

Name: _____
Date: _____

Timbuktu

No name brings ancient Africa to mind more than Timbuktu, a great city that flourished on a bend in the Niger River for more than four hundred years. Timbuktu was at the end of the camel caravan route that linked sub-Saharan Africa to North Africa and Arabia. Gold, ivory and kola nuts passed through the city, but the most important commodity was salt. Timbuktu was located near several salt mines in the Sahara Desert. Caravans hauled salt from the mines to trade for gold.



center of West Africa. By 1330, Timbuktu became part of the Kingdom of Mali. Mansa Musa built a great mosque, or Islamic place of worship, in Timbuktu. The mosque attracted scholars from as far away as Saudi Arabia.

Timbuktu began to decline in influence when the Portuguese demonstrated that it was easier to sail along the coast of Africa than travel through the desert. The city was destroyed at the end of the sixteenth century by the war between Morocco and Songhai. At one time, historians estimate that more than 100,000 people lived in Timbuktu, but today it remains a shadow of its former self, a mud-built town of 20,000 people on the edge of the Sahara Desert.

Timbuktu began as a trading city, but in time it developed into the educational and spiritual

Fill in the Blanks

Today Timbuktu is a small t_____ on the e_____ of the S_____ Desert, but it was the greatest t_____ city in sub-Saharan Africa for more than four h_____ years.

Timbuktu was l_____ on a b_____ in the N_____ River. Traders would mine s_____ in the nearby d_____ and carry it to T_____. Merchants in the city would then *t_a_s_o__t the salt to far away places.

Timbuktu was also known as an *i_t_ll_ct_al and r_____ site. Mansa Musa built a great m_____ in the city. Timbuktu's influence began to d_____ when the P_____ demonstrated that it was easier to s_____ along the c_____ of Africa than to t_____ through the d_____. The city was also damaged in the w_____ between M_____ and S_____.

Answer in Complete Sentences

*1. How did the location of Timbuktu help it to become a great trading city?

2. What was Timbuktu known for in addition to trade?

3. Why did Timbuktu decline in influence?
