Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Mansa Musa Primary Source Reading Activity**

*Great kingdoms flourished in West Africa for hundreds of years. However, knowledge of these*

*kingdoms did not reach a wide audience in the outside world until the 1300's, when Mansa*

*Musa, the king of Mali made his pilgrimage to Mecca. Soon, people throughout North Africa and*

*southern Europe were aware of the generous, noble leader from the “land of the gold mines.” In*

*the excerpt below from* The Splendor That Was Africa *by Ricky Rosenthal, a modern historian*

*tells the story of Mansa Musa’s journey to and from Mecca.*

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| **Reading Passage** | **Your comments, questions, and summaries** |
| The markets of Cairo could not be quieted- the least bit of gossip sprints from market booth to market booth. There was no doubt about it, something extraordinary had captured the attention of the great city which served as an important caravan stop. Reports of Mansa Musa’s entrance into Cairo in 1324 was nothing short of spell-binding. Mansa Musa was on his way to the holy city of Mecca. It was said that when the remarkable sight of his caravan came into view that 60,000 men were counted, including a personal entourage of 12,000 slaves dressed in the most luxurious silks and clothing. 500 slaves carrying a staff of gold weighing about 6 pounds were observed. When the curtain of dust that had enclosed the caravan had finally settled, it was seen that there was a baggage train of 80 camels carrying 300 pounds of gold dust each. Oh, the riches of this extravagant caravan! Where had Mansa Musa come from was the question of the day? This huge caravan traveled from Nani on the upper Niger to Walata, to Tuat, and then to Cairo. Such a lengthy journey crossed the endless dunes of the Sahara....The very name Sahara, legendary as a temptation to men of all races, is an Arabic word symbolizing wilderness or emptiness, the word having the hot sound of a man gasping for breath. What dangers these travelers had endured on their journey. The terrible dullness of the same sights for day after day- sand dunes and sun for as far as the eye can see! It can start to play tricks on the travelers mind. With the end of the day’s heat you would hope there would be relief for the traveler. But then came the sudden cold of the desert night. But, the nights in the desert have a wonder of their own. Brilliant night skies are filled with stars the likes of which can cause a grown man to cry in their beauty. But the night has dangers of its own, extreme cold and dangerous animals of the desert- Travelers beware of snakes and scorpions that may try to join you for your night’s rest. This caravan, like many others must have camped gratefully near the spikey desert palm...huddling near the lines of palm trees that offer the only shade in miles....These oases of rest are almost sacred to the traveler. These patches of green plants in the desert are random and hard to find. When the rare, but awesome rain storm falls, water collects in hollows and water-courses and soaks into beds of sand. It is here that the desert plants and trees can live and man can take his much needed rest.This journey was certainly dangerous yet, Mansa Musa felt such a journey worth it in the performance of his religious duties- The Hajj. |   |