

The Gold and Salt Trade

Answer the following questions about “The Gold and Salt Trade.”

- Which of the following statements is a central idea of the text, rather than a detail?
 - The Sahara can be dangerous to cross on foot.
 - Salt was highly valued in West Africa.
 - Humans require salt to stay healthy.
 - Camels are ideal for hauling goods across deserts.
- List at least two reasons why salt was important in West Africa. **SAMPLE ANSWERS:**
 - Salt is required for human survival.
 - Salt was used to flavor and preserve foods.
- Reread the following sentence from the text: **Gold and salt were so closely linked that some West Africans even used salt as currency.**

Part A: What idea in the text does this sentence emphasize?
Salt was an incredibly valuable trade good.

Part B: Cite two other sentences from the text that support the idea in Part A. **SAMPLE ANSWERS:**
“They understood West Africa’s need for salt and demanded high prices for it.” “So, salt was often traded for gold pound for pound.” “So what precious cargo do the camels carry that makes this risky journey worth it? Salt.” “All people require mineral salt in their diets to stay healthy, and salt has always been valued for flavoring and preserving food.”
- Which of the following sentences belongs in a neutral, or not opinionated, summary of the text?
 - The Sahara has harsh conditions, so people should not travel there.
 - West Africa valued salt because it lacked a reliable source for the mineral.
 - It is surprising that something as common as salt was so valuable.
- Based on the context in the **Trade Makes Empires** section, what does the word **commodities** mean?
 - pack animals
 - caravans
 - preserved foods
 - trade goods
- In your own words, describe the relationship West African empires had with the salt trade.
The Ghana, Mali, and Songhai empires gained wealth by controlling the salt trade. The empires protected salt traders and made money by taxing them.