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# AP<sup>®</sup> African American Studies

## Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 1

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#### Short-Answer Question 3

- ☒ Scoring Guidelines
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**Question 3: Non-Stimulus/Source****3 points****General Scoring Notes**

- Each point is earned independently.
- **Accuracy:** These scoring guidelines require that students demonstrate historically defensible, or discipline specific, content knowledge. Given the timed nature of the exam, responses may contain errors that do not detract from their overall quality, as long as the historical or disciplinary content used to advance the argument is accurate.
- **Clarity:** Exam responses should be considered first drafts and thus may contain grammatical errors. Those errors will not be counted against a student unless they obscure the successful demonstration of the content knowledge, skills, and practices described below.
- **Describe:** Provide the relevant characteristics of a specified topic. Description requires more than simply mentioning an isolated term.
- **Explain:** Provide information about how or why a historical development or process occurs or how or why a relationship exists.

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**A**      **Describe a cultural or artistic contribution made by one of the ancient African societies.**      **1 point**

**Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:**

- The Nok developed ironworking, pottery, and lifelike terracotta sculptures of animals and people.
- Mansa Musa's efforts ensured that the Mali Empire was a center of culture and learning in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.
- West African griots preserved histories, traditions, and cultural practices, largely through the oral tradition.
- The Aksumite Empire was the first African society to adopt Christianity.
- The Aksum developed their own currency and written language, Ge'ez, which is still in use in the Ethiopian Church.
- The Great Enclosure in Great Zimbabwe was a massive defensive wall that remains an important symbol of ancient African advancement.
- Ancient Egypt developed advanced architectural developments including pyramids and large-scale monuments.

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**B**      **Describe an effect trade had on ancient West African empires such as Ghana, Mali, or Songhai.**      **1 point**

**Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:**

- The three Sudanic empires used their gold mines and their location at the center of trade routes to their economic and political advantage.
- Trans-Saharan trade brought traders, scholars, and religious missionaries into West Africa.

- The wealth generated by trade allowed the Sudanic empires to control neighboring groups.
- Sudanic empires in West Africa were involved in the transatlantic slave trade, and many leaders got rich even though the population of many societies declined rapidly.
- Timbuktu grew large and wealthy because of trade, and became a place of learning, attracting scholars from all over the world.
- When West African empires adopted Islam or Christianity that was brought in by merchants and traders, what resulted was often a blend of the new religion with Indigenous beliefs and practices.

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<b>C</b>	<b>Explain how a contribution made by one of the ancient West African societies can be connected to a tradition, practice, or development in the nineteenth, twentieth, or twenty-first centuries.</b>	<b>1 point</b>
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**Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:**

- Religious traditions established in West Africa were transferred to the Americas as a result of the transatlantic slave trade. Because of this, many enslaved African Americans were part of generations in North America who identified as Christian.
  - Interactions between African ethnic groups resulted in new combinations of African-based cultural practices, languages, and belief systems within African American communities. The development of Voodoo in the Americas is one example of this blending of cultures and belief systems that took place.
  - Africans who had been enslaved and brought to the Americas brought with them skills such as blacksmithing, basketweaving, and farming practices. As result, many African Americans further developed these skills as both enslaved and free people, helping to build skills needed to survive and thrive as a community.
  - African traditions were incorporated into African American pottery, quilt-making, and storytelling. This enabled generations of African American communities to keep alive their own culture and histories despite—most times—being forbidden by their enslavers from learning to read or write.
  - African musical elements and styles were adapted by African Americans. These characteristics would eventually combine into new forms of music—such as the blues and gospel music—which would become important styles of American music.
  - Artists of the New Negro movement and the Harlem Renaissance artists explored the relationship between Africa and African American identity and heritage. Their work helped to counter negative stereotypes of African Americans and Afro-descendants as people without a history or culture.
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- A. One significant cultural contribution made by Mali was the tradition of Griots. These were people whose role was to keep record and preserve stories by passing them from generation to generation, creating Griot culture and popularizing use of the kora instrument.
- B. Trade was extremely significant to Mali, as their economy relied heavily on the control of trade of the Trans-Saharan Trade Route. Most importantly, they had control over the route and managed to create a massive wealth primarily in gold, but their capture of it also facilitated trade and the spread of Islam. This allowed Mali to grow economically wealthy and politically powerful by controlling the most significant trade route in West Africa and politically through ideological influence.
- C. A part of Mali Culture that is still seen today, comes from Griots, particularly their kora instrument, which massively influenced music today. The string instrument they used to complement their storytelling now has a powerful foothold in African American music, helping to characterize and popularize Afro-Pop and even early jazz in the twentieth century.

A) A artistic contribution made by one of the acient African societies is the Nok sculptures, which showed the complexity of early African civilizations.

B) Early Wet African empires used trade as a source of income, and transportation of knowledge and information. This is especially shown during Mali empire, when mansa musa was the king, we can see that during his term, because he used his abundance of gold to get other resources they needed.

C) A development that was made by one of the ancient West African society is when mansa musa was on term. He developed many university and education facilities, which helped many black people in the ancient West African empire get an education. This is important Mali became a center for education.

**B)** The trade effect the ancent west African societies in both good and bad ways. They helped the societies branch out and create alliances with other cities, while also making a name for the empire. They used their empires for their resourses and make them gain popularites and make more places trade with them leadiing to most of their resources plumiting. Other places would also enslave the citizens of the different kingdoms just so they could put them in dire living conditions and make them do man uale labor.

**C)** The ancient west african societies ha d alot of cultuer and traditions that many staye

### Short-Answer Question 3

**Note:** Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain spelling and grammatical errors.

#### Overview

**NEW for 2025:** The question overviews can be found in the *Chief Reader Report on Student Responses* on [AP Central](#).

#### Sample: 3A

**Score: 3**

**SAQ Part A Score: 1**

**SAQ Part B Score: 1**

**SAQ Part C Score: 1**

The response earned 1 point for part A because it adequately describes the cultural contribution of the Mali tradition of Griots, arguing that the Griots “preserve stories by passing them from generation to generation.”

The response earned 1 point for part B for describing an effect trade had on an ancient West African empire by noting that the Mali trade routes “managed to create a massive wealth primarily in gold, but their capture of it also facilitated trade and the spread of Islam.”

The response earned 1 point for part C explaining how the Mali contribution of the kora instrument has connections to twentieth century developments. Although griots and the kora are referred to again in part C, the evidence in this response is distinct from part A and distinguished through the explanation that the kora “now has a powerful foothold in African American music, helping to characterize and popularize Afro-Pop and even early jazz in the twentieth century.”

### Short-Answer Question 3 (continued)

**Sample: 3B**

**Score: 2**

**SAQ Part A Score: 1**

**SAQ Part B Score: 1**

**SAQ Part C Score: 0**

The response earned 1 point for part A because it describes the sculptures as evidence of an artistic contribution by the Nok society “which showed the complexity of early African civilizations.”

The response earned 1 point for part B by effectively describing an effect of trade on West African empires. The response states that “Early West African empires used trade as a source of income, and transportation of knowledge and information.”

The response did not earn a point for part C because while it offers an accurate discussion of the development of universities in Ancient Mali, this West African tradition has not been connected to a tradition or practice in the nineteenth, twentieth or twenty-first centuries.



**Short-Answer Question 3 (continued)****Sample: 3C****Score: 1****SAQ Part A Score: 0****SAQ Part B Score: 1****SAQ Part C Score: 0**

The response did not earn a point for part A because it does not address or attempt to address this portion of the prompt.

The response earned 1 point for part B for describing an effect trade had on ancient West African empires such as Ghana, Mali, or Songhai, stating, “They helped the societies branch out and create alliances with other cities, while also making a name for the empire. They used their empires for their resources and make them gain popularites and make more places trade with them leadiing to most of their resources plumiting.”

The response did not earn a point for part C because while it begins to discuss the prompt (“The ancient west african societies”) it is incomplete and thus does not explain how a contribution made by one of the ancient West African societies can be connected to a tradition, practice, or development in the nineteenth, twentieth, or twenty-first centuries.