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Mansa Musa and the Empire of Mali

P. James Oliver

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Oliver's well-researched biography of Mansa Musa reads like an exotic tale of gold, greatness, and adventure. During his long reign as Mali's emperor, Mansa Musa led his empire into its Golden Age; presided over a spectacular, 60,000 person, 9,000 mile pilgrimage; founded a university in Timbuktu; and helped revolutionize architecture across the Sudan. Oliver does not allow Musa's story to get bogged down in detail by seamlessly weaving a lot of history into his narrative and by supplying curious readers with an extensive Glossary.

Many of the African ancestors of today's African-Americans came from West Africa. From 700 -- 1600 A. D., one after the other, three great, black, commercial empires dominated West Africa. They were powerful, prosperous, complex, stable -- and large. At its height, the Empire of Mali was the size of all of Western Europe.

Well-crafted and fast paced, Oliver's book is enhanced by a liberal sprinkling of enjoyable drawings, clear and helpful maps, and interesting photos. Not only are Mansa Musa's triumphs and dilemmas clearly portrayed, but so are the lives of the people of medieval Mali.

FROM BACK COVER

"Oliver's debut, about one of West Africa's most powerful and charismatic leaders, delivers a vibrant mix of history and historical fiction for young adults.

The book introduces the medieval empire of Mali . . . and soon narrows its focus to the compelling life story of the emperor Mansa Musa, who ruled Mali in the early 1300s. . . . This enjoyable work smoothly blends historical text with memorable anecdotes . . . photos and sketches . . . and well-drawn maps. The book moves at a fast pace, and the author's clear, straightforward style is likely to appeal to young adults. . . . Oliver always strives for historical accuracy; even his fictional account of a young sandal maker . . . contains period-appropriate language and scenery. . . .also includes a length glossary that is amply illustrated

A thoughtful, engaging history . . ."

Kirkus Review

"It's not just good; it's a classic. I've looked and looked for something like this."

Sarah Peterson: Fulbright Scholar; Middle School Teacher

"This compelling biography provides an intriguing introduction to one of the three stable and prosperous merchant empire that dominated West Africa before colonialism and the horrors of the slave trade."

Catharine Gill: Co-founder of Pacific Collegiate School; teacher

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