

World History Honors

Summer Assignment 2025-2026

Welcome to World History Honors! This course will continue the study of global society, building on previously established foundations, and emphasizing the historical forces that have shaped the modern world. Honors courses are designed for highly-motivated students with above-average critical thinking, reading, writing, and oral communication skills. Students in these classes will examine topics in greater depth with an emphasis on the evaluation of historical events.

Through this summer assignment you will explore African and Islamic cultures and their contributions to the world. This assessment is intended to act as a transition from middle school to high school and as an assessment of multiple skills. Use the inquiry question below to guide you through the assignment.

NOTE: This assignment must be completed **INDIVIDUALLY** and students should adhere to the Nutley High School Honor Code (see page 18 of the Student Handbook for details). Academic dishonesty of any kind (copying from another student, copying from the Internet, use of AI, or any production of work that is not your own) will result in a loss of credit for the assignment.

Make a digital copy of this assignment (assignment must be typed) and submit your completed assignment to Turnitin.com by Wednesday, September 3, 2025. Instructions for submission to Turnitin.com will be given in-class on the first day of school.

Inquiry Question: What were the achievements and contributions of the African and Islamic Empires to the world? Evaluate the impact of these achievements and contributions on the world.

Part I: Reading Comprehension

Read the textbook chapters “Islam Expands”, “Muslim Culture”, “West African Civilizations”, and “Eastern City-States and Southern Empires”. After reading each chapter, imagine that you are talking to a classmate that did not read the chapter, but this student needs a quick synopsis of the content in it. For each chapter, make a “Top 3 List” of the most important key points from the reading by using succinct one sentence answers. You are not allowed to use section headers – USE YOUR OWN WORDS.

1. This is an example if you were assigned a reading about the Middle Ages:
 - a. The Roman Catholic Church played a dominant role in Europe by strengthening its social and political ties to Europe’s nobility.

Chapter	“Top 3” List
Islam Expands	1. 2. 3.

Muslim Culture	1. 2. 3.
West African Civilizations	1. 2. 3.
Eastern-City States and Southern Empires	1. 2. 3.

Part II: Document Based Question Analysis

Using the provided documents below, complete the analysis questions in complete sentences.

Document 1
This document explains why Muslims of the Islamic Empire both preserved existing knowledge and extended it. Muslims had practical reasons for supporting the advancement of science. Rulers wanted qualified physicians treating their ills. The faithful . . . relied on mathematicians and astronomers to calculate the times for prayer and the direction of Mecca. . . . Their attitude reflected a deep-seated curiosity about the world and a quest for truth that reached back as far as . . . Mohammed himself. After the fall of Rome in 476 B.C.E., Europe entered a period of upheaval and chaos, an era in which scholarship suffered. . . . In the early 800s, Caliph al-Ma'mun opened in Baghdad . . . the House of Wisdom. There, scholars of different cultures and beliefs worked . . . translating texts from Greece, India, Persia, and elsewhere into Arabic. Source: Bech, Black, Krieger, Naylor, Shabaka, <i>World History: Patterns of Interaction</i>, McDougal Littell, 1999 (adapted)
1. What were the reasons for Muslim's interest in learning at this time in history? a.

Document 2

The Islamic capital of Cordova (in present-day Spain) was described by a contemporary as the “jewel of the world.” European scholars preferred Cordova’s Islamic schools and universities over other study sources in Europe.

Besides the university library, Arab statisticians assure us the city boasted 37 libraries, numberless bookstores, 800 public schools . . . and a total population of 300,000. Its people enjoyed a high standard of living and refinement and walked on paved streets . . . all this at a time when hardly a town in Europe, Constantinople excepted, counted more than a few thousand inhabitants. Parisians and Londoners were still trudging on muddy, dark alleys.

Source: Philip Hitti, *Capital Cities of Arab Islam*, University of Minnesota Press, 1973 (adapted)

1. What conditions in Cordova did this author cite as evidence of the high level of Islamic civilization and scholarship?
 - a.

Document 3

Al-Khwarizmi, a Muslim mathematician, studied Indian sources. He wrote a textbook in the 800s about *al-jabr* (the Arabic word for what we call “algebra” today). This book was later translated into Latin and used throughout Europe. Muslim mathematicians also adopted Arabic numerals from the Indians and used them in a place-value system. Here are examples of these two advances:

$$\begin{array}{r} 3x = 15 \qquad 135 \\ \qquad \qquad +20 \\ \hline \qquad \qquad 155 \end{array}$$

1. What was the importance of these mathematical advances?
 - a.

Document 4

Between 750 and 1350, Muslim merchants built a trade network throughout their empire.

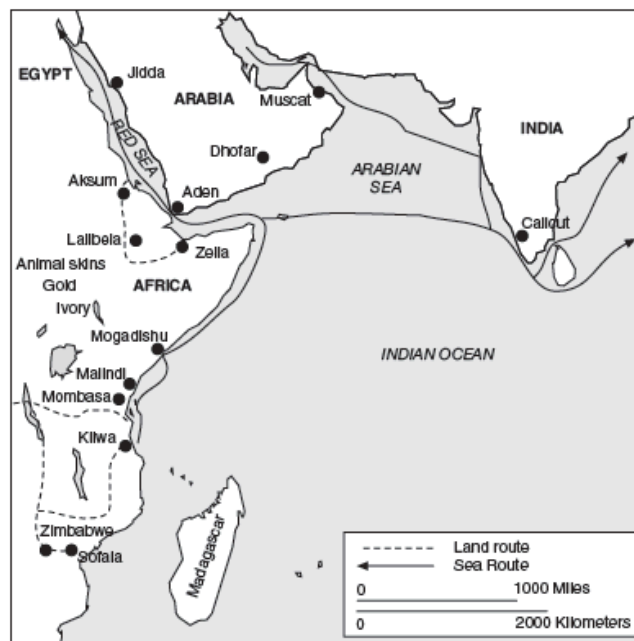
Masters of the sea, even as of the land, the Arabs spread throughout the geographical area. The whole world was theirs to explore . . . their ships sailed across the seas even as they moved across the land [Sahara Desert into West Africa]. The might of the sword of Islam carved the way for the slaveowner and the merchant to follow.

Source: Sir T.H. Holdich, *The Gates of India*, MacMillan, 1910 (adapted)

1. Why and where were Muslims able to establish a trading empire?
 - a.

Document 5

Ibn Battuta also visited Kilwa, an East African coastal city-state, in 1331. He described it as one of the most beautiful cities in the world. He admired the luxury enjoyed by the Muslim rulers and merchants. Kilwa controlled the overseas trade between the interior of Africa and sites around that part of the world. This map shows East African trade routes in 1000.



1. What sea routes was Kilwa connected to? What geographical areas did these sea routes lead to?
 - a.

Document 6

The following excerpt is an explanation for the wealth of the kingdom of Ghana.

The Arab traders of this region wanted gold as much as the Wangara wanted salt, but both had to pass through Ghana to trade. . . . Ghana controlled the land . . . [and] it had the military forces . . . to maintain peace in the area, thereby assuring safe trade for the Arabs and the Wangara.

Ancient Ghana was an extremely complex empire. It possessed many of the characteristics of powerful nations today: wealth based on trade, sufficient food to feed its people, income derived from taxes, social organization that ensured justice and efficient political control, a strong army equipped with advanced weapons, and a foreign policy that led to peace and cooperation with other people.

Source: Leon E. Clark, editor, *Through African Eyes*, Praeger Press, Inc., 1970 (adapted)

1. What was ancient Ghana's role in the gold-salt trade?
 - a.
2. What characteristics of an advanced civilization did ancient Ghana possess?
 - a.

Document 7

In this excerpt, a Moroccan traveler using the name Leo Africanus describes the city of Timbuktu in West Africa.

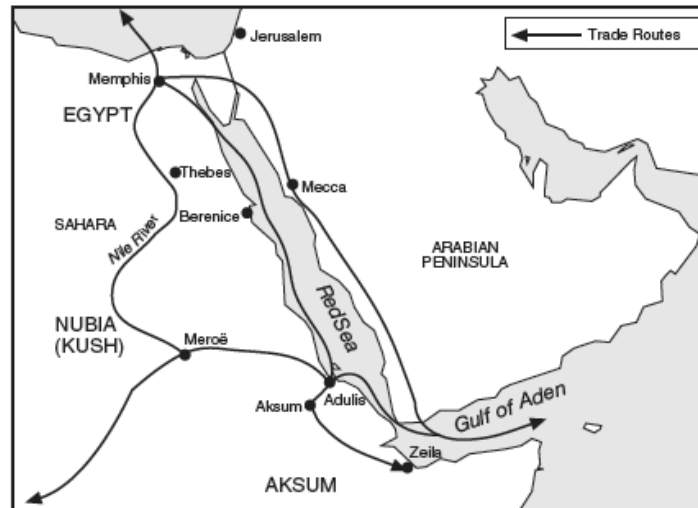
Here are many doctors, judges, priests, and other learned men that are well maintained at the king's costs. Various manuscripts and written books are brought here . . . and sold for more money than other merchandise.

Source: Leo Africanus, "The Description of Africa (1526)," *Reading About the World, Volume 2*, Harcourt Brace Custom Publishers, 1999 (adapted)

1. Is this a primary or secondary source? How do you know?
 - a.
2. What about Timbuktu impressed this writer?
 - a.

Document 8

Aksum reached its height between 325 and 360. Aksum's location made it an important international trading center. This map shows the trade routes to and from Aksum between 300 and 700.



1. How did Aksum's location enable it to become a trading center?
 - a.