AIM:

HOW DID GOLD AND SALT INFLUENCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF WEST AFRICA?
I. An Introduction to West Africa

A. The region to the south of the SAHARA DESERT is called the SAHEL (which means “shore” or “coast” in Arabic).

B. It is a strip, about 600 miles wide, that runs east – west from the Red Sea (in the east) to the Atlantic Ocean (west).

C. It is composed mostly of grassy plains (in Africa, this is called SAVANNA), with little precipitation and very warm temperatures.

D. There are rivers and some aquifers (underwater sources of water), but only 4-8 inches of rain per year.
E. Below the Sahel is a more tropical climate, with more precipitation and vegetation.
The Sahel supports sparse tree growth and low shrubs and grasses. Here, there is a dry riverbed which will flood during the summer rainy season.
A. A region of West Africa was known by traders as **GHANA**.

B. By the 700s, this kingdom (“ghana” means war chief or king in the local language) was wealthy from the **GOLD AND SALT TRADE**.

C. Gold was found relatively close to the surface of the earth and also in fast-moving streams.

D. Until the 1500s (when the Europeans began to colonize the Americas), probably two-thirds of the world’s gold came from West Africa.
E. But West African savanna and forests lack SALT, which is essential for human life.

F. There is salt in the Sahara Desert.

G. Arab traders and desert-dwelling people known as **BERBERS** began to deal with the people of West Africa.
Salt is cut into slabs and hauled by camels across the Sahara Desert and West Africa by Berber tribesmen.
H. Traders from the north also brought cloth, metal weapons, and other goods obtained from ports on the coast of Africa (on the Mediterranean Sea).

I. Thus, a north-south trade developed:

J. Arabs and Berbers from the north of Africa brought salt and goods to the savannah

K. and the people of West Africa went north with gold.

L. In trading cities, the merchants met. Local officials collected taxes for the king of Ghana and made sure business was conducted fairly.

M. By the year 800, Ghana had become an empire.
III. The Empire of Ghana

A. Because of gold, the king of Ghana grew rich and the kingdom became an **EMPIRE**, controlling the rulers of neighboring lands.

B. The rulers of neighboring lands often paid **TRIBUTE** to the king of Ghana, but were allowed to maintain their local control.

C. The king of Ghana was in charge of officials and led the army. He was also a religious (animist) leader.

D. Eventually, **ISLAM** reached Ghana through trade.
E. Ghana’s rulers adopted Islam, but many people remained animist, and some blended Islam with animism.

F. As in other places, the growth of Islam encouraged literacy and the use of the Arabic language.

G. Decline of the empire (1100s / 1200s):
   - gold fields to the east were discovered
   - attacks by Muslim raiders based in North Africa

IV. Empire of Mali (1200s – 1400s)

A. Kingdom emerged by 1200s south of Ghana.

B. Economy was based on gold.
C. Mali benefited from new trade routes after the decline of Ghana.

D. **SUNDIATA** – first “mansa” (emperor) of Mali. He was a military leader but also a wise peacetime leader (mid-1200s)

E. Promoted agriculture in addition to the gold-salt trade.

F. He allowed the different regions of his empire to maintain their own cultures and languages.

G. Sundiata was a Muslim, but allowed religious tolerance.
H. **Mansa Musa** (1300s) – led an enormous army and expanded empire to twice its original size.

I. Major trading city – **Timbuktu** -- an intellectual center for Islam was well as a trading place.
A European map with a depiction of Mansa Musa. What is he holding, and what do his crown and scepter (rod) signify?
J. Leaders after Mansa Musa were less able, and the empire fell into decline and – as in Ghana – new gold fields to the east were discovered.

The Empire of Mali was larger than the Empire of Ghana and reached to the Atlantic Ocean. It encompassed various ecosystems.
V. Empire of Songhai (1400s – late 1500s)

A. As the Empire of Mali declined, the Songhai people, who had been ruled by Mali, built up an army and broke away. Its capital was the city of Gao on the Niger River.
B. **SUNNI ALI**, a military commander, captured the trading and learning center of Timbuktu.

C. After a seven-year siege, Sunni Ali also took the city of Djenné.

D. His son succeeded him, but was deposed by a devout (observant) Muslim leader named **AKSIA MUHAMMAD**.

E. Aksia Muhammad ruled well and justly for 35 years.

   1. Administrators chosen on the basis of talent
   2. Efficient collection of taxes
F. Empire thrived for a time, but in late 1500s, a force from Morocco (to the north) invaded USING CANNONS.

G. Songhai lacked modern weapons.

H. End of the Songhai Empire was also the end of a 1,000-year period of West African power.
VI. Slavery

A. Slavery existed in the world for centuries before the West African kingdoms.

B. Traditionally, slavery in West African only involved black Africans (as slaves and slaveholders).

C. Change came in the 600s, when Arab Muslims (and later Europeans) became slave traders.

D. Europeans had long traded with Africa, and now became more interested in the slave trade.

E. People captured in battle became slaves.
E. Sometimes, people who owed money were made into slaves.

F. Most slaves did menial work and domestic activities.

G. Having slaves could raise one’s social status.

H. Arabs bought or seized black Africans and brought them to North Africa to use or sell.

I. West African kingdoms sometimes traded slaves for valuable goods.

J. Soooo..... Who benefited?