the hazards of desert travel, and the founder of Mali, Sundiata. Of particular appeal to third-grade students will be the additional unit focus on the very colorful historical figure, Mansa Musa, the great ruler of the flourishing Mali empire (from 1312 to 1337) who was often referred to as 'the Black Moses.' His legendary pilgrimage in 1324 to Mecca by way of Egypt, accompanied by a lavish African entourage, will provide a marvelous opportunity to stimulate student interest in further reading and research. At the unit's end is a Readers Theater play on Sundiata, the founder of the Mali empire.

(Developed for Reading, grade 3; recommended for Reading, grades 3 and up)

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