

History Grade 7

Term 1

The Kingdom of Mali and the City of Timbuktu in the 14th century

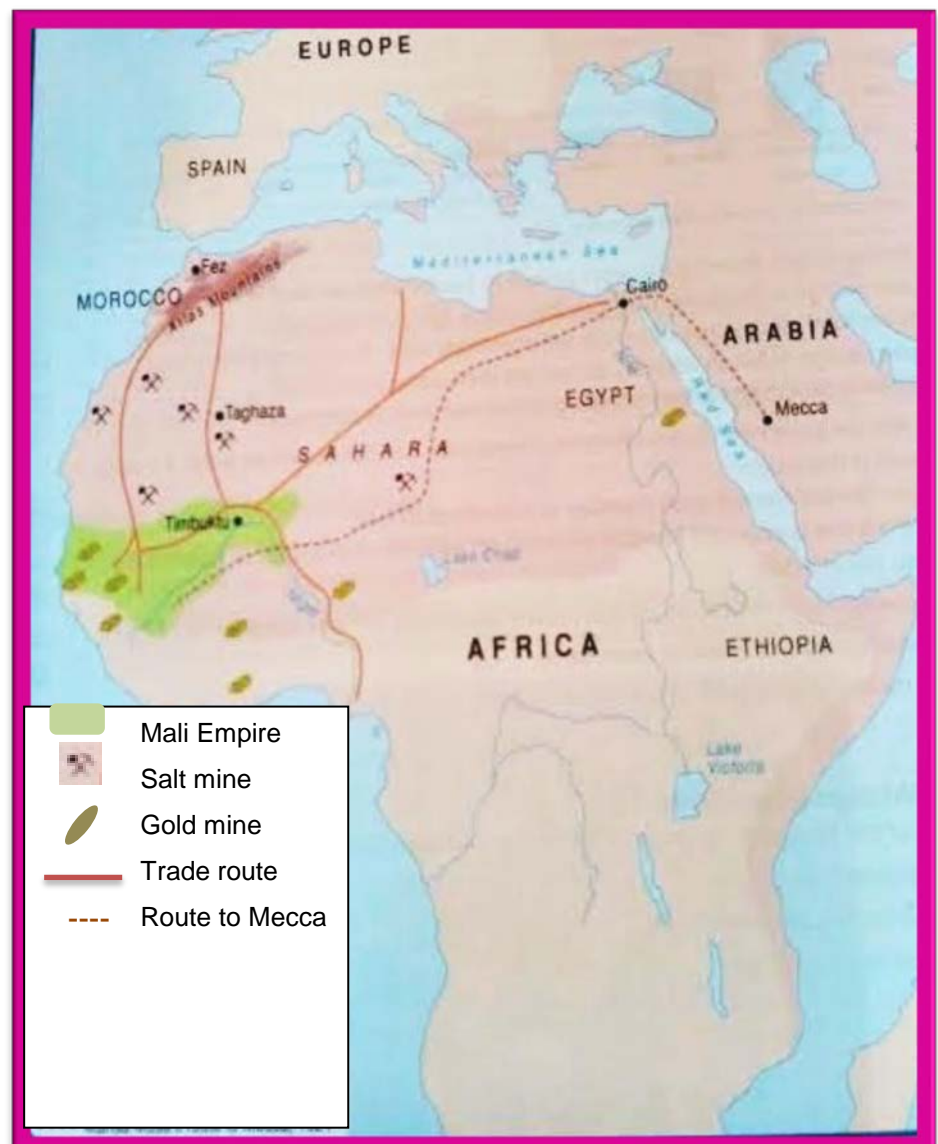
Contents

Section A: Trade across the Sahara Desert.....	2
Activity 1	3
Camel caravans as the means of transport	3
Activity 2	4
Goods traded	4
Activity 3	5
The spread of Islam across North Africa and into West Africa via traders	5
Islam	6
Activity 4: Informal Assessment	7
Complete the worksheet in your exercise book.....	7
Activity 5	7
Section B: The Kingdom of Mali.....	9
Mali, at the height of its power, under Mansa Musa, in the 14th century	9
Mansa Musa's pilgrimage to Mecca (1324-1325)	10
Activity 6	10
Activity 7: Informal Assessment	12
Complete the worksheet in your exercise book.....	12
Construction of the Great Mosque	12
Activity 8	13
Section C: The city of Timbuktu.....	13
Activity 9: Paragraph	14
Leo Africanus's eyewitness stories of his travels	14
Africanus's travels along caravan routes into the Saharan desert and two visits to Timbuktu.....	14
Activity 10	15
Descriptions of Timbuktu in Africanus's book <i>Description of Africa</i> (written in 1550).....	15
Activity 11	16
Timbuktu as a trade centre on the trans-Saharan caravan route	16
Timbuktu as a centre of learning.....	16
Activity 12	17
Timbuktu Manuscripts Project and South African collaboration	18
Timbuktu as a World Heritage Site.....	20
Activity 13	20

Section A: Trade across the Sahara Desert

The Mali kingdom was in the western part of Africa, south of the Sahara Desert. It stretched across West Africa to the Atlantic Ocean. Mali was at the height of its power in the 14th century (1300 – 1399). The Niger River, which is over 4000km long, flowed through the Mali Empire. People travelled long distances between Mali, North Africa, Europe and the Middle East in order to trade.

The trade routes from Timbuktu, in Mali, in the 14th century



Activity 1

Refer to the map on page 2 and answer the following questions:

1. Which river runs through the Mali Empire? (1)
2. Was gold mined in Mali? (1)
3. Draw the symbol for a salt mine. (1)
4. The main trade routes went from Timbuktu to Egypt and _____, in Africa.
(Name the country). (1)
5. Which large desert is found in the northern part of Africa? (1)

Camel caravans as the means of transport

Vocabulary

Camel caravan: a procession of camels travelling together in single file

Navigate: to find the way safely

Camels were used to transport goods and people along the Trans-Saharan trade-route through the Sahara Desert to West Africa.

Most large animals are unable to survive in the Sahara Desert as there is very little water for them to drink, but a camel can go without water for up to nine days.

A camel can carry heavy loads, including people and goods. Camels have broad, flat, leathery pads under each foot. The pads spread when the camel puts its foot on the ground and this stops the foot from sliding and sinking into the sand. They have long eyelashes and bushy eyebrows which protect their eyes during sandstorms. They have large nostrils which open and close and this traps water vapour which returns to their bodies. Their thick fur helps them to cope with harsh weather conditions and changes in body temperature. Camel milk is rich in vitamins and minerals.



Traders travelled across the Sahara Desert in **camel caravans** so they would be safe from attack by robbers. The Sahara is one of the hottest places in the world, and daytime temperatures can be as high as 57° C in the summer. So, camel caravans sometimes travel during the early morning and early evening when it's cooler.

Activity 2

Work in pairs.

1. List 2 to 3 other reasons why the Sahara Desert was one of the most difficult deserts to cross.
2. It is very easy to get lost in the desert. How do you think the people navigated their way through the desert?
3. Where is fat stored in the camel's body?
4. Where is water stored in the camel's body?

Source A

This extract describes the importance of oases (Singular – oasis) for travellers in the Sahara:

Even though there are many oases in the Sahara, the desert is so big that the travellers may go for days to reach them. Without these wet rest stops for humans and animals, crossing the desert would be almost impossible.



Goods traded

In the 14th century, the kingdom of Mali became rich and powerful as a result of the trans-Saharan trade. Sahara trade linked Mali to the Middle East and Europe. From Persia and Arabia, camels carried goods such as rugs, swords, daggers and glass. From India, they carried spices, dyes, cloth and beads. The Arabs would exchange their goods for gold, slaves, ivory, salt and ostrich feathers.



Salt



Gold



Ostrich feathers

Mali was rich in gold. Gold was in great demand in Europe and the Middle East, where it was used to make gold coins to use as money. The king of Mali made profits on gold trade by taxing traders who used trade routes that passed through the Mali Empire.

People cannot survive without salt. In the hot climate of Mali, people and animals need a lot of salt to replace what the body sweats out. Salt is also used to make food taste better and to preserve it. Salt was brought from the salt-rich village of Taghaza, to Mali. Refer to your map on page 2.

Activity 3

Refer to the goods traded in the 14th century.

1. List 5 items from the most important to the least important (this will be your own opinion).
2. Explain why you think the first item is so important.

The spread of Islam across North Africa and into West Africa via traders

Vocabulary

Mansa: king or emperor of Mali

The religion of Islam started in the Middle East in the 7th century. From the 9th century, Arab Muslim traders from the Middle East travelled to West Africa to trade. They brought the religion of Islam to West Africa. Followers of the Islamic religion are called Muslims.



Many West Africans converted to Islam because it enabled them to get better prices when trading with other Muslims. It also gave them the chance to read and write.

Some Muslims played important roles as advisors to African rulers. By 1300 the kings of Mali became Muslims. **Mansa** Musa even made Islam the state religion in the Kingdom of Mali, but still allowed religious freedom.

Islam

- Muslims believe that there is only one God, called Allah.
- Muhammad was not the founder of Islam but he is a significant Prophet in the Islamic faith. Allah sent an angel to teach Muhammad.
- The holy book of Islam is the Koran. Muslims believe that Allah gave the words of the Koran to the Prophet Muhammad.
- The language of the Koran is Arabic.
- The Koran encourages the followers of Islam to spread their religion.
- The building where Muslims worship is called a mosque.
- Muslims must recite prayers, called Salah, five times a day.
- Muslims are required to give a fixed portion of their wealth to help the poor or needy, and also to assist the spread of Islam. This is called Zakat.

Arabic alphabet

خ	ح	ج	ث	ت	ب	أ
kha'	h'aa'	jiim	thaa'	taa'	baa'	alif
ص	ش	س	ز	ر	ذ	د
saad	shiin	siin	zaay	raa'	thaal	daal
ق	ف	غ	ع	ظ	ط	ض
qaaf	feh'	ghayn	'ayn	thaa	Taa'	daad
ي	و	ه	ن	م	ل	ك
yaa'	waaw	haa	nuun	miim	laam	kaaf

Arabic alphabet

Islamic symbol



Activity 4: Informal Assessment

Complete the worksheet in your exercise book.

Sources of information about the past

Vocabulary

Source- something that gives us information about the past

Historians study sources of information to find out how people lived long ago.

There are four different types of sources:

- ▶ **Material sources or artefacts.** These are objects made by people and studied by archaeologists, e.g. buildings



- ▶ **Written sources.** These are books, newspapers and letters that have been written.

- ▶ **Visual sources.** These are photographs, maps and drawings.



- ▶ **Oral sources.** These are stories told by people, songs and poems passed on to other people.

Activity 5

Look at sources A to E on the next page. Complete the table in your exercise book:

1. Tick the correct box for each source.
2. Write down information the source gives us (in the last column). Write the information in your own words.

'Timbuktu, the crossroad where sub-Saharan Africa and the Mediterranean met each other, was not only magnificently rich; it was also a world class centre of learning.'

(Adapted from Gates, Henry Jnr, *Wonders of the African World*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1999, page 112)

Source A: This is written in a history book about Africa.



Source B: This is a drawing of gold traders in Mali long ago.



Source C: These gold coins were used in Mali long ago. They were found by archaeologists.



Source D: A page from a handwritten book in Arabic in the 14th century, from the University of Timbuktu.

'Long, long ago, when Mali was a powerful kingdom, there was a great king named Mansa Musa. He made Timbuktu into the City of Gold. Walk around Timbuktu today, and you can still see the enormous mosque that the king built.'

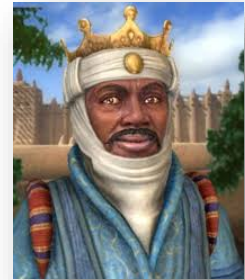
(Adapted from: Marissa Moss. *Tales from Timbuktu*. *National Geographic Explorer* March 2009, p.12)

Source E: Griots talk about the past

Section B: The Kingdom of Mali

Mali, at the height of its power, under Mansa Musa, in the 14th century

Mali was ruled by Mansa Musa between 1312 and 1337. Under Mansa Musa, Mali reached the height of its power. He encouraged people to grow cotton, beans, rice and onions and to mine gold. He became known as 'Musa the Magnificent' and the 'Lion of Mali'. The lion is a symbol of royal power, bravery and strength. His people loved him.



Mansa Musa divided his empire into provinces, each ruled by a governor. Each province consisted of many villages. Each village had a mayor.

During his rule, Mansa Musa funded the building of mosques, centres of learning and libraries.

Mansa Musa ruled during Mali's Golden Age. During his reign he:

- set up a more efficient and stable system of government than any of the earlier kings of Mali.
- maintained his power through taxes. He taxed imports and exports.
- had friendly relationships with other neighbouring African states.
- employed judges, scribes and civil servants to help him strengthen his control of the large empire.
- had a strong army that was able to keep order, so that traders and travellers could move about without fear of attack by robbers.



Kola nuts

Under Mansa Musa there was economic prosperity. Apart from gold, Mali also traded in kola nuts which were in demand in the Middle East and Europe. Cowrie shells became more common as a form of money in Mali.



Cowrie shells

Mansa Musa's pilgrimage to Mecca (1324-1325)

Vocabulary

Pilgrimage: a religious journey to a holy place

Kaaba: a black stone building in Mecca shaped like a cube. This is the most sacred Muslim pilgrim shrine.

Hadj is the Arabic word for the **pilgrimage** to Mecca (in modern Saudi Arabia) to pray at the place where Mohammed went up to heaven. It is the religious duty of every Muslim who can afford it, to go on this pilgrimage.

Mansa Musa made his pilgrimage in 1324 and set off across the desert towards Mecca. He travelled with 60 000 soldiers, officials, merchants, servants and slaves as well as a caravan of about 80 camels, each carrying gifts and about 150kg of gold. They carried large amounts of gold dust. Mansa Musa gave away the gold to the poor he met along his journey. He spent so much money in Egypt that the price of gold fell in Cairo and took a few years to recover.



Wherever he stopped on a Friday, he paid for a mosque to be built. He became famous for how much he spent and his generosity. The journey took a year. Mansa Musa became so famous that, for the first time ever, Mali appeared on maps throughout the Middle East and Europe. He brought back scholars, architects and books back to Mali. The scholars helped to make his empire a centre of learning.

Activity 6

Imagine you have been asked to write a paragraph on Mansa Musa's pilgrimage. Jot down the **key words/ phrases** you will need in order to write your paragraph.

Source A

This extract describes Mansa Musa's reasons for his pilgrimage.

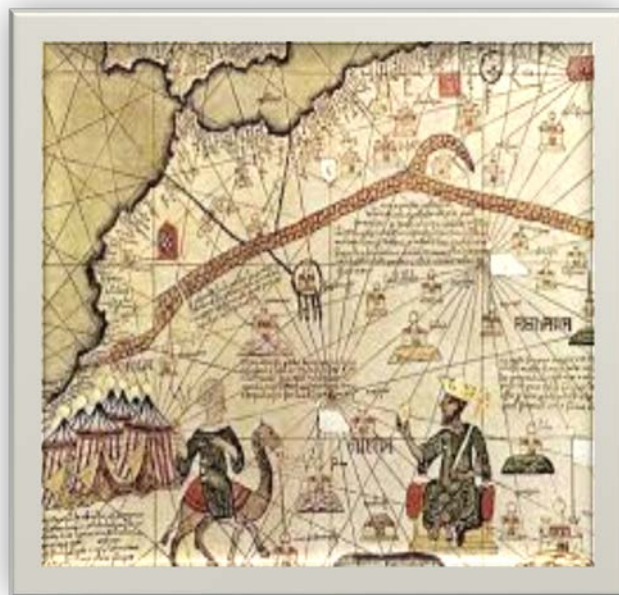
*The faithful approached the city of Mecca. All had the same objective to worship together at the most sacred shrine of Islam, the **Kaaba** in Mecca. One such traveller was Mansa Musa, king of Mali in West Africa. Mansa Musa had prepared carefully for the long journey he and his servants would take. He was determined to travel not only for his own religious*

fulfilment, but also to bring back teachers and leaders, so that his kingdom could learn more of the Prophet's teachings.

(Adapted from Mahmud Kati, *Chronicle of the Seeker of Knowledge*, written in the late 14th century.)



The Kaaba in Mecca



A painting of Mansa Musa on his travels

Activity 7: Informal Assessment

Complete the worksheet in your exercise book.

Construction of the Great Mosque

Vocabulary

Architect: a person who designs buildings

Minaret: the spire or steeple on a mosque

Husks: the dry part covering seeds on a plant

Decays: breaks down

World Heritage Site: a natural or historical site, area or structure which has international importance and needs special protection



Djingareyber Mosque,
in Timbuktu



The Djenne Mosque in Timbuktu

When Mansa Musa returned to Mali from his pilgrimage to Mecca, he ordered a new mosque to be built in the city of Timbuktu. This building was called the Djingareyber Mosque. Mansa Musa wanted to spread the teachings of Islam in Mali.

An Arab **architect** had returned with Mansa Musa to Timbuktu to draw plans for the Djingareyber Mosque. The Djingareyber Mosque is a magnificent building, with two **minarets**. It is made entirely of heat-baked bricks of mud mixed with straw and rice **husks**. The mud is supported by wooden beams. The mud **decays** easily in the summer sun. Therefore people had to add fresh mud between the beams to repair the walls regularly.

There was enough space inside for 2 000 Muslims to pray facing East towards the holy city of Mecca.

The most famous mosque in Mali is the Great Mosque in the city of Djenne. This mosque was first built in the 12th century and rebuilt in 1907. The Mosque still stands today. It is the largest structure in the world to be made entirely out of mud. Both mosques were declared **World Heritage Sites** in 1988.

Activity 8

Look at the pictures of the two mosques on the previous page, carefully.
Tabulate the differences you see between the two mosques.

Section C: The city of Timbuktu

Timbuktu is on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert. The city of Timbuktu was founded in 1100 CE, as a resting camp, and became part of the Mali Empire in the early 13th century. Mansa Musa made it his capital city. In the Golden Age of Mali, the town became the centre of learning as well as a centre of trade.



Timbuktu occupied an important position at the end of the camel caravan route and was near several big salt mines. It was very difficult for people from Europe to get to the city of Timbuktu and they knew very little about the city. They thought Timbuktu was a mysterious

place. It seemed as though it was on the other side of the world and they struggled to imagine what it was like. Traders who went to Timbuktu could tell stories about the place.

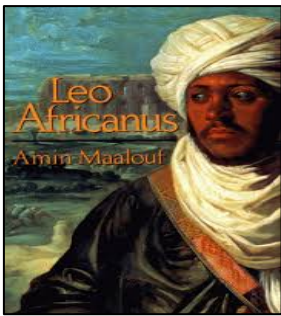
Activity 9: Paragraph

Imagine that you wanted to advertise Mali and Timbuktu to foreign visitors, during Mansa Musa's rule. Write a **paragraph** in which you explain why people should visit the area.

Hint: ▶ What could they **see and enjoy** there to encourage them to visit the area?

- ▶ Select your information from all your notes.
- ▶ Write the paragraph in your own words!

Leo Africanus's eyewitness stories of his travels



Leo Africanus was born in Spain in 1483. He later moved, with his family, and lived in Fez, in Morocco, in North Africa. He worked for the Sultan of Fez. He was a Muslim and his original Muslim name was Al-Hasan al-Wazzan. He was a well-educated traveller. During his travels, he made two visits to Timbuktu from Fez. Later in his life he became a Christian and changed his name to Leo Africanus.

Africanus's travels along caravan routes into the Saharan desert and two visits to Timbuktu

Leo Africanus travelled to Timbuktu twice during the 16th century. He travelled on the trade route as part of a camel caravan through the Sahara Desert. He was one of the few people in the 16th century to travel through Africa and write about it.



A map used by the traveller Leo Africanus

Activity 10

Look at the map above.

1. What do you find strange about this map?
2. Why do you think it is like this?

Vocabulary

Eyewitness: *someone who is present at an event and sees something with his own eye*

Reliable: *accurate or trustworthy*

Descriptions of Timbuktu in Africanus's book *Description of Africa* (written in 1550)

Europeans called Africa the 'dark continent' because they knew very little about it. Leo Africanus later wrote a book about his journeys, titled '*Description of Africa*', which is an **eyewitness** account of his travels. This helped people in Europe learn more about West Africa and its people. He wrote about the large cities and empires, complex cultures and societies.

At the time he visited the city of Timbuktu, it was a thriving Islamic city famous for its learning. It was the centre of busy trade (in local products): gold, printed cotton, slaves and Islamic books.



An **eyewitness** account is not always **reliable**. Historians always ask questions about an eyewitness account, such as who wrote it and why it was written. Historians would have to check what Leo Africanus wrote against other sources to see if he wrote about things as they really were.

Source A: A quote from Leo Africanus' eyewitness description.

The royal court is magnificent and very well organised.

There are no gardens or orchards in the area surrounding Timbuktu.

Leo Africanus, *History and Description of Africa*, translated by John Pory (1896). Originally published in 1600.

Source B: A quote from a book commenting on Leo Africanus' description.

The people of Timbuktu planted agriculture products in the fields outside of the town where the best farm land is located may not have seen these areas because as an important guest the ruler of Timbuktu may have thought them too common a place for Africanus to visit.

De Villiers, M and Hirtle, S Timbuktu: the Sahara's city of gold, Walker and Company. New York, 2007, pg. 161

Activity 11

Read source A and B.

1. What idea do you get about the Mansa of Timbuktu, in source A?
2. What idea do you get about agriculture in Timbuktu, in source A?
3. In what way does source B give a different description of Timbuktu to source A?

Timbuktu as a trade centre on the trans-Saharan caravan route

Timbuktu was a major city in West Africa. It lay across the trans-Saharan trade routes between the salt mines in the north and the gold mines in the south of the Sahara. Timbuktu became a popular trading centre for the whole region and many goods were traded there. Until the discovery of the Americas, Mali was the main producer of gold in the world. Timbuktu was very wealthy because it became the centre for gold trade.

Even though they produced cotton in Timbuktu, the inhabitants also wanted the fine printed fabrics that came from Europe. These goods were transported across the Mediterranean Sea to Morocco in North Africa. The traders would then bring them across the Sahara Desert to Timbuktu. Salt was mined in Taghaza by digging 23kg blocks out of the ground. At one time, salt was worth as much as gold. Salt was very hard to find in other parts of the world at that time.



Timbuktu as a centre of learning

By the 12th century, Timbuktu was a well-known centre of Islamic learning. The wealth created from trade was used. It had 180 schools, teaching the Koran, and three universities, as well as many mosques. The first university in the world was the Sankore University in Timbuktu. The Sankore University is part of the Sankore Mosque. Sankore

was the name of a very wealthy Muslim woman who wanted to do good deeds for other people. She paid for the building of the mosque and university. The university could take about 25 000 students. Scholars came from Saudi Arabia, Europe and other parts of the world. Books became an important business with many people writing books, copying books, making ink, making paper, and illustrating and binding books. Other subjects that were studied include chemistry, physics, optics, medicine, history, geography, the traditions of Islam, government laws and much more.

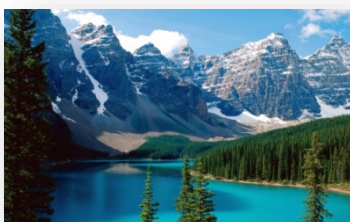
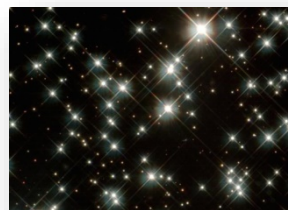
The historic Sankore University



Activity 12

Write the correct definition in the second column for the subjects taught at the university in Timbuktu.

1. Mathematics	A. The past
2. Chemistry	B. Construction
3. Physics	C. Mountains-weather
4. Optics	D. Calculations
5. Astronomy	E. Science
6. Medicine	F. Reaction of chemicals
7. History	G. Designing
8. Geography	H. Stars
9. Engineering	I. Eyes
10. Architecture	J. Health



Timbuktu Manuscripts Project and South African collaboration



Timbuktu Manuscripts showing mathematics and astronomy

Vocabulary

Collaboration: working together

Manuscripts: handwritten books

Legacy: something handed down from the past

Timbuktu was known as a city of books. Islamic scholars brought hundreds of thousands of handwritten **manuscripts** to Timbuktu. Some manuscripts were also written in Timbuktu. These manuscripts became known as the Timbuktu Manuscripts and were written in Arabic. Some of the manuscripts are beautifully decorated with gold and kept in leather covers. These manuscripts prove that Africa has a rich **legacy** of written history.

By the middle of the 16th century, the Golden Age of the Mali Empire came to an end. After Mansa Musa died, the kingdoms of Mali fought against each other. Morocco invaded Mali and took all the wealth and burnt some of the libraries. They killed many scholars or sent them to Morocco.

The Timbuktu Manuscripts began to get lost and fall apart. They were threatened by:

- ▶ pages becoming brittle and falling apart easily
- ▶ insects eating the paper
- ▶ damp weather in Mali's rainy season
- ▶ the selling of manuscripts to tourists for money to buy food.



Fortunately, families in Timbuktu knew these documents were important and hid many manuscripts away - behind walls, down wells and in the sands of the desert. In 1893 the French ruled Timbuktu. In 1960 Mali became an independent republic.

South Africa became very involved in the preservation of the Timbuktu Manuscripts. Former South African president, Thabo Mbeki visited Mali in 2001 and promised to help rescue the manuscripts and educate the world about African history.

Vocabulary

Cataloguing: *organising books and written documents by making lists*

The South Africa-Mali Scrolls Project was started in 2003, which involved the following:

- ∞ collecting, conserving and cataloguing the documents.
- ∞ building a special library to safely store the manuscripts.
- ∞ training researchers and librarians from Mali to look after the manuscripts.
- ∞ studying the manuscripts.
- ∞ making digital copies of all the manuscripts to store on computer.

In 2009 South African architects and engineers helped to build a new library in Timbuktu at the Ahmed Baba Institute. It holds about 300 000 old manuscripts.

The manuscripts are housed at the Ahmed Baba Institute in a building with temperature and humidity controls to provide the correct conditions for preserving the manuscripts.



Timbuktu as a World Heritage Site

Vocabulary

UNESCO - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

- UNESCO encourages countries and people to identify, protect and preserve cultural and natural heritage.
- UNESCO selects places such as forests, mountains, deserts, lakes, monuments, buildings and historical sites (of great importance) as World Heritage Sites.
- World Heritage Sites belong to all the peoples of the world, regardless of the country in which they live.
- In 1988, Timbuktu was declared a World Heritage Site. This means that the interesting past of its architecture and learning will be protected by certain laws for future generations all over the world.

Today, the area where the old Kingdom of Mali used to be located, is one of the poorest regions in the world. In 2012, Mali experienced a civil war. Many of the Timbuktu Manuscripts were destroyed.



Activity 13

Read over your notes on pages 20, 21 and 22 and answer the following questions:

1. Why is the Ahmed Baba Institute a good place for preserving the manuscripts?
2. Why do you think the South African government took a special interest in the project to preserve the Timbuktu Manuscripts?
3. Explain, in your own words, what a World Heritage Site is.
4. Name 5 well known World Heritage Sites found in South Africa. Visit one the following sites to help you if you are unsure:

http://www.places.co.za/html/south_africa_world_heritage_sites.html

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/ZA/>

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