# ESSENTIAL FACTS Medieval Africa

1. Most of the vast continent of Africa rests on a **plateau** or area of high, flat land.
2. **Caravans**, groups of traveling traders and merchants, traveled across the Sahara Desert to and from West Africa.
3. The **Berbers** were the first known people to settle in North Africa.
4. African empires became wealthy from **trade** during the Middle Ages.
5. **Ghana** was a West African empire known as “the crossroads of trade.”
6. The people of Ghana taxed those who transported salt, gold, and iron down the **Niger River**.
7. The kingdom of **Mali** was built on the trade of salt and gold.
8. **Griots** are African storytellers.
9. **Sundiata Keita** was the Mali leader who expanded the empire to trade with Timbuktu.
10. The **Songhai Empire** rose to power by driving the Berbers out of Timbuktu.
11. **Sunni Ali** was the leader of the Songhai who seized control of the river with a fleet of canoes.
12. **Axum** was a city-state in East Africa located near the Red Sea.
13. **Ezana** was a king of Axum who brought Christianity to the empire.
14. **Zimbabwe** was a trading center that traded gold, copper, and ivory.
15. Kings ruled organized African governments that were divided into smaller family groups called clans.
16. People of medieval Africa lived in **extended families** or families made up of several generations.
17. Many African villages were **matrilineal**, tracing their family descent from their mother rather than their father.
18. African storytellers educated children through **oral history**, stories passed down from generation to generation.
19. **Bantu** chiefs raided other African villages for captives for labor.
20. **Enslaved** or forced laborers became part of the African trade with Europe.