

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Hook Exercise: Developing a Persona**

In this Mini-Q, you will examine several documents and then write six journal entries in the voice of a person who actually went on Mansa Musa's *hajj* (pilgrimage). First, choose the type of traveler you wish to be from the sketches on the following page. Give your traveler a name from the list below. This will be your persona. Then fill out the profile of your persona using the biographical information and your historical imagination. Write in the first person.

EV

**Name Choices**

Kankou (female)      Kunburu (male)  
 Muhammad (male)    Ule (male)  
 Wali (male)          Sogolon (female)  
 Khalifa (male)

**Profile Sheet**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Age at the time of the *hajj* \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Marital status/spouse's name (if married) \_\_\_\_\_

Children (if any) \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for going on the *hajj* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other personal information \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Hook Exercise: Developing a Persona (continued)

### Types of Travelers on Mansa Musa's *Hajj*

#### Ferba

To govern more efficiently, Mansa Musa divided his empire into provinces. Over each province, he appointed a governor called a "ferba." He typically chose relatives or other people he trusted for this position. Ferbas oversaw the day-to-day running of the government. They had to rule according to strict instructions given them by Mansa Musa. Many ferbas went on the *hajj*. Perhaps this was a way to keep them from plotting rebellion during the king's long absence.

#### Griot ("gree-oh")

Mansa Musa and the other officials brought many griots on the *hajj* to serve as oral historians. A griot's job was very hard and took a long time to learn well. Griots had to serve as the living memory for an individual, village, or clan. They combined history, music, poetry, dance, and drama to capture these memories and then entertain their audiences.

#### Muslim Scholar

Scholars went on the *hajj* to offer advice and record observations of the journey. Many scholars were educated in Niani, the capital of Mali, where Mansa Musa had established a mosque and school. Scholars could read and write. They were fluent in both Arabic and various African languages. Scholars gave advice that helped Mansa Musa and his officials in difficult situations. The written observations of scholars became important records once the caravan returned to Mali.

#### Soldier

According to tradition, Mansa Musa kept an army of 100,000 soldiers in his empire. Some of these rode on horseback or camels. Because Mansa Musa carried so much gold on the *hajj*, part of his army went along to protect the caravan. In addition, the size of a ruler's army demonstrated his status. A king as wealthy and powerful as Mansa Musa would never travel without a large armed escort.

#### Slave

Slaves of all ages went on the *hajj*. They might serve Mansa Musa himself or one of his scholars, griots, officials, or doctors. Many slaves had to take care of the camels, and just as many had to carry the gold that Mansa Musa brought with him on the journey. It was unlikely that many slaves could read and write. However, they lived in a society that valued oral history, and they were used to hearing stories from griots. Surely, they would have mentally recorded their thoughts to preserve their own stories and memories.

EV

## Mansa Musa's *Hajj*: Remembering the Journey

In 1324 CE, an enormous **caravan** left Niani, the capital of Mali in West Africa. The sprawling mass of people, pack animals and gear was on its way to Mecca in Arabia, nearly 4,000 miles across the desert. Leading the caravan was the king himself, Mansa Musa. He was a Muslim, and making a *hajj*, or pilgrimage, to Mecca was an important duty of Islam.

We don't know exact details of Mansa Musa's life. West African societies relied greatly on oral history instead of written records. Griots ("gree-ohs"), or storytellers, have passed down West African history through generations. From their stories, we know that a king named Sundiata ("soon-jah-tuh") founded Mali in about 1230 CE. During his rule, Sundiata took control of the region's gold and salt trade. Historians don't know if Sundiata was a Muslim, but his heir and grandnephew, Musa, was. When Musa took the throne around 1312, he received the title of **mansa**, which means "sultan" or "king." He would rule until his death in 1337.

Although the kingdom of Mali was already large, Mansa Musa increased its size. To rule more effectively, he divided his vast empire into provinces. Each had a *ferba*, or governor, who ruled according to Mansa Musa's orders. The griots say Mansa Musa maintained a large standing army to assure his safety and that of his people. Mansa Musa also increased the wealth of Mali, expanding the gold and salt trade and encouraging copper trade with Egypt.

At the peak of his success, in 1324, Mansa Musa set out on his *hajj*. To get to Mecca and back, the pilgrimage had to make two crossings of the **Sahara**, which stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea—an area larger than the continental United States. (The word "Sahara"

means "desert" in Arabic, which is why we don't use the name Sahara Desert.) Compared to the **savanna** they were used to, the Sahara must have been a barren and terrifying landscape to the pilgrims on the *hajj*.

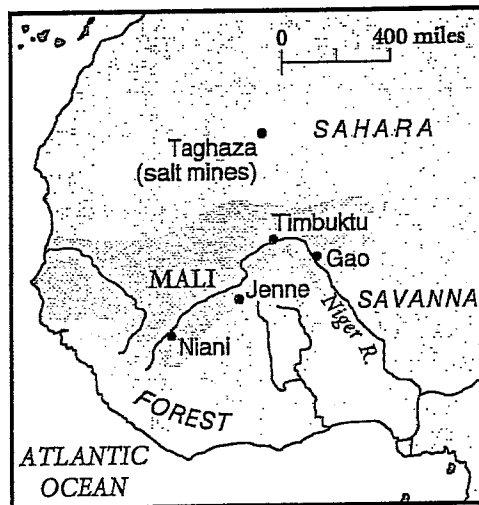
Stories passed down by griots say that as many as 60,000 people accompanied Musa on this journey, a number that is probably high. Nonetheless, for years after the *hajj*, stories about the great journey spread through Africa, Arabia, and Europe. Today much of our knowledge comes from a handful of Arabic writers

and travelers who crossed paths with Mansa Musa in Cairo or who visited Saharan trade towns a few years after the *hajj* passed through. Two of these accounts are included in this Mini-Q.

You now have a chance to become part of this historic caravan. Using the voice of the traveler you chose in the Hook Exercise, record your thoughts about

the journey. The documents that follow will provide material for the six journal entries you will write. Be creative, but be factual, too. Try your best to see the journey through the eyes of your character. For example, a slave might react differently than a *ferba* to the long hard journey, and the two might experience different degrees of hardship based on their status.

It is just after dawn on the day of departure. Morning prayers are finished, and the camels are bellowing. Are you ready to leave? You are nervous, but excited, too. It's an honor to travel with the king on this important religious journey. You hope that **Allah** guides you safely to Mecca and back. In the meantime, you will do your best to record everything that happens along the way.



EV

## Document A

Source: Chart compiled from various sources.

Note: Many of these numbers are rough estimates drawn from oral history and a few written records.

Mansa Musa's *Hajj* by the Numbers

EV

Number of people on the <i>hajj</i>	60,000
Number of slaves who were Mansa Musa's personal servants	12,000
Number of slaves who carried gold	500
Number of miles traveled from Niani to Mecca	4,000
Time it took to cross Mali on a donkey	4 months
Number of camels	1,000
Number of camels to carry gold	80-100
Amount of gold on each camel	100-300 pounds
Distance a camel can travel without water	100 miles
Distance a loaded camel can travel in a day	20-25 miles
Total amount of gold (for alms giving, gifts, salaries, supplies)	24,000 pounds
People in the caravan (in addition to Hook Exercise personae)	musicians, royal guards, flag bearers, doctors, teachers

## Document Analysis

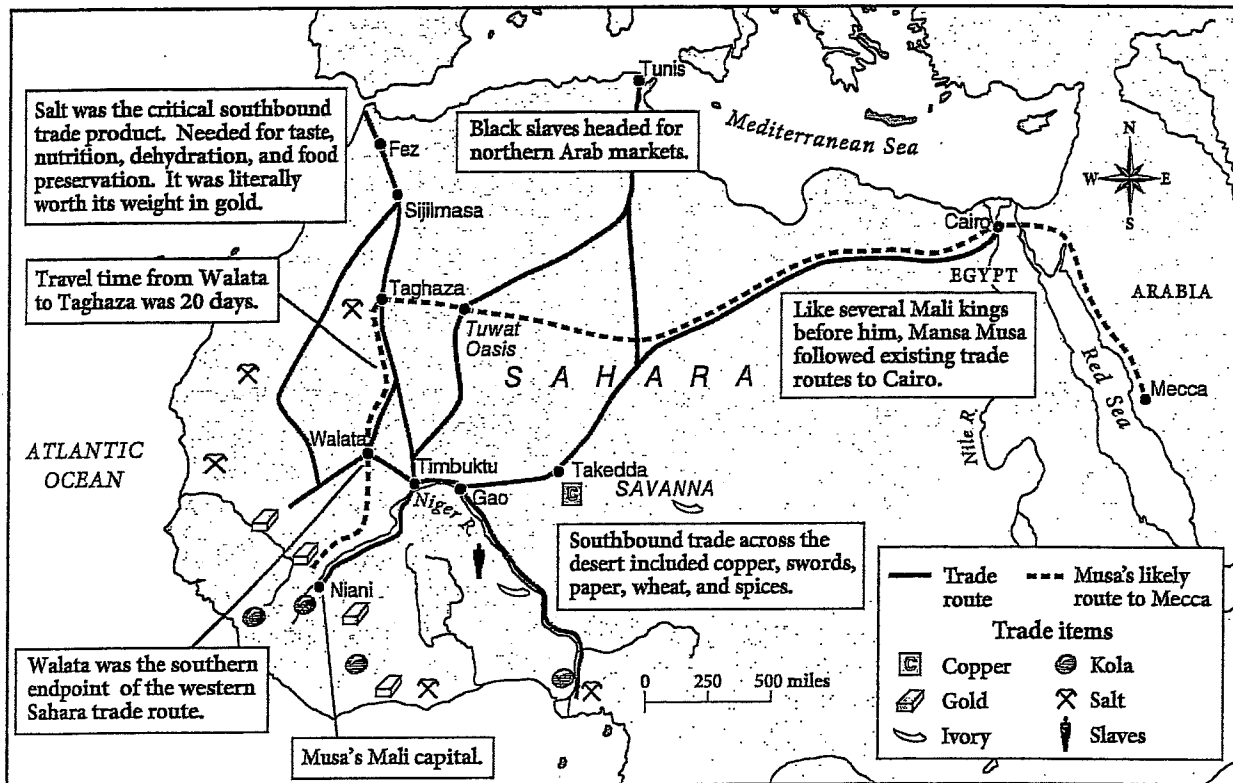
1. What percentage of travelers on the *hajj* were Mansa Musa's personal servants?
2. Why are you (that is, your persona) going on this journey? What possible benefits may result?
3. What information might worry you about traveling on the *hajj*?
4. Which of the numbers in this chart might be exaggerations? Explain your thinking.

## Writing Journal Entry #1: Label your entry "Niani, January, 1324, Morning."

It is early on the day you are to set off on the *hajj* with Mansa Musa. The number of travelers and animals is staggering. You will be following the trade route headed northeast across the grasslands to Walata, a good 600 miles away. You move to your position near the head of the caravan. What are your thoughts as you wait to leave? What do you see around you? hear? smell? Be sure to include references from the document to support your writing.

## Document B

Source: Map created from various sources.



## Document Analysis

- About how many miles was it from:
  - Niani to Walata?
  - From Walata to Taghaza?
  - From Taghaza to Tuwat?
  - From Tuwat to Cairo?
- What is your estimate on the time it would take Mansa Musa's caravan to travel from Niani to Cairo? How did you reach your estimate?
- What is meant by the statement, "Salt was worth its weight in gold"?

## Writing Journal Entry #2: Label your journal entry "Walata, February, 1324, Morning."

The caravan now stretches several days ahead of you and several days behind. Thank Allah for the water in this oasis town. Your next leg to Taghaza will be across waterless desert, and the water supply is critical. Luckily, the rainy season is beginning, although rainfall will be spotty at best. You are impressed by the trade activity in town. Blacks from the Sudan to the south meet with Berbers from northern Africa to exchange their goods. You sit in the shade of a date palm to record your thoughts and impressions.

## Document C

Source: Ibn Battuta, *Rihla*, 1356. (*Rihla* means "journey" in Arabic.)

**Note:** Some historians believe that, after leaving Walata, Mansa Musa's *hajj* made the difficult trip north to Taghaza. We have no record of Mansa Musa's stay in Taghaza, but we do have a description of the place from the famous Arab scholar and traveler Ibn Battuta (ib-n ba-tu-tah), who visited Taghaza in 1352. This is 28 years after Mansa Musa would have passed through.

EV

This is a village with nothing good about it. One of its marvels is that its houses and its mosque are of rock salt and its roofs of camel skins. It has no trees, but is nothing but sand with a salt mine. They dig in the earth for the salt, which is found in great slabs lying one upon the other as though they have been shaped and placed underground. A camel carries two slabs of it. Nobody lives there except the slaves of the Masufa who dig for the salt. They live on the dates imported to them [from Morocco] and on camel meat.... The Sudan [black peoples from the gold-producing forest lands to the south] come to them from their land and carry the salt away. One load of it sold at the city of [Niani] for 30 or 20 mithqals [of gold].

The Sudan use salt for currency as gold and silver is used. They cut it into pieces and use it for their transactions. Despite the meanness [desolation] of the village of Taghaza they deal with [quantity] upon [quantity] of gold there.

We stayed there for ten days, under strain because the water there is brackish [salty]. It is the most fly-ridden of places.

## Document Analysis

1. What does Ibn Battuta think of Taghaza? Why would anyone live there?
2. What reasons might explain why the people of the Sudan were willing to trade large quantities of gold for salt?
3. Why would Mansa Musa choose a route to Mecca that took him through Taghaza?

**Writing Journal Entry #3:** Label your journal entry "Taghaza, March, 1324, dusk."

As you make camp in Taghaza, you hear grumblings in the *hajj*. Questions are being asked about the route taken north. Aren't there other ways to get across the Sahara? You are both intimidated and fascinated by this town literally made of salt. What do you think of it? How do *you* feel about the route the *hajj* has taken?

## Document D

**Source:** Verses from the Qur'an, the Muslim holy book.

**Note:** Although Mansa Musa was a Muslim, he did not require his citizens to be Muslims. Most historians believe this was because many people in the empire still practiced traditional African religions; Islam was the religion of traders and the court. Many of the slaves and soldiers on the trip were likely not Muslim and would not have made the final trek from Cairo to Mecca. For Mansa Musa, however, the verses below would have had great meaning.

EV

Give generously for the cause of God and do not with your own hands cast yourselves into destruction. Be charitable. God loves the charitable. **2:195**

Make the pilgrimage [*hajj*] and visit the Sacred House for His sake. If you cannot, send such offerings as you can afford and do not shave your heads until the offerings have reached their destination. . . . **2:196**

Make the pilgrimage in the appointed months. He that intends to perform it in those months must abstain from...obscene language, and acrimonious [angry] disputes while on pilgrimage. God is

aware of whatever good you do. Provide well for yourselves: the best provision is piety [devotion to faith]. Fear Me, then, you that are endowed with understanding. **2:197**

To be charitable in public is good, but to give alms [gifts of charity] to the poor in private is better and will atone for some of your sins. God has knowledge of all your actions. **2:271**

Those that give alms by night and by day, in private and in public, shall be rewarded by their Lord. They shall have nothing to fear or to regret. **2:274**

## Document Analysis

1. According to the verses, why must the *hajj* be completed? Whom are the pilgrims looking to please?
2. What type of personal behavior is expected on the *hajj*?
3. According to the verses, why should Muslims give alms?
4. What does verse 2:271 suggest about those who give alms publically?
5. We know from Document A that Mansa Musa was carrying great quantities of gold. Do these lines from the Qur'an suggest what that gold might be used for?

**Writing Journal Entry #4:** Label your entry "Tuwat Oasis, April, 1324, Evening."

You have traveled more than 1,500 miles with the caravan. Today as you journeyed, you overheard several pilgrims discussing what the Qur'an teaches about the duties that Muslims must perform. You sit down to record your experiences and thoughts about the *hajj* so far. How do you think this journey relates to the teachings of Islam? Be sure to include references from the document to support your writing.

## Document E

Source: Al-Umari, *Masalik al-Absar*, 1337-1338.

**Note:** Al-Umari was an Arab scholar and the son of a Cairo official. He did not meet Mansa Musa when the *hajj* arrived in Cairo in December 1324, but several years afterward he interviewed people who had. He included their observations in his encyclopedia *Masalik-al-Absar*, excerpted below.

From the beginning of my coming to stay in Egypt I heard talk of the arrival of this sultan Musa on his Pilgrimage and found the Cairenes [people of Cairo] eager to recount what they had seen of the Africans' prodigal [wasteful] spending. I asked the emir Abu ... and he told me of the opulence [luxury; extreme wealth], manly virtues, and piety of his sultan [king]. "When I went out to meet him, that is, on behalf of the mighty [Egyptian] sultan al-Malik al-Nasir, he did me extreme honour and treated me with the greatest courtesy.... Then he forwarded to the royal treasury many loads of unworked native gold and other valuables. I tried to persuade him to go up to the Citadel to meet the sultan, but he refused persistently saying: 'I came for the Pilgrimage and nothing else. I do not wish to mix anything else with my Pilgrimage.' He had begun to use this argument but I realized

that [meeting the sultan] was repugnant to him because he would be obliged to kiss the ground and the sultan's hand. I continued to cajole him and he continued to make excuses but the sultan's protocol demanded that I should bring him into the royal presence, so I kept on at him till he agreed..."

This man [Mansa Musa] flooded Cairo with his benefactions [gifts]. He left no court emir nor holder of a royal office without the gift of a load of gold. The [people of Cairo] made incalculable profits out of him and his suite in buying and selling and giving and taking. They exchanged gold until they depressed its value in Egypt and caused its price to fall.... This has been the state of affairs for about twelve years until this day by reason of the large amount of gold which they brought into Egypt and spent there.

EV

### Document Analysis

1. Whom does al-Umari quote in this account?
2. How did Mansa Musa treat his Cairo hosts?
3. What did Mansa Musa say when asked to meet with the sultan of Cairo? Might there have been another reason for his refusal?
4. How did Mansa Musa's actions affect the Egyptian economy and currency?

### Writing Journal Entry #5: Label your journal entry "Cairo, July, 1324, Afternoon."

You arrived in Cairo this morning and the city was abuzz with activity and excitement. There are rumors swirling that Mansa Musa will not meet with the local sultan. Meanwhile, great amounts of gold are being given to the people of Cairo. How do you feel about the excitement surrounding your visit? What are your thoughts about how much gold is being distributed? Take a few moments to write your thoughts in your journal.



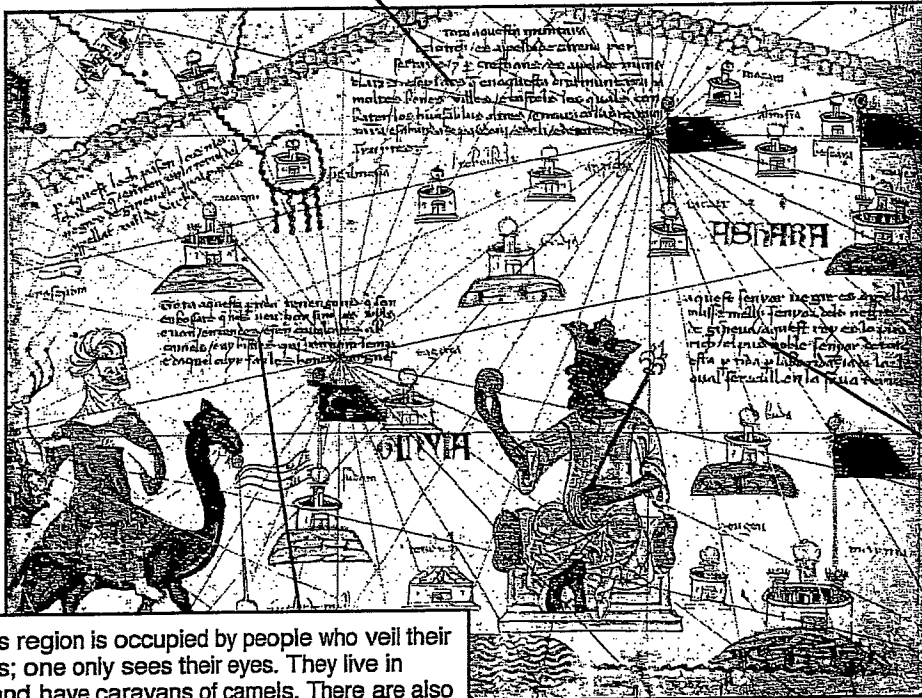
## Document F

Source: The Catalan Atlas, courtesy of the French National Library, 1375.

Note: The Catalan Atlas is a medieval map of the known world drawn in 1375 by Abraham Cresques, a Jewish mapmaker from Majorca, a Mediterranean island off the coast of Spain. He had never been to West Africa. Rather, he relied on the stories of travelers to make the illustrations and write the captions that appear on the map.

EV

"Through this place pass the merchants who travel to the land of (Mali)."



"This Negro lord is called Musa Mali, lord of all the Negroes of (the region of Mali). So abundant is the gold which is found in his country that he is the richest and most noble king in all the land."

"All this region is occupied by people who veil their mouths; one only sees their eyes. They live in tents and have caravans of camels. There are also beasts called Lemp from the skins of which they make fine shields."

## Document Analysis

1. Describe the image of Mansa Musa seen on the map. What does he look like? What is he wearing? What is he holding?
2. How is Mansa Musa described in the caption to the right?
3. What important aspect of life in Mali is referenced in the top and bottom captions?
4. What might Europeans think about western Africa after viewing The Catalan Atlas?

**Writing Journal Entry #6:** Label your journal entry "Niani, October, 1375, Evening."

It has been over 50 years since your journey as part of Mansa Musa's historic *hajj*. As you gather some special belongings to pass along to your grandson, you discover the personal journal that you kept during the journey. Reflecting on that time and the recently published and very popular Catalan Atlas that described the *hajj*, you decide to write a final entry. Did the journey turn out the way you hoped? Was it worth the time and money it cost? What was the lasting significance of Mansa Musa's journey? Record your thoughts in your journal.

# From Thesis to Essay Writing

---

## Mini-Q Journal Outline Guide

**Directions:** List three details from each document that will go into your journal entry.

### Journal Entry #1

Niani, January, 1324, morning

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Journal Entry #2

Walata, February, 1324, morning

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Journal Entry #3

Taghaza, March, 1324, dusk

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Journal Entry #4

Tuwat, April, 1324, evening

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Journal Entry #5

Cairo, July, 1324, afternoon

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Journal Entry #6

Niani, October, 1375, evening

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

EV

*Rough Draft*  
**Guided Essay: Mansa Musa's *Hajj*: A Personal Journal**

**Entry #1:** Niani, January, 1324, morning

One cannot imagine the excitement of the day. We depart Niani this early morning, a mighty caravan of 1000 camels, ...

**Entry #2:** Walata, February, 1324, morning

It has taken a month but here we are in Walata, one month after leaving Niani. The huge Sahara sprawls before us...

**Entry #3:** Taghaza, March, 1324 dusk

Oh, my goodness. The flies! There are grumblings throughout the camp. What a forsaken place is Taghaza...

**Entry #4:** Tuwat Oasis, April, 1324, evening

Finally, there is time to spend with my Qur'an. It is so easy to get caught up in the hubbub of thousands of pilgrims moving across the desert. I sometimes forget why we are making the hajj. In this regard, it is written in the Qur'an that...

**Entry #5:** Cairo, July, 1324 afternoon

Part of our caravan arrived yesterday morning in Cairo. The city is almost crazy with joy. I think they have heard that our king Mansa Musa is traveling with great amounts of gold. Rumor is that...

**Entry #6:** Niani, October, 1375, evening

It is forty years since the great hajj. I am an old man but must add these last words to my diary...