



# **MALI: ELEMENTARY LESSON PLANS**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b><i>Mali: Elementary Lesson Plans</i></b> .....	<b>0</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>0</b>
<b>Lesson 1 – Journey To Mali</b> .....	<b>2</b>
Lesson 1 – Activity 1: Here Today, Gone to Mali .....	2
Lesson 1 – Activity 2: A Day in the Life... ..	3
Lesson 1 – Activity 3: To Market to Market.....	5
Lesson 1 – Activity 4: King for a Day .....	6
Materials .....	6
Lesson 1 – Activity 5: The Village Voice.....	8
Lesson 1 – Activity 6: Little by Little the Bird Builds Its Nest.....	9
<b>Lesson 2 – Lion King of Mali Character Study</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Objectives and Goals .....	10
Materials .....	10
Procedure .....	10
<b>Lesson 3 – Mali Cause and Effect</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Lesson 4 – Third Grade History Check-It Spreadsheet</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Map Of Mali</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Objectives and Goals .....	11
Materials .....	11
Procedure .....	12
<b>Story Scenes From Sundiata</b> .....	<b>12</b>
Objectives and Goals .....	12
Materials .....	12
Procedure .....	13



# LESSON 1 – JOURNEY TO MALI

By: Mary Alice Liscomb, Returned Peace Corps Mali Volunteer, Third Grade Teacher for Page County Public Schools

Standards of Learning History and Social Science 3.4 (2015) – The students will describe the oral traditions (storytelling), government (kings), and economic development (trade) of the early West African empire of Mali.

## Lesson 1 – Activity 1: Here Today, Gone to Mali

### *Objectives*

- Students will participate in a suitcase packing activity to prepare for an imaginary journey to Mali by choosing items they may need on the trip.
- Students will explore Malian geographic features as well as cultures and daily living practices through viewing pictures from the Gallery on the Mali Web site.
- Students will discuss items to include in a suitcase and decide whether or not the objects would be useful on a journey to Mali and how each might be needed.
- Students will record experiences through creative writing activity in a student-made travel journal.

### *Materials*

Globe, maps of the continent of Africa and the country of Mali, a travel journal for each student (the covers could be made from cardboard and cut out to resemble a suitcase), pictures from the Mali Web site, Library resource books, and a computer.

### *Method*

Before beginning the Mali unit, share with the students that they will be taking a virtual journey to this fascinating West African country and that they need to prepare for the trip. Review various types of maps of the country of Mali and have students generate ideas about the geography, vegetation, animal life, cultural lifestyles, and day-to-day living in Mali. Have them look for resources about Mali on the computer, in the library, and at home. Students should bring in any information or items they find that relate to their upcoming Malian adventure. Items could be put on a travel display bulletin board in the classroom. Students could also introduce their items by making a commercial about Mali or a brochure. Now students are prepared to explore Mali!

First, give the students travel journals and have them draw 10 items on the cover that would be useful on their journey to Mali.

Then, share Mali photos from the Web site with students and discuss the images. Make a class list of geographic features, natural resources, animal and plant life, and day-to-day living practices observed in the photos. One way to do this is to divide the students into small groups,

assigning each with their own color of marker. Take poster paper and put one of the four main topics listed above on each sheet. Hang posters in the four corners of the classroom. Next, have the groups rotate from poster to poster writing down the information that they learned about each topic with their specific color of marker. Student groups should be allowed about five minutes per poster and the teacher will give the rotation signal when time is up. When each group has had an opportunity to record information about the four topics, bring the posters to the front of the room and share the information.

Since the responses were color coordinated, you will be able to see the input from each of the groups.

Next, have the students look back at the cover of their suitcase journals and decide which items would be useful on the trip to Mali. Students should circle the top five items they have drawn that would be useful.

Finally, have the students write about the five items they circled on their suitcase covers and how they plan to use each one on the journey. Discuss various entries as a class and review images of Mali.

### *Evaluation*

Classroom discussion, participation, journal entry, and student pictures.

## **Lesson 1 – Activity 2: A Day in the Life...**

### *Objectives*

- Students will explore everyday life in Mali.
- Students will learn how the people of Mali have adapted to their environment by participating in some of the daily routines practiced there.
- Students will record experiences through creative writing activities in their travel journals.

### *Materials*

Pictures from the Mali Photo Gallery (this Web site) printed individually on pieces of paper, travel journals, teapots, scarves, sieve, smooth stones, a bag of birdseed, poster paper, and markers.

### *Method*

Before the lesson, briefly review the photos from Web site and discuss how the environment of Mali plays a role in the attitudes and lifestyles of its people.

Next, introduce some of the day to day chores that would be practiced by children living in a Malian village similar to the one in the photos.

## Sample day-to-day chores . . .

- **Water Resource Management**
  - Fill a teapot or similar size container with water and have the students use various measuring devices to figure out the volume of water in the container. Next, tell the students that a typical Malian would only have that amount of water to use for bathing and washing each day. To help the students further understand the scarcity of water as a natural resource, have them walk, possible at recess, for five minutes with an empty bucket on their head ( see item number 4 Steady Heads) and tell them that the distance from a water source in a typical Malian village is about this distance. Discuss the importance of water and how the environment in Mali plays a role in the availability of this precious resource. Challenge the students to conserve water both at home and at school.
- **Scarcity of Wood**
  - Show the students the Sahara desert on a map of West Africa and talk to them about the concept of deforestation (clearing the land of trees) and how the depletion of the forests in Mali is causing the desert to grow. Discuss how the forests and trees are important as a natural resource. Next, have the students point out all of the various items in the classroom that are made of wood as well as objects they see at home and other places. Take away the students' chairs for five minutes and let them know that a typical Malian school does not have chairs or desks. Children who are lucky enough to be able to attend school either sit on the dirt floor of the classroom or carry a stool from home each day to school. Stools are small chunks of wood with four small legs and only wealthy families would have these. Wood is a scarce commodity in Mali and so children and adults as well squat by resting their elbows on their knees when they need to sit. Paper, pencils, and books are also in short supply in a typical Malian village so have the students try using charcoal on some recycled paper (like a cement bag) to get the full effect. Also, all lessons are copied directly from the chalkboard (students do not have textbooks) so have the students spend time day copying everything they do from the board.
- **Right is Right**
  - Explain to the students that the right hand is the only hand that is ever used in Mali to conduct business. The left hand, if offered to shake or used to eat with, is considered dirty and rude. When you are out in public or at home with your family the right hand should be the only hand ever offered to touch something or someone. Have the students try to spend the day using only their right hand for everything.
- **Steady Heads**
  - In Mali, heavy items are typically carried on the top of a person's head as opposed to in one's arms. This is a cultural tradition of many of the ethnic groups in Mali who are nomadic and travel long distances on foot. When done correctly, it actually distributes the weight of the objects being carried evenly and is better on the back. Have the students try this out. Let them make a nest out of a scarf on

the tops of their heads first to provide a bit of padding, and then they may experiment carrying various items on top of atop of their heads.

- **Millet Mush**
  - Explain to the students that the harsh climate of Mali as well as the lack of significant rainfall limits the types of food that can be grown. Show them the millet balls from the birdseed mixture and tell them that this is the primary crop grown for people. If the students are willing, have them practice preparing the Malian staple food called to (tow).
  - After you share some of these activities with your students and allow them to experience Malian living firsthand, have them each choose a picture from the photos of Mali and write about it in their travel journals. The students should pretend to be the person in the photo or at the exact place where the photo was taken in their entries. Have them describe where they are and what they are doing.
  - In closing, have students compare the Malian lifestyle they have experienced to their own. Make a Venn diagram pointing out likes and differences. If time allows, have the students write down their daily routines and look for environmental reasons they perform certain tasks.

### *Evaluation*

Participation in Malian activities, travel journal entry, and Venn diagram.

## **Lesson 1 – Activity 3: To Market to Market**

### *Objectives*

- Students will identify early Mali as a wealthy trading empire.
- Students will participate in a bartering activity to appreciate the early trading practices of Mali.
- Students will record experiences through a creative writing activity in their travel journals.

### *Materials*

Maps of West Africa, poster paper, markers, recycled materials for market preparation, glue, scissors, salt, gold wrapping paper, and travel journals.

### *Method*

Locate on a map the approximate early Empire of Mali and point out that it lay across the trade routes between the sources of salt in the Sahara Desert and the gold region/mines of West Africa. Have students work in small groups to create maps of this ancient empire, gluing on salt and golden wrapping paper scraps where necessary. For the people of the desert, salt was a natural resource. People used salt for their health and for preserving foods. Miners found gold in Western Africa. Therefore, salt was traded for gold. Review this essential knowledge with

students and have them discuss why each item is valuable and how much of each should be traded to make a fair deal.

Next, make a class list of natural resources that are available in your local community. Have the students prioritize the list in their travel journals by copying down the items in order from the most to the least important to them.

Next, compare the early West African Empire of Mali to the Mali of today. What are the resources available today? Tell the students that since Mali is no longer rich with natural resources; the markets of Mali are currently filled with items that have been hand crafted out of recycled materials.

Ask the students to bring in some old containers, towel rolls, cereal boxes, and other objects they would normally throw away for a market project. When enough recycled goodies have been collected, let the students choose three or four items from the pile and come up with a plan to transform their trash into a useful treasure. Upon completion of the projects, let the students have a Malian market bartering experience. If you want to make the market experience authentic, be sure to insist that the students bring in towels to sit on and conduct their business from the floor. You can also let your students know that West Africa is filled with many languages--27 alone in Mali--so that creating a market language complete with hand signs and guttural clicks is essential in order for everyone to understand each other.

### *Evaluation*

Travel journal entry, physical map of West African trade route, and market participation.

## **Lesson 1 – Activity 4: King for a Day**

### *Objectives*

- Students will explore the early West African Empire of Mali and its government.
- Students will participate in a village meeting to appreciate roles and responsibilities of various members of the Malian society.
- Students will record experiences through creative writing activities in their travel journals.

### **Materials**

Travel journals, drum, computer access, and library.

### *Method*

Have students research Sundiata, the Lion King of Mali, and create a list of characteristics for the role of a king.

Next, have them create a job description for an advertisement in the newspaper listing the various responsibilities involved in being king of the wealthy empire of Mali. Review and



reemphasize how the location of Mali (between the sources of salt in the Sahara Desert and the gold region/mines of West Africa) made it an important trade center. The kings of Mali needed to be strong and powerful men to be able to control the trade in West Africa.

Have the students collect newspaper job listings and redistribute so that students receive a different one from their own. Have the students respond to the advertisement they received by writing a resume listing experiences they have had or qualities that they possess that make them perfect for the job of king of Mali.

Next, talk about the roles of other people who lived in the Malian Empire and what their responsibilities may have been. Compare these people and their jobs to your classroom jobs. Talk about your classroom meetings and cooperative group project assignments. Are there certain responsibilities designated to each member?

Tell the students that they will be participating in a village meeting similar to the ones held in Malian communities both past and present. Have students brainstorm to create a list of topics that would be important to discuss in this setting (either past or present) based on what they have learned about Mali. Let them know that in a Malian village meeting, each member has a specific job to do and that failing to follow the rules can be costly.

#### Members of a Malian Community

1. Village Chief: Similar to the role of the king. Responsibilities include decision making and the final word on topics of discussion.
2. Drummer: Calls people to the meeting. If the villagers fail to show up on first drum call, they must pay the village chief cola nuts (show pictures of cola nuts). If villagers fail to show up on second drum call, they must pay money to the village chief. If the villagers fail to show up by the third and final call, they must suffer a punishment.
3. Treasurer: Collects dues at the meetings if the village is in need of something. Collects penalty fees and cola nuts for village chief.
4. Griot: Records information from the meeting in his head, and repeats it to the group sometimes in the form of a poem, song, or theatrical production.
5. Elderly Men: Sit with the village chief and act as his advisors. The village chief shares his cola nuts with these men.
6. Young Men: Sit around the outskirts of the meeting to listen only. They have not yet earned the right to speak.
7. Group of people with problems or concerns who seek advice and counsel from the village chief.
8. Women: Stay at home and do not attend village meetings unless they are involved with a group of people with problems or concerns who seek advice and counsel from the village chief.

Assign various positions and conduct a village meeting with the students. Discuss the various roles and responsibilities after the meeting has been held and record events of the meeting, as a poem or song like the Griot, in travel journals.

### *Evaluation*

Newspaper advertisements and resume responses, participation in village meeting, and Griot entry in travel journals.

## **Lesson 1 – Activity 5: The Village Voice**

### *Objectives*

Students will identify the important role of Griots as storytellers in Mali and their responsibility to pass on traditions from one generation to the next.

Students will recognize that most of what we know about Mali's history comes from oral accounts that were handed down from generation to generation.

Students will record experiences through creative writing activities in their travel journals.

### *Materials*

Travel journals, recycled materials appropriate for mask making, glue, and scissors.

### *Method*

Ask the students if they have any family traditions centered around a special event. Have the students record a family tradition in their travel journals. Talk about these personal traditions as well as the various holidays we celebrate in the United States and their historical significance.

Explain that, in Mali, historical events and special occasions are honored as well. The role of the Griots, or storytellers, in Mali is to preserve the history of this country by passing on its traditions with oral accounts. These accounts can be in the form of a song, a poem, or a riddle. The responsibility of the Griot to collect, record, and share information with his fellow villagers was important to the early empire of Mali and is still valued today as a means to preserve the history and customs of this country.

Griots not only share oral accounts of historical events, but they initiate the celebration of yearly activities such as the planting and harvesting seasons as well. They will sometimes present their stories in the form of a theatrical drama and have the villagers dress up to represent certain characters. The villagers wearing the masks will not have any speaking parts; they will merely act out the motions and emotions of the story. The Griot always narrates these productions and is the only one allowed to speak. The job of the Griot is well respected and is passed down each generation from the Griot to his oldest son.

Discuss the responsibilities of the Griots in Mali and have the students work in small groups to research a historical event or a holiday they would like to present to the class. Next, have the students create masks out of the recycled materials to act out their accounts. Don't forget to include the Griot, or narrator, in these productions.

### *Evaluation*

Travel journal entries and group work for storytelling activity.

## **Lesson 1 – Activity 6: Little by Little the Bird Builds Its Nest**

### *Objectives*

- Students will appreciate the role of the Grandmother in a Malian family as storyteller.
- Students will explore the differences between the types of stories passed from generation to generation by the Griot and the Grandmother.
- Students will record experiences through creative writing activities in their travel journals.

### *Method*

Have the students copy the following Malian proverb in their travel journals.

- Doni doni kono be nyaga da. (Little by little, the bird builds its nest.)

Give the students several minutes to respond to this saying and figure out its meaning. Share responses and discuss what lesson this proverb is trying to teach. Tell the students that, in addition to the Griot, Grandmothers also play an important role in the oral tradition of Mali.

Grandmothers share stories with their grandchildren each evening around the cooking fire when the meal is finished. These stories are different from the type of story shared by the Griot at a village celebration.

The stories that the Grandmothers of Mali share are often fictional, are usually about animals, and always contain a lesson. The stories may differ from village to village but the lessons remain the same. Grandmothers use their stories as a way to help their grandchildren make good decisions as they grow up. The proverb about the bird is an example of the type of lesson a Grandmother would tell to show her grandchildren why it is important to take their time on a task and always do their best work.

Write two more Malian proverbs on the board.

- Don o don jiri be ji la, a te ke bama ye. (No matter how long a log sits in the water, it will never become an alligator.)
- Don o don na kele aminye. (The same sauce every day is not good.)

Have the students choose one of the sayings and figure out what lesson it is trying to teach. Next have them create a fictional story based on the proverb in their travel journals. Let the students practice telling their stories with partners and have them share their stories in a round circle in your classroom. If you would like to provide a snack, roasted ears of corn or peanuts in the shell would be in keeping with tradition.

## Evaluation

Travel journal entries and oral account of fictional story based on Malian proverb.

## LESSON 2 – LION KING OF MALI CHARACTER STUDY

By Carol Sylvester

Standards of Learning History and Social Science 3.4 (2015) - The students will describe the oral traditions (storytelling), government (kings), and economic development (trade) of the early West African empire of Mali.

### Objectives and Goals

1. Students will examine similarities and differences between themselves and the characters in *Sundiata: Lion King of Mali*.
2. Students will use photos from the Mali Web site in creating a graphic organizer.

### Materials

- Book: *Sundiata: Lion King of Mali* by David Wisniewski, ISBN 0-395-76481-5

Use digital images of each child. These also should be available on a network folder, a disk or the hard drive of student machines.

### Procedure

1. Students should first read the story *Sundiata: Lion King of Mali*. Discuss each of the main characters from the story, paying attention to key characteristics of each. (Sundiata- the main character; King Maghan Kon Fatta -Sundiata's father; Sogolon Kedjou - Sundiata's mother; Sassouma Berete - the king's first wife; Balla Fasseke - Sundiata's griot; Sumanguru- the sorcerer king)
2. Each student should select a character from the story to use for the activity.
3. Students should try to think of three similarities and three differences between themselves and the character from the story. Show students an example of a completed character study.
4. Demonstrate to students how to access the template on the hard drive or network folder of the computer.
5. To replace one of the pictures with a digital image:
6. Click on it and drag it so that the picture is small enough to be workable with the character map.
7. To replace a clipart image:
8. Click one time on box where you wish your picture to go.
9. Next begin adding details to the text boxes that describe similarities and differences between your characters. Triple click on the boxes to begin typing.
10. When you are done, pull down FILE to SAVE AS and give your project a new name. You may also want to print it.

11. Use your character study as a guide to write about how you and your character are alike and different.

**Note:** This project may also be done without using a software program. Teachers may elect to provide students with a Venn diagram to use for filling in the comparison information. Have students draw pictures of the characters on the Venn diagram.

## **LESSON 3 – MALI CAUSE AND EFFECT**

by Carol Sylvester

Read each cause (blue boxes) and each effect (yellow boxes.) Use the ARROW tool to match the correct cause to the correct effect. Use research notes, books, internet sites and stories that you have read to help if you get stumped.

Write three of your own causes and effects in the blank boxes at the bottom of the page. Make sure they are correctly matched up.

Print your page when you are finished.

Download the Cause Effect (PDF) handout.

## **LESSON 4 – THIRD GRADE HISTORY CHECK-IT SPREADSHEET**

By Carol Sylvester

Download the Check-It Spreadsheet (PDF) handout.

## **MAP OF MALI**

By Carol Sylvester

**Standards of Learning History and Social Science 3.4 (2015)** – The students will describe the oral traditions (storytelling), government (kings), and economic development (trade) of the early West African empire of Mali.

### **Objectives and Goals**

1. Students will learn about many of Mali's natural resources.
2. Students will learn about geographic features of Mali.
3. Students will create a product map of Mali, along with a map key

### **Materials**

- Maps, atlases, and websites related to the geography of Mali.

## Procedure

1. Divide students into groups to research the following: (provide groups with atlases and maps of Africa. Use the library and internet resources to research the following:
  - Locate Mali on a map of Africa.
  - Find 3 natural resources. Where was gold mined? Where was salt mined? Why were these two resources so important?
  - Locate Timbuktu (also spelled as Tombouctou in some resources) and find out why it was so important.
  - Locate the Niger River.
  - What countries border Mali?
2. Explain that students will use a software program to create a landform/product map of Mali. Show an example.
3. Follow these steps to create the map:
  - Use the software tools to create symbols for towns, products, landforms, etc. You may also use the draw tools to create your own. Be sure to include Timbuktu, the Niger River, and the gold and salt mines on your map.
  - Use the rectangle tool to create areas for your map key.
  - Use the typewriter tool to indicate names of items for your key and to label parts of your map.
  - Save your map to your disk or folder with your name.
  - Print and display maps in the classroom.

## Websites

- [Geography and History of Mali](#)
- [Mali Factbook](#)

## STORY SCENES FROM SUNDIATA

By Carol Sylvester

**Standards of Learning History and Social Science 3.4 (2015)** – The students will describe the oral traditions (storytelling), government (kings), and economic development (trade) of the early West African empire of Mali.

## Objectives and Goals

1. Students will analyze important events from the story *Sundiata: Lion King of Mali* and use available technology to draw scenes from the story.
2. Put story scenes into correct sequence.
3. Students will learn about the life of Sundiata.

## Materials

- Book: Sundiata: Lion King of Mali

## Procedure

What was your favorite scene from the Sundiata story? In this activity, you will use a software program to draw that scene. Feel free to refer to the Sundiata story for inspiration!

1. Create a picture using a software program.
2. Save your picture onto the Desktop when you are done.
3. Print your scene.
4. Work with your classmates to put the scenes in order according to the sequence they followed in the book. Create a class display in the hallway