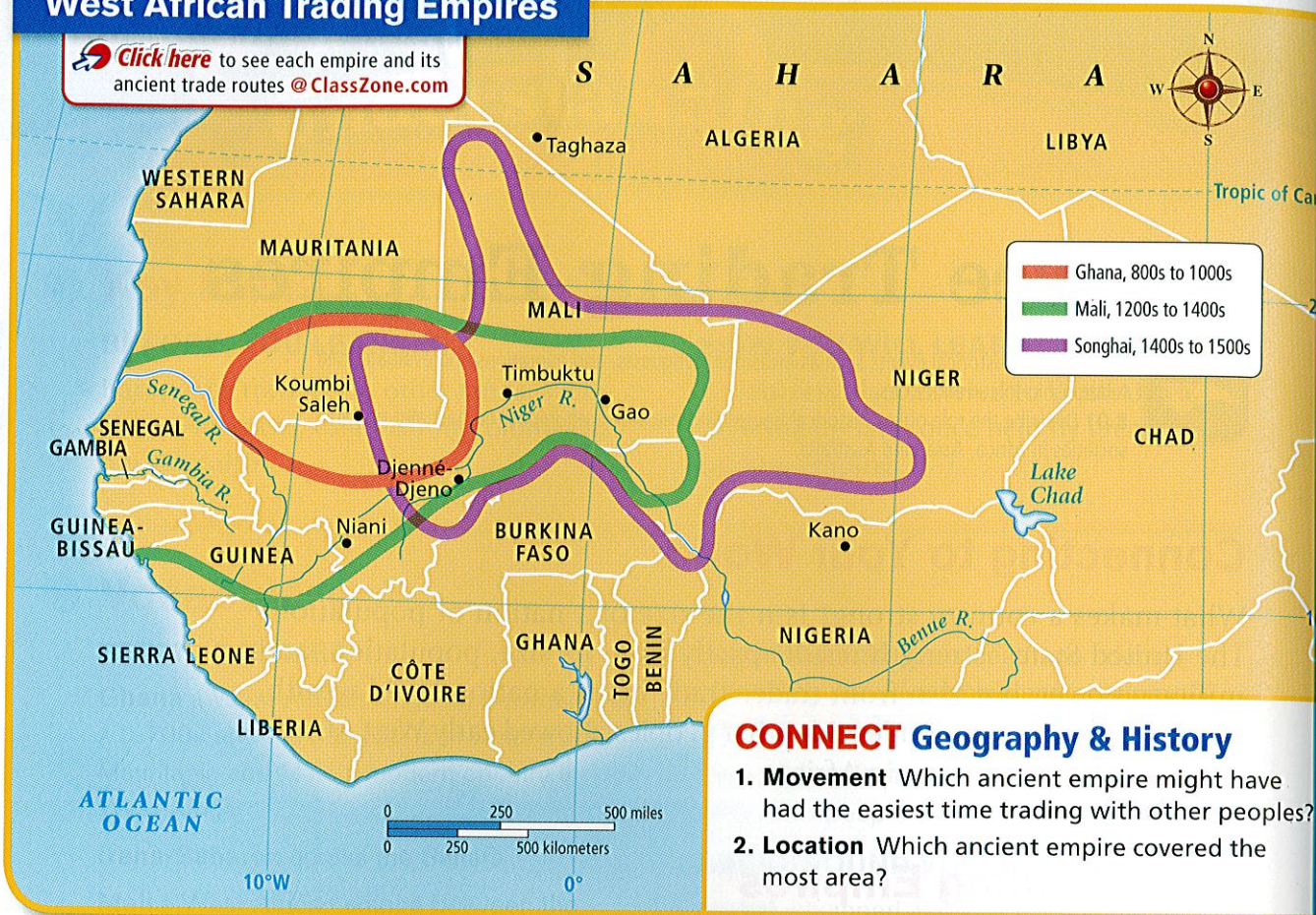


West African Trading Empires

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CONNECT Geography & History

- 1. Movement** Which ancient empire might have had the easiest time trading with other peoples?
- 2. Location** Which ancient empire covered the most area?

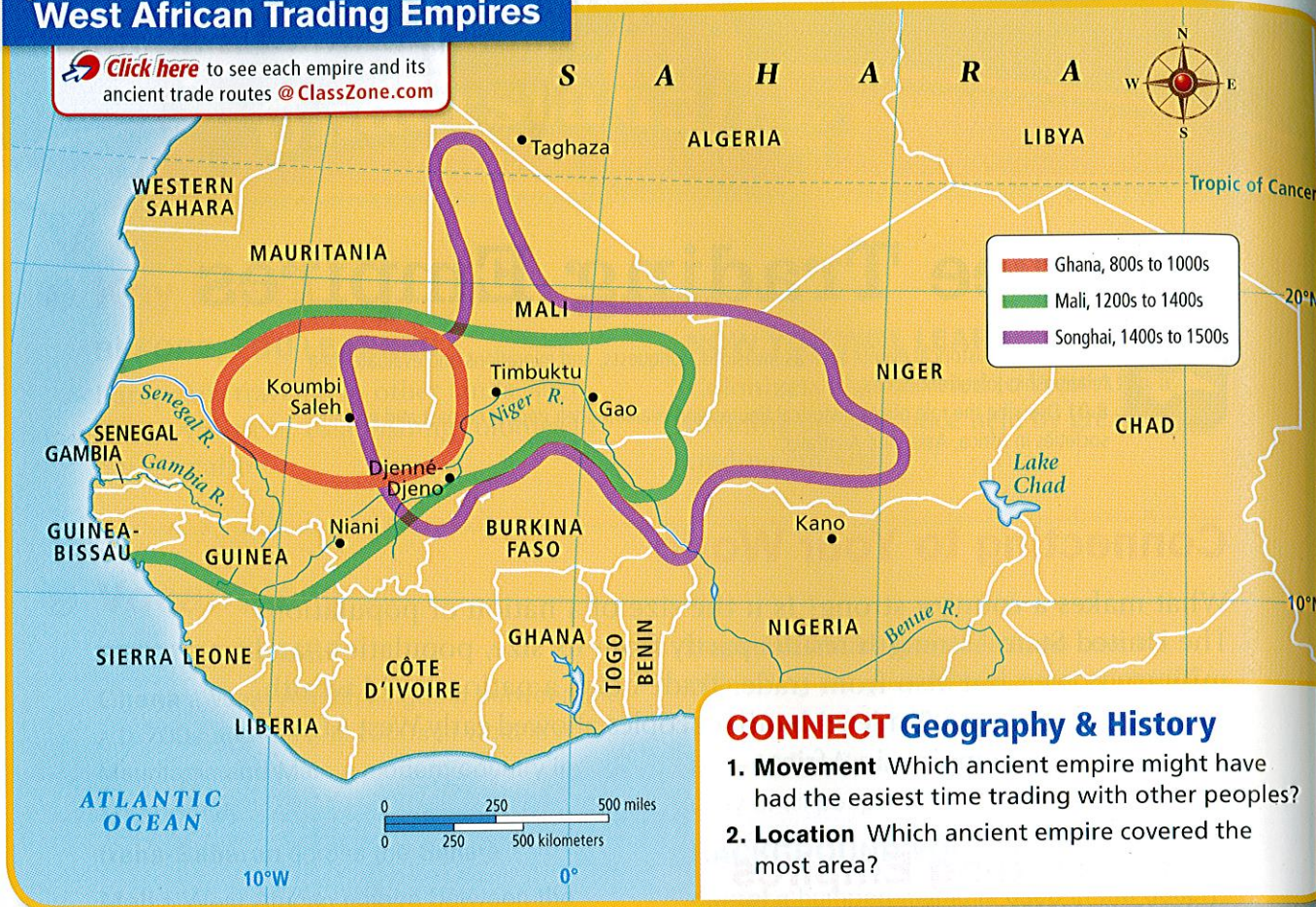
Ghana The Soninke people of **Ghana** founded the first West African empire around A.D. 700. Ancient Ghana began as a trading center for grains, cattle, and metals. Camel caravans from the Arabic world arrived at Ghana's markets, introducing Islam to the region and establishing a **trans-Saharan** trade. *Trans-Sahara* means "across the Sahara." Caravans brought books, salt, cloth, and tools from Arabia to Ghana, and carried back slaves, ivory, and gold. Taxing the gold trade enriched Ghana's rulers. In 1076, Moroccan Berbers conquered Ghana's major city. More defeats followed, and Ghana collapsed around 1200.

Mali As Ghana declined, several small states competed to control the empire. Between 1235 and 1240, a king named Sundiata conquered the other states to found a new empire east of Ghana. This empire, **Mali**, thrived because it controlled a large new gold field at the center of the trans-Saharan trade.

Sundiata's great-nephew **Mansa Musa** (MAHN•sah moo•SAH) ruled Mali from 1312 to about 1337, spreading Islam throughout the empire. Mosques, courts, and schools in Timbuktu, the capital of Mali's trading empire, made the city a major center of Muslim learning. After 1400, Mali gave way to a stronger empire.

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