The Simple AP® African American Studies Unit 1 Cheat Sheet

1.1 What Is African American Studies?

The Field

African American Studies: interdisciplinary (many-field) study of the history, culture & contributions of people of African descent in the U.S. + across the **diaspora** (Africans dispersed worldwide), past and present, on their own terms.

How It Entered Colleges (1960s–70s)

Context: late Civil Rights + **Black Power** era → 1st large wave of Black students at mostly white colleges, who push for change.

Black Campus Movement (1965–72): 100,000s of students (Black, Latino, Asian, white allies) protest at 1,000+ colleges → demand Black studies.

Required source	Shows
SF State strike (1968)	Student protest → dept.
Hunter College (1972)	Black + Puerto Rican st.
NCBS conf. (1975)	Field goes national

Why Start w/ Africa?

Africa = birthplace of humanity + ancestral home of African Americans; its arts, tech, politics, religion & music inform Black identity.

⚠ Don't open the story at enslavement. Unit 1 exists to show African societies on their own terms first, before the slave trade.

Key claim: early Africa was diverse, complex & globally linked before the slave trade.

✓ MCQ on 1.1 sources: link the image or document to a demand (Black studies, faculty, support) + the era (Black Power).

1.2–1.3 Landscape & Bantu Expansion

Geography

Africa: 2nd-largest continent. Red Sea, Mediterranean, Indian Ocean → early ties beyond Africa; Atlantic Ocean on the W.
5 rivers link the interior: **Niger**, **Congo**, **Zambezi**, **Orange**, **Nile** = highways for trade.

Climate zone	e.g.	Trade/econ.
Desert	Sahara	Nomads, salt
Semiarid	Sahel	Livestock
Savannah	Grasslands	Grain crops
Rainforest	Tropics	Kola, yams, gold
Mediterranean	N. coast	Sea links

Settlement & Trade

Sahel + savannah = population centers b/c: (1) rivers move people/goods, (2) fertile land → farming + herding, (3) they link Saharan trade (N) w/ the tropics (S), so cities grow there.

Bantu Expansion (1500 BCE–500 CE)

Cause: new tools + crops (bananas, yams, grains) → population growth in W. & Central Africa → migration S. & E. over centuries.
Effect: Bantu = family of 100s of languages across W., Central & S. Africa (**Xhosa**, **Swahili**, **Kikongo**, **Zulu**) still spoken by millions today.

⚠ Bantu = a language family spread by migration, not one ethnic group or one empire.

✓ Map stimulus: trace the arrows from W./Central Africa → name the cause (ag + tech) and the effect (language spread) in 1 line.

1.4 Africa's Ancient Societies

Nile: Egypt & Nubia

Egypt + Nubia (Kush) emerge on Nile ~3000 BCE, among world's earliest complex societies.
Rivalry: Nubia supplied Egypt's gold + luxury goods → conflict. ~750 BCE Nubia conquers Egypt → **25th Dynasty** ("Black Pharaohs") rules all of Egypt for ~100 years, from Napata.

Aksum & Nok

Society	Region	Date	Known for
Nubia/Kush	Nile	~3000 BCE	Gold
Aksum	Ethiopia	~100 BCE	Coins, Ge'ez
Nok	Nigeria	~500 BCE	Terracotta

Aksum: Red Sea hub → Mediterranean, Roman & Indian trade. Own currency + script (**Ge'ez**).
King Ezana → Aksum 1st African society to adopt **Christianity** (4th c.), on its own terms, w/o colonialism. Ge'ez still Ethiopian Orthodox liturgy.
Nok: early W. African ironworkers; naturalistic terracotta heads w/ detailed hair + jewelry → oldest evidence of a complex settled society in sub-Saharan Africa (central Nigeria).

Why It Matters to Black Communities

Late 1700s+: African American writers cite ancient Africa (religious + secular texts) to refute racist claims that Africa lacked govt or culture → part of the early AAS canon of Black thought.

✓ Ezana coin / Nok head stimulus: say what it shows (trade, faith, skill) → then which racist myth it disproves ("no civilization").

1.5 Sudanic Empires: Ghana, Mali, Songhai

Gold, Trade & Islam

Empire	Peak	Key fact
Ghana	7th–13th c.	Gold; 1st of 3
Mali	13th–17th c.	Mansa Musa
Songhai	15th–16th c.	Largest + last

Sudanic (Sahel-region) empires: gold mines + control of **trans-Saharan** trade routes across the desert to N. Africa & on to Europe.
Islam spreads w/ N. African traders, scholars & officials; rulers convert, while many subjects keep their local faiths (→ 1.7 syncretism).
Songhai's decline: Portuguese sail the W. African coast → trade shifts from Saharan → **Atlantic** routes → less wealth, weaker state.

Mali's Reach

Mansa Musa (14th c.) → Mali = a center of trade, learning & cultural exchange in Africa.
Hajj of 1324 (to Mecca) → Mediterranean merchants + mapmakers notice his gold → plans to trade European goods for Mali gold.

Sources & Diaspora Link

Catalan Atlas (1375, Cresques): Musa enthroned w/ gold → Europe's view of Mali's wealth. **Mali equestrian figure**: horse = military power + status.

⚠ Atlas made in Europe: it shows Europeans' view of Mali, not Mali's self-image.

✓ Causation chain: gold + location → trade → Islam + wealth → expansion; then the Atlantic shift → the slow decline of Songhai.

1.6–1.7 Learning Traditions & Syncretism

Learning in West Africa

Timbuktu (Tombouctou, Mali): book trade, university & scholars: astronomers, mathematicians, architects, jurists.
Griots: historians, storytellers, musicians; preserve community history through oral performance.
Epic of Sundiata: griots' account of Mali's 13th-c. founder → political history + moral lessons in one.
Gender: women + men served as griots; kept records of births, deaths, marriages.

Syncretism (1.7)

Syncretism (blending faiths): rulers adopt Islam (Mali, Songhai) or Christianity (Kongo) → people mix it w/ their local beliefs & rituals.
Carried to Americas: ~¼ of enslaved Africans in N. America came from Christian societies, ~¼ from Muslim societies in W. Africa's Sahel.
Survivals: ancestor veneration, divination, healing, group song + dance → **Louisiana Voodoo**; also Vodun (Haiti), Regla de Ocha (Cuba), Candomblé (Brazil), all syncretic faiths of the diaspora.
Resistance: syncretic ceremonies used to gain strength & unity before revolts.
Timbuktu manuscripts: Arabic texts on law, astronomy, medicine = written scholarship.

⚠ Syncretism ≠ abandoning African belief. It is adaptation that keeps core practices alive.

✓ Oral sources are evidence: say what griots preserve + why oral tradition is reliable record.

1.8 Southern & East Africa

Great Zimbabwe (12th–15th c.)

Kingdom of Zimbabwe: capital Great Zimbabwe; **Shona** people grow rich from gold, ivory, cattle; tied to Swahili Coast trade routes.
Stone walls (no mortar): military defense + a long-distance trade hub for the Shona kings.
Great Enclosure: religious + admin. center.
Conical tower: likely a granary.
Who built it: Shona ancestors, not outsiders → independent **Zimbabwe** (1980) took its name.

Swahili Coast (11th–15th c.)

Name: Arabic *sawahil* = "coasts." Runs from **Somalia → Mozambique** along the coast.
City-states link the African interior ↔ Arab, Persian, Indian & Chinese traders via seasonal Indian Ocean monsoon wind routes.
Unity w/o one ruler: shared language (**Swahili**, a Bantu lingua franca) + shared religion (**Islam**).
Key cities: Mogadishu, Mombasa, Zanzibar, **Kilwa**.

Factor	Rise	Fall
Geography	Ocean ports	Exposed coast
Wealth	Gold, ivory	Lures Portugal
Politics	Indep. cities	Taken 1500s

Decline: Swahili wealth draws the **Portuguese**, who invade major city-states + settle (16th c.) to control Indian Ocean trade by force.

✓ Trade-route map: name 2+ partners (Arab, Persian, Indian, Chinese) + 2 goods (gold, ivory, cowries) to earn the full point on it.

1.9 West Central Africa: Kingdom of Kongo

Conversion (1491)

Nzinga a Nkuwu (João I) + son **Nzinga Mbemba** (Afonso I) voluntarily adopt Roman Catholicism.
Economic effect: closer trade w/ Portugal → more wealth. Goods: ivory, salt, copper, textiles.
Religious effect: nobles chose it + no colonial occupation → wide acceptance → distinct **African Catholicism** blending local art + culture.

Portugal & the Slave Trade

Price of alliance: Portugal's king demands access to the slave trade in exchange for military aid.
Afonso I's letter (1526, to João III): protests Portuguese traders seizing free people, even nobles; asks to limit the trade. Kongo nobles join the trade but can't cap captives sold.
Outcome: Kongo + W. Central Africa → the largest source of enslaved people in the whole transatlantic trade (~45% of all).

Legacy in North America

~¼ of Africans taken directly to future U.S. came from W. Central Africa; many already **Christian**.
Names: saints' names + **day names** → Juan/João/John in early Black America often have African (Kongo) Catholic roots.

⚠ Afonso opposed abuses of the trade, not slavery itself. Read the letter's purpose + audience (a Portuguese king) first.

✓ Triple crucifix: African features on Christian object = syncretism + local agency.

1.10–1.11 Queens, Kinship & Global Africans

Kinship & Women's Roles

Kinship: extended family groups organize society; the basis of political alliances & marriages.
Women: spiritual leaders, political advisors, market traders, educators, farmers.

	Queen Idia	Queen Njinga
Realm	Benin (Nigeria)	Ndongo-Matamba
Era	Late 1400s	1600s (Angola)
Role	1st iyoba	Ruling queen
War	Spirit + medicine	30-yr guerrilla
Legacy	FESTAC '77 mask	~100 yrs women

Njinga: fought Portugal to keep sovereignty; traded captives for wealth; gave sanctuary to people fleeing Portuguese enslavement → a bigger army & more power for her state.
Ndongo link: Ndongo captives = the 1st large group of enslaved Africans in English colonies (1619, Point Comfort, Virginia colony).

Global Africans (1.11)

Late 1400s: Portugal ↔ W. Africa trade in gold, goods & captives bypasses Saharan routes; W. African kingdoms gain wealth via slave trading.
Atlantic model: Portuguese plantations on **Cabo Verde** + **São Tomé** (cotton, indigo, sugar). ~50,000 enslaved by 1500 → the blueprint for plantation slavery in the Americas.

⚠ Idia = queen mother to the oba (king); Njinga = ruling queen. Don't swap their roles.