

- Students can learn to say some words in Swahili, an African language that was developed by traders on the east African coast. Because it was originally a trading language, it is easy to learn to speak Swahili. There are a number of children's books and web sites that teach Swahili words.
- Have students draw the trade routes used by Swahili Coast traders on a map of Africa and Asia. Students can create a color-coded key to indicate the different routes to Great Zimbabwe and other parts of Africa, Arabia, Persia, India and China.
- For hundreds of years, Africans have played a game called Mankala. Have students research the rules of the game and play it using egg cartons and stones, shells or nuts.

### Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our web site at [www.libraryvideo.com](http://www.libraryvideo.com).

- [www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/features/storyofafrica/index\\_section5.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/features/storyofafrica/index_section5.shtml)  
The BBC's "The Story of Africa" provides a wealth of information on Swahili history.
- [www.timeforkids.com/TFK/specials/goplaces/0,12405,182117,00.html](http://www.timeforkids.com/TFK/specials/goplaces/0,12405,182117,00.html)  
Go Places with TFK enables students to take a virtual tour of Kenya.
- [www.historyforkids.org/learn/africa/](http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/africa/)  
This site provides lots of useful information about ancient Africa.

### Suggested Teacher Resources

- Bessire, Mark. *Great Zimbabwe (First Book)*. Franklin Watts, New York, NY; 1998.
- Feelings, Muriel L. *Jambo Means Hello: Swahili Alphabet Book*. Dial Books for Young Readers, New York, NY; 1992.
- Haskins, James. *Count Your Way Through Africa*. Carolrhoda Books, Minneapolis, MN; 1989. Teaches kids to count to ten in Swahili.
- Johnston, Deborah Smith. "Great Zimbabwe: An African City." *Calliope Magazine: World History for Young People*. Cities of the Past issue, May/June, 1996. Calliope also devoted an entire issue to "Ancient Nubia," Nov/Dec, 1996. Back issues available from Cobblestone Publishing, Peterborough, NH.
- Mallows, Wifrid. *The Mystery of Great Zimbabwe: A New Solution*. W.W. Norton, New York, NY; 1984.
- Wilson, Thomas H. *City States of the Swahili Coast*. Franklin Watts, New York, NY; 1998.
- *Empires and Kingdoms of Sub-Saharan Africa*. Teachers' Curriculum Institute, Palo Alto, CA; 1993.

### Suggested Student Resources

- Altman, Susan, Susan Lechner and Donna Perrone. *Ancient Africa*. Scholastic Library Publishing, New York, NY; 2002.
- Bart-Schwarz, Simone. *In Praise of Black Women: Ancient African Queens*, Vol 1. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison WI; 2001.
- Hall, Martin. *Great Zimbabwe: Digging for the Past*. Oxford University Press, New York, NY; 2006.
- Richardson, Hazel. *Life in Ancient Africa*. Crabtree Publishing Company, New York, NY; 2005.
- Shuter, Jane. *Ancient West African Kingdoms*. Heinemann Library, Oxford, England; 2002.



# ANCIENT AFRICA

Grades 3–7

This guide is a supplement designed for teachers to use when presenting this program. The guide provides you with a summary of the program, pre-viewing and follow-up questions, activities, vocabulary and resources.

**Before Viewing:** Give students an overview of the program. Use the program summary to help provide this introduction. Select pre-viewing discussion questions and vocabulary to provide a focus for students when they view the program.

**After Viewing:** Review the program and vocabulary and discuss what students learned. Use follow-up questions and activities, and encourage students to research the topic further with the Internet and reading resources provided.

### TEACHER'S GUIDE CONSULTANT

Jan Bufkin  
6th Grade Teacher  
Westland Middle School  
Bethesda, MD

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## Historical Overview

The continent of Africa played host to a number of ancient civilizations. The first civilization in Africa, and one of the first in history, was that of the ancient Egyptians, who built their empire along the Nile River over 4,000 years ago. Other ancient African civilizations included Nubia, located south of Egypt, and ancient Ethiopia. In West Africa, the kingdoms of Ghana, Mali and Songhay grew wealthy and influential from caravan trade.

This program focuses on two other ancient African civilizations: the cities of the Swahili Coast in eastern Africa and Great Zimbabwe in the south. The Swahili Coast civilization created a trading empire in the 13th - 15th centuries AD based in cities along the coast of the Indian Ocean. With sea trade routes reaching as far as China, the cities of the Swahili Coast created a rich, new culture and language with strong Islamic influences. The civilization of Great Zimbabwe, with its wealth of gold and ivory, became a powerful trading partner with the Swahili Coast. The ruins of the capital city of Great Zimbabwe were the largest in Africa, south of the pyramids. Archaeologists continue to search for clues as to why these two great African civilizations collapsed by the 16th century.

## Vocabulary

**archaeologist** — A scientist who studies past cultures by analyzing their remains.

**artifacts** — Objects from the past that serve as evidence of past cultures.

**Swahili** — An ancient culture of coast dwellers and a language of East Africa that developed from trade.

**trade route** — A path merchants follow to exchange goods.

**merchant** — A person who makes a living by buying and selling goods.

**caravan** — A group of merchants who travel together, often through desert or difficult terrain.

**ivory** — A precious material derived from elephant tusks.

**dhow** — A small sailboat used for centuries to trade goods in Africa and Asia.

**Islam** — A world religion whose members follow the prophet Mohammed.

**mosque** — An Islamic temple.

**Mankala** — An African game using twelve holes and playing pieces like stones, shells or nuts.

**Great Zimbabwe** — The capital city of an ancient trading empire in southern Africa.

**stone mason** — A skilled builder who works with stone.

**carbon dating** — A technique of measuring the amount of carbon-14 remaining in organic matter to determine its age.

**soapstone bird** — Sculptures made of soapstone found among the ruins at Great Zimbabwe; they are believed to have religious significance.

## Timeline

c.AD850	Swahili trade began along the east African coast
c.AD 1250 - 1450	Great Zimbabwe grew wealthy from trade with the Swahili
c.AD 1450	Great Zimbabwe economy collapsed
c.AD 1500	Swahili Coast cities declined

## Pre-viewing Discussion

- Inform students that this is a very exciting time to be an archaeologist in Africa because the remains of civilizations largely unknown to history are being uncovered. Explain that this program will focus on that two ancient African civilizations that grew fabulously wealthy from trade in luxury goods and then collapsed in less than a century. In eastern Africa, the cities of the Swahili Coast were located along the Indian Ocean from southern Somalia to Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique. The trading empire of Great Zimbabwe was located in present-day Zimbabwe. Ask students to notice ways in which Great Zimbabwe and the Swahili Coast cities contributed to each other's prosperity as trading partners.
- Ask students if they are familiar with other great African civilizations. As you locate them on the map, ask students to notice the geographical features of the African continent that may have contributed to the rise of each civilization. The Kingdom of Nubia south of Egypt shared Egypt's fertile Nile valley. Ethiopia prospered from trade along its coast. In West Africa, the kingdoms of Ghana, Mali and Songhay grew wealthy from camel caravan trade routes crossing the Sahara desert.
- Many students will have heard of Africa's earliest civilization, that of the ancient Egyptians. Briefly review with students what they know about the civilization of ancient Egypt as you locate Egypt and the Nile River on a map of Africa.

## Focus Questions

- Explain the two main reasons why Africa's ancient history is difficult to reconstruct.
- What are some regions in Africa where early civilizations developed?
- What does "Swahili" mean and how does the meaning relate to the location of the Swahili civilization?
- Describe the routes followed and goods traded by Swahili merchants that made the cities of the Swahili Coast wealthy and powerful.
- Why did archaeologists originally believe that the Swahili people were not African?
- What styles of architecture are archaeologists uncovering as they excavate the ruins of the Swahili cities?
- Where did Swahili traders obtain the gold that they traded to all parts of Europe and Asia?

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- What makes the city of Great Zimbabwe unique in sub-Saharan Africa?
- Describe the walls of Great Zimbabwe. What purpose did the walls serve? What special techniques did stone masons use to construct them?
- What was the economic foundation of Great Zimbabwe's wealth and power?
- How have archaeologists used carbon-14 dating to determine the age of Great Zimbabwe?
- What do the Shona people who live in Zimbabwe today have in common with their ancestors who built Great Zimbabwe?
- Give two theories for the mysterious decline of Great Zimbabwe.
- When did the cities of the Swahili Coast lose their economic power?

## Follow-up Discussion

- Discuss why historians know much more about Egypt than other ancient African civilizations. How has the lack of permanent building material such as stone created obstacles for archaeologists in their search to uncover Africa's ancient past?
- The cities of the Swahili Coast and Great Zimbabwe were trading partners. Discuss how these economic powers of the past depended upon each other for their wealth and prosperity. Can students name some modern trading partners in the world today?
- It is not known why the Swahili Coast cities and Great Zimbabwe lost their power. What theories do students have? Discuss tools and methods archaeologists might use to solve the mystery of these civilizations' collapse.

## Follow-up Activities

- Archaeologists originally believed that people of the Swahili Coast were not African because of the Arab influences in their language, religion and architecture. Cultures still influence each other today through trade and migration. Working in groups, students can compile a list of influences from other countries and cultures. Assign each group a different culture: Asian, Hispanic, African, Native American and European. Areas of influence include food, clothing styles, music, words, language, religion and more. Groups then share their lists with the class. Which cultures have had the most influence in your area?

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