

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
October 31, 2005

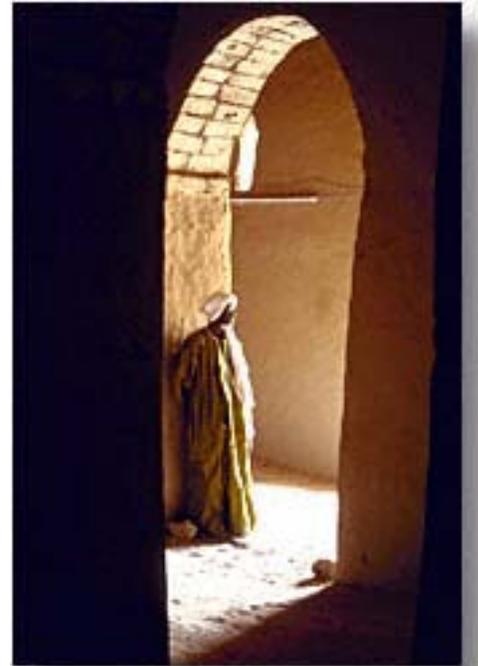
Classwork  
History -

## TIMBUKTU

The section of the Muslim Empire in western Africa became home to some of the greatest minds of the medieval world. The greatest city in this region was Timbuktu, located in what is today Mali. Timbuktu became so wealthy and so beautiful that stories about its glory became popular all over Europe.

Timbuktu is located a few miles to the northeast of the top bend in the Niger river in what is today Mali. The people who live there are from the Songhai ethnic group. Timbuktu became an important trading center on the trans-Saharan trade. People brought gold from the Niger river to Timbuktu where they could trade it for salt with people from Northern Africa.

More importantly, though, Timbuktu became an important center for Islam. Rulers built large mosques (Islamic churches). Famous and brilliant scholars (thinkers), historians, and writers grew up in Timbuktu. Muslims from the rest of the world came to Timbuktu to study. The city became the Harvard of the ancient Islamic world. It contained enormous libraries of Muslim books. And--in the days before the printing press--it had one of the world's largest book copying industries.



The walls outside of Timbuktu

The greatest king of Timbuktu was named Mansa Mousa. In 1324 he decided to make the Hajj (the required pilgrimage to Mecca). This was no ordinary trip, however. He took with him 500 slaves, each with a golden staff, 100 camels carrying 300 pounds of gold, and many scholars with him across the Sahara. On the other side of the desert, Mansa Mousa began giving away all of this gold to people in Egypt.

Mansa Mousa's generosity would one day become a problem. Gold was originally valuable because it was hard to come by. Once everyone had so much gold, it became much less valuable. No one in Egypt was interested in gold for years to come.

**Directions:** Answer each of the questions below in complete sentences.

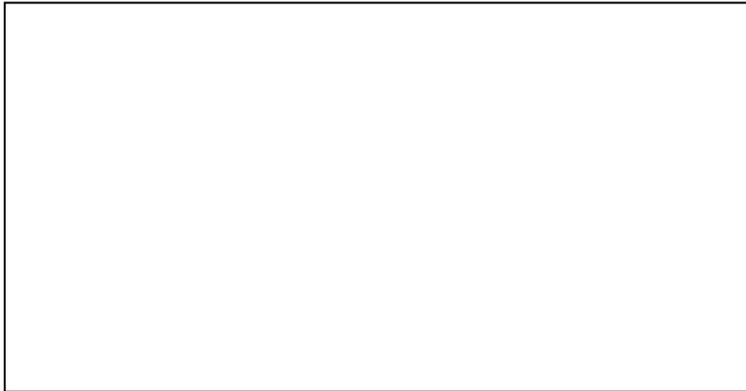
1. Describe the geographic location of Timbuktu: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Explain how Timbuktu was an important economic and intellectual capital of the Muslim empire: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

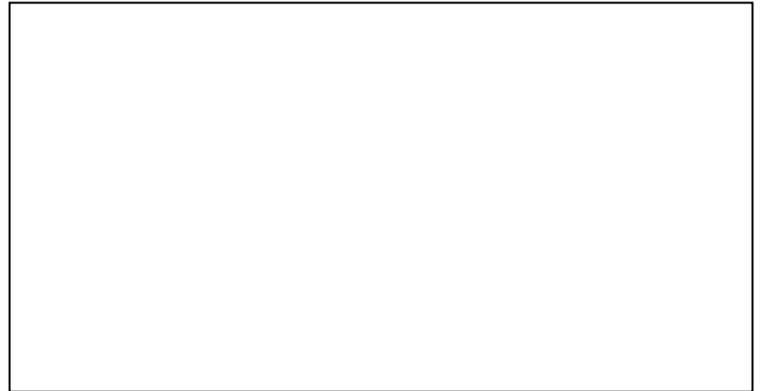
3. What did Mansa Mousa do in 1324? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. In what ways was this Hajj different from a typical Hajj? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Create a sketch in each box to match the description below that box:**



Traders trading their goods in Timbuktu



A large library in Timbuktu



Scribes working at copying Muslim texts



Mansa Mousa on the Hajj