

Name _____ Date _____

Trade in the Mali Empire

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

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The Library of Alexandria

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Established around 235 BCE, the Library of Alexandria was one of the largest and most important institutions in the ancient world. It was built and maintained by the Ptolemies, a family that ruled ancient Egypt for several centuries. The Ptolemies wanted the library to contain all of humanity's knowledge. They worked to grow its collections by buying, stealing, and copying texts from around the world. At its peak, the library may have held up to half a million documents. It was also home to more than 100 scholars, who lived there full-time to write, lecture, research, and translate texts.

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For centuries, the Library of Alexandria was celebrated as a global center of learning. Then, the unthinkable happened: The library was destroyed. In 48 BCE, an invading Roman army set fire to a fleet of Egyptian boats. The flames spread to the city and burned at least part of the library. From that point on, the library remained in a state of decline. Years later, religious leaders ordered the rest of the library's contents to be burned. Today, almost nothing remains of the library and its priceless archive of ancient knowledge.

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Notes

The Silk Road

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Trade networks have connected cultures around the world for thousands of years. One important route was the Silk Road, which was active from the second century BCE to the 15th century CE. Spanning over 4,000 miles, the Silk Road was an early link between Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Its name refers to one of the route's most prized goods: Chinese-produced silk. In order to buy and sell foreign goods, merchants traveled long distances on horseback or atop camels. Still, few people ever traveled the entire Silk Road. Much of the route was dangerous. It snaked through harsh deserts and steep mountains. Plus, traders had to protect themselves from bandits.

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Silk was not the only product that defined the Silk Road. The Chinese also exported porcelain, tea, and spices. Europeans sent cotton, wool, and glass eastward. Additionally, the Silk Road facilitated cultural exchange. Islam and Christianity spread from the Middle East to Central Asia, while Buddhism arrived in China from India. Not everything that traveled along the Silk Road was positive, however. In the 12th century, the road carried an outbreak of bubonic plague that killed nearly half the European population.

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Deserts

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The desert is one of four land biomes on Earth. A biome is a region characterized by a certain climate and plant and animal life. Deserts are known for being extremely dry. They receive less than 10 inches of rain per year, and any rain that does fall evaporates quickly. All organisms on Earth need water to live. Desert plants and animals have developed special adaptations for getting and holding on to water. Without these adaptations, they would not be able to survive in the hot, dry desert. For example, cacti, the primary plants of the desert, have shallow, sprawling roots that soak up the maximum amount of water from the ground. They can also store water in their rubbery stems. Some desert animals, like kangaroo rats, live underground, where it is cooler than on the surface. Other animals, like camels, evolved to tolerate high temperatures. Camels conserve water by not sweating very much. Still others are able to collect water when it rains. The sandgrouse, a type of bird, can hold up to 25% of its body weight in water in its feathers.

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