

Animator: Understanding the Mali Empire

Adventure Description:

In this adventure, students will think like an animator and learn about the Mali empire.

Activity

Teacher Note: You will need an account set up on Animaker. See Handout: [How to Use Animaker](#). It should take no more than 10 minutes to set up an account.

Teacher Note: This activity is long and can be broken up across multiple days.

Step 1: Background Information on Ancient Mali Empire (5-10 minutes)

- Show [Video: Ancient Mali Empire](#). Review reasons why Mali became a great empire.
- Discuss the following: What natural resources were available to help the Mali?
- What is the importance of archaeological findings around trade and the Mali Empire?
- Why do professionals want to learn about Mali culture?

Step 2: Activity Set Up (10 minutes)

- Explain to students that they will get to be an animation director and make an animated film that will teach others about the ancient Mali empire.
- Explain to students that animation directors always brainstorm ideas and create a plan before they create their videos. Many animation directors create a brief, which is an outline that includes a short summary of the video, characters and scenes that will be included, and other important information.
- Provide students with [Handout: Creating A Brief for an Animated Video](#). As a class, review the steps.
- Explain to students that they will use [Handout: Ancient Mali Empire Sources](#) to create the plan for their video. They will use this document as inspiration for different scenes and characters in their video.

Please contact Allison Bischoff, Director of Teacher Support, at allison@rozzylearningcompany.com or 314-272-2560 with questions.

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Step 3: Brainstorming and Planning (20+ minutes)

- Divide students into pairs or small groups. Explain to students that they will now brainstorm and plan what their video will be about. Have students complete the steps on the handout.
- As students are working, ask the following questions:
 - How might Mali's wealth influence interactions with other cultures?
 - Why is the griot an important figure in the Mali culture? What does this tell you about how cultures pass on their history?
 - How might the study of ancient astronomy help astronomers today?
- Next, explain to students that animated directors get feedback on their briefs before they start designing the first draft of their videos. They typically get feedback from the client who is paying for the video to be created.

Step 4: Creating Video (25+ minutes)

- Teacher note: This step will most likely be completed on a separate day. It can also be completed for homework or as a take-home project.
- Explain to students that once film producers have finished creating their brief, they create an initial draft of their videos. Explain to students that they will be using Animaker, a computer program that allows people to create animated cartoons.
- Provide students with [Handout: How to Use Animaker](#). As a class, review the information. Explain to students when their animated video is due.

Step 5: Discussion (5 minutes)

- Have groups volunteer to present their videos.
- Have a concluding discussion about the significance of the Mali Empire. How did Mali's location influence its economy and culture? How might a culture's use of oral history differ from written accounts?

Materials List

Provided Online:

- Video: Ancient Mali Empire
- Handout: How to Use Animaker
- Handout: Ancient Mali Empire Sources

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