

Document A: Blog Post

The following is an excerpt from a blog post that appeared in The Huffington Post on October 17, 2012. It describes a study on the wealthiest people in world history done by Brian Warner, the founder of Celebrity Net Worth, an online publication that investigates the lifestyles of the rich and famous.

Mansa Musa of Mali Named World's Richest Man of All Time; Gates and Buffet Also Make List

You've probably never heard of him, but Mansa Musa is the richest person ever.

The 14th century emperor from West Africa was worth a staggering \$400 billion, after adjusting for inflation, as calculated by *Celebrity Net Worth*. To put that number into perspective – if that's even possible – *Net Worth's* calculations mean Musa's fortune far **outstrips** that of the current world's richest man Carlos Slim Helú and family. . . .

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, when Musa died sometime in the 1330s, he left behind an empire filled with palaces and mosques, some of which still stand today. But the emperor really turned historic heads for the over-the-top extravagances of his 1324 pilgrimage to Mecca.

The trip, which he embarked upon during the 17th year of the monarch's glittering reign, was hosted by the leaders of both Mecca and Cairo and apparently was so brilliant, it "almost put Africa's sun to shame."

Musa's wealth was a result of his country's vast natural resources. The West African nation was responsible for more than half of the world's salt and gold supply, according to *Net Worth*. Of course, the entry also notes that the fortune was also fleeting. Just two generations later, his net worth was gone – wasted by invaders and infighting.

Source: The Huffington Post, *October 17, 2012.*

Vocabulary

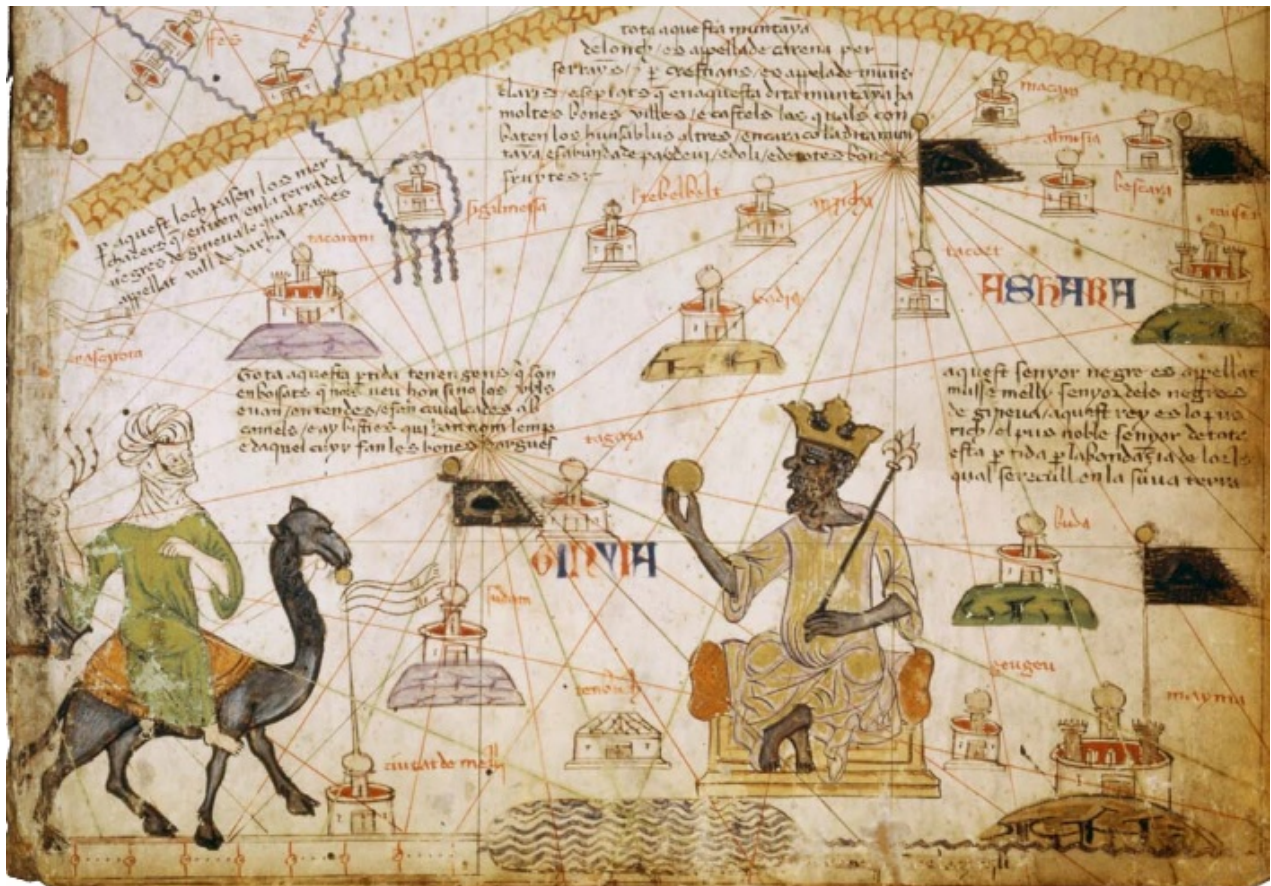
<u>outstrips: exceeds</u>

Blog Post: Guiding Questions

1. (Sourcing) Who created this blog post? When was it created? Why do you think it was written?
2. (Close Reading) What is the main point of the blog post? Identify two claims it makes.
3. (Close Reading) What evidence does it use to support its claims?
4. Do you think the information in this blog post is trustworthy? Why or why not?

Document B: Catalan Atlas

The Catalan Atlas is a medieval map from Spain drawn in 1375 by a mapmaker named Abraham Cresques. Cresques had never visited West Africa but relied on the accounts of travelers and traders to make his map.



“This Black lord is called Musa Mali, Lord of the Black people of Mali. So abundant is the gold which is found in his country that he is the richest and most noble king in all the land.”—*Catalan Atlas inscription*

Source: Abraham Cresques, 1375.

Catalan Atlas: Guiding Questions

1. (Sourcing) What kind of document is this? Who created it? When?
2. (Corroboration) How does the Catalan Atlas compare to *The Huffington Post* blog post in terms of its depiction of Mansa Musa?
3. Do you think this is an accurate depiction of Mansa Musa? Why or why not?

Document C: Al-Umari

Al-Umari was an Arab historian from Damascus, Syria. He visited the city of Cairo in Egypt several years after Mansa Musa passed through there on his pilgrimage in 1324 CE. He then wrote this account of Mansa Musa's visit, as told to him by the people of Cairo.

From the beginning of my coming to stay in Egypt I heard talk of the arrival of this **sultan** Musa on his Pilgrimage and found the people of Cairo eager to tell what they had seen of the Africans' extravagant spending. I asked the **emir** Abu and he told me of the **opulence**, manly virtues, and **piety** of his sultan. Abu said, "When I went out to meet him, Musa did me extreme honor and treated me with the greatest courtesy. He addressed me, however, only through an interpreter despite his perfect ability to speak in the Arabic tongue. Then he sent to the royal treasury many loads of unworked native gold and other valuables. I tried to persuade him to go up to the Citadel to meet the sultan of Cairo, but he refused persistently saying: 'I came for the Pilgrimage and nothing else. I do not wish to mix anything else with my Pilgrimage.'"

"Mansa Musa flooded Cairo with his gifts. He left no emir or holder of a royal office without the gift of a load of gold. The people of Cairo made **incalculable** profits out of him and his caravan in buying and selling and giving and taking. They traded away gold until they **depressed** its value in Egypt and caused its price to fall." This has been the state of affairs for about twelve years until this day by reason of the large amount of gold which they brought into Egypt and spent there.

Source: *Al-Umari*, Pathways of Vision in the Realms of the Metropolises, 1337-1338.

Vocabulary

<u>sultan</u> : king <u>emir</u> : a high ranking title <u>opulence</u> : great wealth, especially shown by extravagant living	<u>piety</u> : religious devotion <u>incalculable</u> : huge <u>depressed</u> : lowered
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Al-Umari: Guiding Questions

- 1) (Sourcing) Who is Al-Umari? Do you think he is a reliable source of information on Mansa Musa's pilgrimage to Mecca? Why, or why not?

- 2) (Corroboration) How does this document compare to *The Huffington Post* blog post and the Catalan Atlas in terms of its depiction of Mansa Musa?

- 3) (Close Reading) How does the emir Abu describe Mansa Musa to Al-Umari? According to the emir Abu, what traits does Mansa Musa possess?

- 4) Do you think Al-Umari's description of Mansa Musa is accurate? Why or why not?