A  Africa is the second-largest continent in the world, with major rivers, deserts, and natural resources to use for trade.  The Sahara Desert and Africa’s high plateau acted as great barriers to the outside world, shielding Africa from conquest in the Middle Ages.

B  Outside of North Africa, ancient and medieval Africans had no written language, so little is known except through archeological artifacts, traders, and oral history.  Many medieval kingdoms rose to power in West, East, and South Africa.

C  Along the banks of the Niger River, three great West African empires emerged during the Middle Ages:  the Ghana Empire, the Almoravid Empire, and the Mali Empire.  All made their wealth from trading Africa’s natural resources:  ivory, gold, and other minerals, including copper and diamonds.  These empires all had similar social classes.  The king or chief had the most wealth and rights.  After the chiefs were nobles, followed by traders, farmers, and finally slaves.  West African slaves could marry and earn their freedom, and slave families could not be separated.

D  The Ghana Empire traded with North African Muslims across the Sahara Desert.  Ghana’s most valuable trading good was gold, but they also traded jewelry, leather goods, ivory, and slaves.  In return, they received copper, cloth, tools, and salt from North African Muslims.  Africans used salt to preserve food, enhance the taste of food, and as a dietary supplement to help survive the very hot climate.

E  The Almoravids conquered Ghana and ruled for about one hundred years.  They expanded the empire to include many Trans-Saharan trade routes.

F  Descendants of the Ghana Empire established the Mali Empire south of the Almoravid’s Empire and ruled for over 150 years until they were conquered by the Songhai Empire.

G  On Africa’s east coast, Swahili trading towns shared many economic and cultural features.  Swahili settlements were city-states with their own army, laws, and customs.  The most dominant city-states were Mogadishu, Malindi, Kilwa, and Mombasa.

H  These Swahili city-states traded with other African regions but also with Arabia and India.  They traded ivory, iron, salt, copper, and gold for cotton cloth, glass beads, porcelain, and fine chinaware.  The trading opportunities in East Africa brought many Arabs, Persians, and Indian merchants to the area.  These traders brought new ideas to Eastern Africa, including the Muslim religion.  Islam became the predominant monotheistic religion, primarily existing in the cities.  Polytheism remained the main belief in rural areas.

I  Southwest of the Swahili city-states, the Kingdom of Zimbabwe emerged in the 11th century.  People of Zimbabwe believed their ruler was a god and only the king’s wives and court were allowed to see him.

J  Zimbabweans were not only rich in gold and elephant ivory; they also controlled most land trading routes.  They traded with the Swahili city-states as well as traders from North Africa, Arabia, India, Southeast Asia, and China.

K  In the 1480s, the Portuguese conquered many East African cities.  For centuries afterward, Africa was a continent ruled by stronger European powers.
1. Africa was protected from invaders during the Middle Ages by:
   a. its armies
   b. its geography
   c. soldiers from other nations
   d. peace treaties

   Which sentence best supports the answer? _____

2. Historians don’t know as much as they would like to about Medieval West, East, and South Africa because:
   a. many ancient records were destroyed.
   b. there are so few remaining artifacts.
   c. there was no written language.
   d. those parts of Africa have not been studied.

   Which sentence best supports the answer? _____

3. Mark the statements T for true or F for false:
   a. ______ West African slave families were often forced to live apart.
   Which sentence best supports the answer? _____

   b. ______ All free people of the West African empires shared the same rights.
   Which sentence best supports the answer? _____

   c. ______ West African slaves could earn their freedom.
   Which sentence best supports the answer? _____

   d. ______ Africa’s natural resources proved to be a source of great wealth for West African empires.
   Which sentence best supports the answer? _____

4. Which of the following was considered especially important if you lived in the warm climate of West Africa?
   a. sandals
   b. metal tools
   c. copper pots
   d. salt

   Which sentence best supports the answer? _____

5. What is the main reason foreigners came to East Africa in the Middle Ages?
   a. to explore
   b. to conquer
   c. to trade
   d. to buy slaves

   Which sentence best supports the answer? _____

6. Islam was introduced to East Africa by:
   a. traders
   b. West African empires
   c. conquering armies
   d. Zimbabweans

   Which sentence best supports the answer? _____

7. Swahili city-states:
   a. were often at war with each other.
   b. had militaries, laws, and practices that were unique to each city-state.
   c. shared a large army.
   d. followed the same laws.

   Which sentence best supports the answer? _____

8. A king of Zimbabwe:
   a. would interact with all social classes.
   b. was considered to be almost a god.
   c. was seen on special occasions by the lower classes.
   d. was seen only by his wives and royal court.

   Which sentence best supports the answer? _____
9. In addition to their natural resources, what contributed to the Kingdom of Zimbabwe’s wealth?
   a. Zimbabwe dominated the overland trade routes.
   b. They produced glass beads and chinaware.
   c. Their army confiscated goods from other nations.
   d. The people were heavily taxed.

Which sentence best supports the answer?
   _____

Written Response Question

10. How did Africa’s natural resources benefit the lives of Africans?

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

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________________________________________________________________________________________
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1. b, sentence 2
2. c, sentence 3
3. a. F, sentence 10
   b. F, sentence 8
   c. T, sentence 10
   d. T, sentence 6
4. d, sentence 14
5. c, sentence 23
6. a, sentence 24
7. b, sentence 19
8. d, sentence 28
9. a, sentence 29
10. Key points:

   Africans were able to trade their natural resources for goods they could not produce and salt that was needed in the warmer climates.

   Trade brought Africans into contact with foreigners who shared new ideas and a new religion, Islam.