

# Unit 1: Origins of the African Diaspora (Week 1-9)

Content Area: **Social Studies**  
Course(s):  
Time Period: **Full Year**  
Length: **Full Year**  
Status: **Published**

## UNIT RATIONALE

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Unit 1 serves as the foundational layer for understanding the complexity of African American experiences and identities. By exploring the origins of the African diaspora, students will learn about the historical context that has shaped African communities both on the continent and in the diaspora. This unit emphasizes the diversity within Africa and the various cultural, linguistic, and social dynamics that existed prior to the transatlantic slave trade. By engaging with primary sources, students will critically analyze how these origins influence contemporary African American identities and experiences. This foundational knowledge is essential for understanding the subsequent units, as it sets the stage for discussions on freedom, resistance, and cultural practices.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

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1. What defining features characterize African American Studies, and how does it contribute to broader academic discourse?
2. What historical developments in the 1960s and 1970s led to the establishment of African American Studies programs in U.S. colleges and universities?
3. In what ways does African American Studies enhance the understanding of early Africa and its connections to the African diaspora?
4. What geographic features of the African continent are significant, and how have they influenced settlement patterns and trade among diverse cultural regions?
5. What were the key causes of the Bantu expansion across Africa, and how did it impact linguistic diversity and the genetic heritage of African Americans?
6. What characteristics define the complex societies that emerged in ancient East and West Africa, and why are these societies culturally and historically significant to Black communities?
7. How did the influence of gold and trade shape the political, economic, and religious developments of the ancient West African empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai?
8. In what ways did Mali's wealth and power facilitate its expansion and influence on other societies within Africa and across the Mediterranean?
9. How do the Sudanic empires connect to the early generations of African Americans, and what is the significance of this relationship?
10. What educational models existed in early West African societies, and how did they reflect the values and

priorities of those communities?

11. How did syncretic practices in early West and West Central African societies evolve, and what impact did they have on African-descended communities in the Americas?

12. What is the significance of Great Zimbabwe's stone architecture, and how did various factors contribute to the rise and fall of city-states on the Swahili Coast?

13. How did the adoption of Christianity influence the economic and religious landscape of the Kingdom of Kongo?

14. In what ways did the Kingdom of Kongo's political relations with Portugal shape its role in the transatlantic slave trade?

15. How did the Kingdom of Kongo's Christian culture impact the development and experiences of early generations of African Americans?

16. What roles did kinship play in early West and Central African societies, particularly concerning the contributions of women?

17. How do the political and military leadership styles of Queen Idia of Benin and Queen Njinga of Ndongo-Matamba compare, and what legacies do they leave behind?

18. What motivated the movement of Africans to Europe and Europeans to Africa prior to the transatlantic slave trade, and how did early forms of enslaved labor influence slave-based economies in the Americas?

## **STANDARDS**

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### **NEW JERSEY STUDENT LEARNING STANDARDS: CONTENT AREA**

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6.2.12.GeoSV.1.a: Use geographic representations to assess changes in political boundaries and the impact of European political and military control in Africa, Asia, and the Americas by the mid-18th century.

6.2.12.GeoGE.1.b: Trace the movement of essential commodities (e.g., sugar, cotton) from Asia to Europe to America, and determine the impact trade on the New World's economy and society. 6.2.12.GeoGE.1.c: Assess the role of mercantilism in stimulating European expansion through trade, conquest, and colonization.

6.2.12.GeoGE.1.d: Determine the effects of increased global trade and the importation of gold and silver from the New World on inflation in Europe, Southwest Asia, and Africa.

6.2.12.HistoryCC.1.a: Determine the extent to which various technologies, (e.g., printing, marine compass, cannonry, Arabic numerals) derived from Europe's interactions with Islam and Asia provided the necessary tools for European exploration and conquest.

6.2.12.HistoryCC.1.b: Analyze various motivations for the Atlantic slave trade and the impact on Europeans,

Africans, and Americans.

6.2.12.HistoryCC.1.c: Explain how the new social stratification created by voluntary and coerced interactions among Native Americans, Africans, and Europeans in Spanish colonies laid the foundation for conflict.

6.2.12.HistoryCC.1.d: Compare slavery practices and other forms of coerced labor or social bondage common in East Africa, West Africa, Southwest Asia, Europe, and the Americas.

6.2.12.HistoryCC.2.b: Explore the factors that laid the foundation for the Renaissance (i.e., Asian and Islamic, Ancient Greek and Roman innovations).

6.2.12.HistoryUP.2.a: Analyze the impact of new intellectual, philosophical, and scientific ideas on how humans viewed themselves and how they viewed their physical and spiritual worlds.

6.3.12.HistoryCA.12: Analyze a current foreign policy issue by considering current and historical perspectives, examining strategies, and presenting possible actions.

6.3.12.CivicsPD.1: Develop plan for public accountability and transparency in government related to a particular issue(s) and share the plan with appropriate government officials.

## **NEW JERSEY STUDENT LEARNING STANDARDS: CAREER READINESS, LIFE LITERACIES AND KEY SKILLS**

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WRK.9.2.12.CAP.12

Explain how compulsory government programs (e.g., Social Security, Medicare) provide insurance against some loss of income and benefits to eligible recipients.

WRK.9.2.12.CAP.13

Analyze how the economic, social, and political conditions of a time period can affect the labor market.

## **NEW JERSEY STUDENT LEARNING STANDARDS: COMPUTER SCIENCE AND DESIGN THINKING**

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8.1.2.DA.1: Collect and present data, including climate change data, in various visual formats.

8.1.2.DA.3: Identify and describe patterns in data visualizations.

8.1.2.DA.4: Make predictions based on data using charts or graphs.

8.1.12.IC.1: Evaluate the ways computing impacts personal, ethical, social, economic, and cultural practices.

8.1.12.IC.2: Test and refine computational artifacts to reduce bias and equity deficits.

8.1.12.IC.3: Predict the potential impacts and implications of emerging technologies on larger social, economic, and political structures, using evidence from credible sources.

8.2.12.EC.1: Analyze controversial technological issues and determine the degree to which individuals,

businesses, and governments have an ethical role in decisions that are made.

8.2.12.EC.2: Assess the positive and negative impacts of emerging technologies on developing countries and evaluate how individuals, non-profit organizations, and governments have responded.

8.2.12.EC.3: Synthesize data, analyze trends, and draw conclusions regarding the effect of a technology on the individual, culture, society, and environment and share this information with the appropriate audience.

8.2.12.ETW.4: Research historical tensions between environmental and economic considerations as driven by human needs and wants in the development of a technological product and present the competing viewpoints.

## PRE-ASSESSMENTS

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Game review of topics included in unit and those specifically on unit assessment to gauge level of previous knowledge of students.

## INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

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**Student Learning Intentions (SLI) WALT:**  
**(We are learning to...)**

WALT

- examine the origins and development of the African diaspora.
- analyze the key factors that led to the transatlantic slave trade.
- describe the social, political, and economic conditions in West and Central Africa prior to the slave trade.
- explain how the transatlantic slave trade impacted the demographics, culture, and economies of Africa.
- compare and contrast the experiences of enslaved Africans in different regions of the Americas.
- evaluate the short-term and long-term consequences of the transatlantic slave trade.

## Student Learning Strategies

- Active lecture note taking
- Close Reading
- Think-Pair-Share
- Case Notes
- Making Connections
- Debate/Socratic Seminar
- Short written responses
- Discussion Groups
- AP Classroom

## Success Criteria

- Describe the features that characterize African American Studies.
- Describe the developments that led to the incorporation of African American Studies into United States colleges and universities in the 1960s and 1970s.
- Explain how African American Studies enriches the study of early Africa and its relationship to communities of the African diaspora.
- Describe the geographic features of the African continent.
- Explain how Africa's varied landscape affected patterns of settlement and trade between diverse cultural regions.
- Describe the causes of Bantu expansion across the African continent.
- Explain how the Bantu expansion affected the linguistic diversity of West and Central Africa and the genetic heritage of African Americans.
- Describe the features of, and goods produced by, complex societies that emerged in ancient East and West Africa.
- Explain why Africa's ancient societies are culturally and historically significant to Black communities
- Explain how the influence of gold and trade shaped the political, economic, and religious development of the ancient West African empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai.
- Explain how Mali's wealth and power created

opportunities for the empire to expand its reach to other societies within Africa and across the Mediterranean.

- Explain the connection between the Sudanic empires and early generations of African Americans.
- Describe the institutional and community-based models of education present in early West African societies
- Explain how syncretic practices in early West and West Central African societies developed and were carried forward in African-descended communities in the Americas.
- Describe the function and importance of Great Zimbabwe's stone architecture
- Explain how geographic, cultural, and political factors contributed to the rise and fall of the city-states on the Swahili Coast.
- Explain how the adoption of Christianity affected economic and religious aspects of the Kingdom of Kongo.
- Explain how the Kingdom of Kongo's political relations with Portugal affected the kingdom's participation in the transatlantic slave trade.
- Explain how the Kingdom of Kongo's Christian culture influenced early generations of African Americans.
- Describe the function of kinship along with the varied roles women played in early West and Central African societies.
- Compare the political and military leadership of Queen Idia of Benin and Queen Njinga of Ndongo-Matamba.
- Describe the legacy of Queen Idia of Benin's and Queen Njinga of Ndongo-Matamba's leadership.
- Explain the reasons why Africans went to Europe and Europeans went to Africa before the onset of the transatlantic slave trade.
- Explain how early forms of enslaved labor by the Portuguese shaped slavebased economies in the Americas.

**Formative Assessment (drives instructional decisions)**

- Key terms and People assignments
- Chapter Question assignments
- Primary Source Packets for Section
- In class discussions
- Low-stakes group work

**Activities and Resources**

- Textbook readings
- Lecture/notes/active class discussion
- Unit Source Book

**Suggested Modifications**

**English Language Learners**

**Native language support:** The teacher provides auditory or written content to students in their native language.

**Adjusted Speech:** The teacher changes speech patterns to increase student comprehension. This could include facing the students, paraphrasing, clearly indicating the most important ideas, and speaking more slowly.

**Visuals:** The teacher uses graphics, pictures, visuals, and manipulatives. This helps ELL students better understand and comprehend the subjects at hand.

**Front-Loading Vocabulary:** The teacher front loads vocabulary. This means providing students with a list of important vocabulary words they will need to know for a book, lesson, etc. prior to the lesson being taught. Including pictures to go with the vocabulary words is also very beneficial for the students.

**Special Education Students**

**Chunking:** The teacher presents information in a way that makes it easy for students to understand and remember. Chunking is based on the presumption that our working memory is easily overloaded by excessive detail. The best way to deliver information is to organize it into meaningful units. Because students with special needs get overloaded easily, chunking is an effective strategy to use with them.

**Checking for Understanding:** It is important to constantly

check for understanding, especially for students who have accommodations. Teachers want to make sure students understand the concepts being covered in a way that makes sense to them.

**Extra time:** The teacher provides students with special needs extra time to complete work or answer questions. It is important to give students enough time to process their thoughts.

**Oral Reading:** The teacher will read work orally to students. Class work such as tests and literature circles may need to be read aloud to the student.

**Timers:** The teacher will use timers as an instructional tool. The use of timers is beneficial for students who have trouble completing tasks. Timers can be helpful so the student is aware of how much time they have to complete an assignment.

#### **Students with 504 Plans**

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#### **Gifted & Talented Strategies**

**Extensions/Enrichments:** Teachers will provide gifted and talented students with extension/enrichment projects. Students will be challenged to further their understanding, to apply acquired knowledge, and/or to produce something in reference to acquired knowledge.

**Modify/Change Activities:** Teachers will monitor and modify activities to accommodate those students who need to be challenged further. Additional reading,

problem-solving, writing, or project work is necessary for those students who are ready to move on at a rate more accelerated than their peers. In this way, G & T students are provided the same opportunity for support as special needs students.

### **Students at Risk of School Failure**

**Directions or Instructions:** Make sure directions and/or instructions are given in limited numbers. Give directions/instructions verbally and in simple written format. Ask students to repeat the instructions or directions to ensure understanding occurs. Check back with the student to ensure he/she hasn't forgotten.

**Peer Support:** Peers can help build confidence in other students by assisting in peer learning. Many teachers use the 'ask 3 before me' approach. This is fine, however, a student at risk may have to have a specific student or two to ask. Set this up for the student so he/she knows who to ask for clarification before going to you.

**Alternate or Modified Assignments:** Always ask yourself, "How can I modify this assignment to ensure the students at risk are able to complete it?" Sometimes you'll simplify the task, reduce the length of the assignment or allow for a different mode of delivery. For instance, many students may hand something in, the at-risk student may jot notes and give you the information verbally. Or, it just may be that you will need to assign an alternate assignment.

**Increase One to One Time:** When other students are working, always touch base with your students at risk and find out if they're on track or needing some additional support. A few minutes here and there will go a long way to intervene as the need presents itself.

**Contracts:** It helps to have a working contract between you and your students at risk. This helps prioritize the tasks that need to be done and ensure completion happens. Each day write down what needs to be completed, as the tasks are done, provide a checkmark or happy face. The goal of using contracts is to eventually have the student come to you for completion sign-offs.

**Hands On:** As much as possible, think in concrete terms and provide hands-on tasks. This means a child doing math may require a calculator or counters. The child may

need to tape record comprehension activities instead of writing them. A child may have to listen to a story being read instead of reading it him/herself.

**Tests/Assessments:** Tests can be done orally if need be. Break tests down in smaller increments by having a portion of the test in the morning, another portion after lunch and the final part the next day.

**Seating:** Seat students near a helping peer or with quick access to the teacher. Those with hearing or sight issues need to be close to the instruction which often means near the front.

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## REFLECTIONS

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### INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS: NEW JERSEY STUDENT LEARNING STANDARDS FOR ELA, SOCIAL STUDIES, SCIENCE AND/OR MATHEMATICS

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LA.RL.11-12	Reading Literature
LA.RI.11-12	Reading Informational Text
	Text Types and Purposes
LA.SL.11-12	Speaking and Listening
	Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas
LA.L.11-12.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.