

MANSA MUSA: KING OF MALI

Mansa Musa was a celebrated king of the Mali Empire. Read some important details of Mansa Musa's life. Then follow the instructions on the next page.

Who was Mansa Musa?

Mansa Musa (also known as Musa Keita) was the most celebrated king of the Mali Empire. He was a devout Muslim who established Mali as the largest Islamic kingdom in western Africa.

When did he live and rule?

Mansa Musa lived from around 1280 CE to 1337 CE. His rule, in the early part of the 14th century, lasted from 1312 CE to 1337 CE.

Where did he live?

Mansa Musa lived in Mali, in the western part of Africa (along Africa's Niger River and south of the Sahara Desert). The Mali Empire existed for over three hundred years (ca. 1235–1600). The Mali Empire was rich in gold and salt and was an important center of global trade.

What did he do?

Mansa Musa established Mali as the most powerful Islamic kingdom in 14th-century Africa. He emphasized the importance of learning by establishing libraries and schools in his capital city, Timbuktu. Mansa Musa maintained wealthy centers of trade throughout Mali using his rich supply of gold deposits.

Why is he important?

Mansa Musa's reign brought great power and prestige to the Kingdom of Mali. In 1324, Mansa Musa made a religious pilgrimage from West Africa to Islam's holy city of Mecca on the Arabian Peninsula. He reportedly traveled with hundreds of elephants and camels, carrying roughly 30,000 pounds of gold. During his pilgrimage, Mansa Musa reportedly spent and gave away so much gold that the value of gold in Egypt and Arabia actually decreased. Mansa Musa became so famous that, in 1375, a Spanish Atlas put his image holding a scepter and a gold nugget on their map of Africa. The text above the image said, "This [lord] is called Musa Mali...So much gold found in his country that he is the richest and most noble king in all the land."

Mansa Musa was also celebrated for his contributions to learning, establishing libraries in Timbuktu, and spreading the teachings of Islam in West Africa.



Detail from a 1375 Catalan Atlas

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Write a news article reporting on Mansa Musa's extravagant 1324 journey from Timbuktu to Mecca. Follow these tips to guide your writing process.

- Create a catchy title.
- Be sure your news article fully explains who Mansa Musa is, where he is from, what he has done, and why making this journey to Mecca is such a big story.
- Use the information from page 1 to add background details to your article. Feel free to do additional research.
- You may also want to include made-up quotations from people who could have witnessed Mansa Musa's journey. Here is an example of how you could weave a creative (but historically believable) quotation into your text. *Mansa Musa's pilgrimage to Mecca passed through Cairo and left a vivid impression on the busy Egyptian city. One bystander commented, "This man [Mansa Musa] spread upon Cairo a flood of generosity. There was no person that did not receive a sum of gold from him."*
