

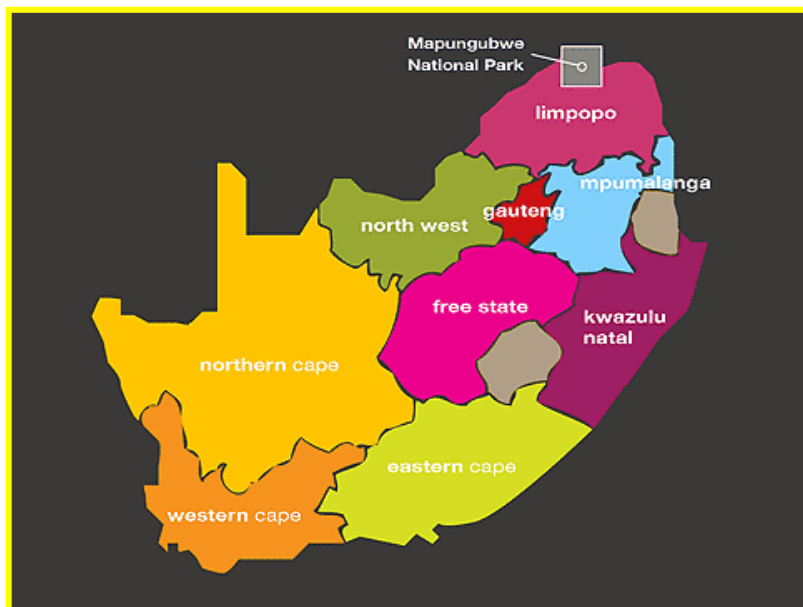
# Grade 6 History

## Term 1

### KINGDOMS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

#### MAPUNGUBWE

The city of Mapungubwe is in the Limpopo Province, on a farm called 'Greefswald', near the Limpopo River. Mapungubwe means "Hill of the Jackal". Mapungubwe was declared a World Heritage Site because of its value as an archaeological site that provides insight into humanity's past.



The people of Mapungubwe were wealthy and farmed cattle, sheep and goats between 900CE and 1150CE. They produced large harvests that allowed them to trade and store extra food. Successful cattle farmers grew wealthy enough to spend time mining gold in shallow diggings in the area. Their riches came from gold and ivory.

Archaeologists found evidence that the Mapungubwe people traded with Arabia, China and India through the East African harbours because of the city being so close to the

Limpopo River. They exchanged salt, cattle, fish, gold and iron, wood, freshwater snail and mussel, and ostrich eggshell beads were used for glass beads and cloth.

Trade led to the gathering of power and wealth and a rich and powerful ruling class emerged. This ruling class was led by the Mambo or king. It was believed that the Mambo had a special relationship with the ancestors and gods which gave him a sacred right to rule. His symbols of authority were the crocodile and the black rhino.



In about 1220AD, the king decided to show his power by moving away from the rest of the people to the top of the Mapungubwe Hill. His followers carried thousands of tons of sand to the top of the hill to make it level. The king's huts were built on top of the hill. The huts of his wives, senior sister/diviner, advisors, healers and guards were also built there.

People with different levels of authority ruled the thousands of farmers and other people living in the community below the hill. These included the king's brother who controlled the court as well as chiefs and headmen who controlled the villages.

Archaeologists found two different graveyards. They found a burial site on top of the hill, near the palace, where 23 bodies had been buried. Three of the bodies were buried upright, in a sitting position, showing that they were royalty. They were also buried with gold and copper ornaments and glass beads. The rest of the community members were buried below the hill top near the cattle kraal.



Gold and clay objects found on the mountain

## Mining in Mapungubwe

The Mambo began to regard gold as wealth, not just as a way to get beads. So, the Mambo asked some of his farmers to mine gold. We know this because of the gold ornaments and jewellery found at Mapungubwe.

Mining was very hard work, so the king often paid the miners with cattle.

Gold was mined in two ways: **Alluvial mining and Underground mining.**



### Alluvial Mining

People took gold from the rivers.

1. Miners dug in the sod or sand in rivers and on river banks.
2. They washed the sand and soil in the river.
3. The gold was scooped out in baskets.



## Underground Mining

Mining in rock, underground, was much more difficult than alluvial mining. It was sometimes very dangerous. Miners had to smash tunnels through the rock and support the tunnels with slabs of stone.

1. Miners used fire and water to make the rocks weak. They made a fire in front of the rock face and then poured water onto the hot rock to cool it suddenly and crack it.
2. Then, they split the rock with iron wedges.
3. They carried the gold-bearing rock to the surface.
4. At the surface, the rock was broken up.
5. It was then ground to a powder.
6. People washed the ground rock to separate out the gold dust.



## The discovery of the golden rhinoceros and other golden objects

### Vocabulary

<b>Sceptre</b>	a rod carried around by a king or queen as a symbol of their royal power.
<b>Symbol</b>	an object or a sign that stands for something else.

The most important discoveries at Mapungubwe were a golden rhinoceros, the golden sceptre and a golden bowl. These objects were carved out of wood and a gold foil sheet was wrapped around them and they were held in place by small nails. These objects were found in one of the royal graves. Click here to learn more about the treasures of Mapungubwe [Treasure chest](#)



The golden rhinoceros is a symbol of leadership as it is aggressive, it stays alone and it is fierce. The rhinoceros horn symbolises the role of a leader as the protector of his people. The sceptre is a symbol of authority.

### **The significance of Mapungubwe Hill**

The site of the palace was carefully chosen by the rulers. Study the photograph below and answer the questions that follow.

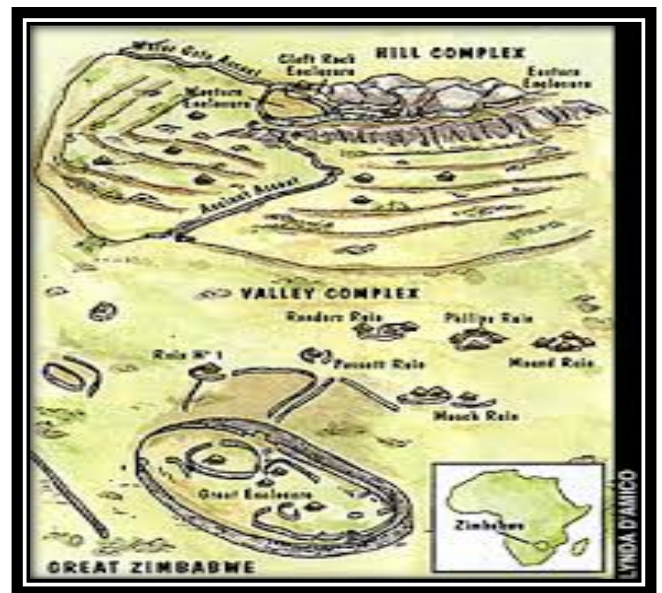


## **Activity 1**

1. Why do you think the leaders chose to live on the hill? Write down at least two reasons, in your book. (Think about the advantages of living above the people you govern.)
2. Now, share your reasons with the person sitting next to you and, if they have thought of different reasons, add them to your list.

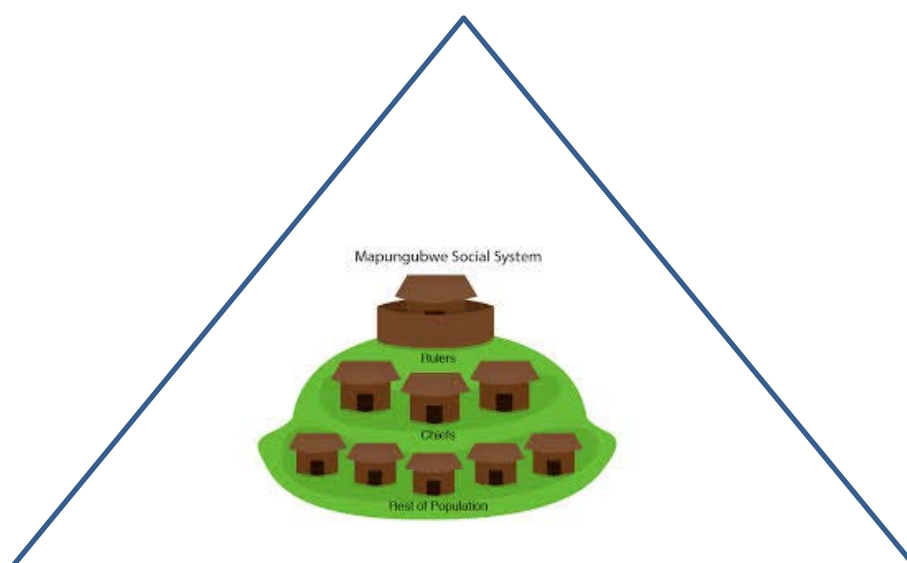
## The first town

The settlement around Mapungubwe formed the first town. We know it was a town because of the number of people who lived there as well as the way it was organised. The town was arranged in clusters of homesteads or huts. Each homestead had storage huts for the grain they had planted and an enclosed area for their cattle. They also kept goats, dogs and sheep. Archaeologists also discovered a large central refuse site. They also discovered other items like spoons, a spindle used to make cloth and a funnel.



## Distinct social classes

We know that the royal family separated themselves from the ordinary people. These ordinary people can also be referred to as commoners. Within the town, there were also other social divisions based on the amount of money you or your family had. Your family name was also important and if your family had a good reputation you were part of a higher social group. These 3 things would determine your status or social class in society.



The pyramid above represents the different social classes, the higher you go in society, the fewer people there are.

Historians believe that the more powerful and wealthy people in society eventually owned almost all the cattle and this meant that the commoners had very little chance of increasing their own wealth by owning cattle.

## **Activity 2**

1. Do you think that the social classes of Mapungubwe were fair? If you could belong to a social class, which would you have wanted to belong to. Give a reason for your answer?
2. Do you think that South Africa has social divisions? Are there people in society that are more powerful than others?
3. If you answered yes to question 2, write down what these classes are and who these people are. What determines which social class a person belongs to?
4. Do you think that people can change class in a society?
5. Do you think that it is acceptable for societies to be divided into classes? Why do you think this?

### **Trade across Africa and across the Indian Ocean and Beyond**

People of Mapungubwe became wealthy because they controlled the trade in that region. Arab traders came down the east coast of Africa looking for goods that African societies had to offer. They came inland and traded with the kings of Mapungubwe. Arab traders sailed in ships called dhows. These ships were used to sail as far as India, Indonesia, and China and across the east coast of southern Africa. They also sailed across the Mediterranean Sea to Turkey and Greece. This connected the people of Mapungubwe to people from many other parts of the world. This was an example of early globalisation.



## Goods Traded

Ivory, gold, animal skins and wild animals were some of the items that the people of Mapungubwe traded with. The Arab traders brought glass beads from old Cairo in Egypt, cloth from the East, goods from India and Chinese porcelain bowls in return. This became part of the **Indian Ocean trading system**.

Although the Limpopo Valley was inland, the Limpopo River would have been used to transport some of the goods to the coast of the Indian Ocean, most goods for the Arab traders were transported over land by foot by the traders from Mapungubwe. This seemed to be a very dangerous task.

## Activity 3

Name 4 dangers that could have been faced by the people transporting goods.

## A World Heritage Site and the Order of Mapungubwe

In the early 1980s, Mapungubwe and K2 were proclaimed a National Monument. They now form part of the Mapungubwe National Park and the park was declared a **World Heritage Site** in 2003. This was due to the fact that it is a place of outstanding value to mankind because of its rich history.



The Order of Mapungubwe was introduced as a national order by President Thabo Mbeki in 2002. This is awarded to a South African citizen for excellence and exceptional achievement. The first person who received this award is Nelson Mandela.





## Description of the order of Mapungubwe

On the badge is a golden rhinoceros with the sun rising above Mapungubwe Hill in the background. There is a beadwork pattern and the sides are edged with royal sceptres. In the middle is molten gold flowing down to a red furnace. The South African coat of arms appears on the back of the badge.



## Change and continuity in East Coast trade with settlements inland

The Kingdom of Mapungubwe came to an end around 1300AD and people moved away from the area. Nobody knows why this happened, but some historians believe that it may have been a change in climate which resulted in the area becoming too dry for farming. Others believe that the population became too large and there were too many mouths to feed and this meant that farmers had to plant more crops than the soil could handle.

The people of Mapungubwe were scattered to other areas. The southern African control over The Indian Ocean trade was no longer in this area. The control and power shifted further north to Great Zimbabwe.



This African society continued to form part of the Great Zimbabwe trading system that linked Africa to the world. The main change, however, was that different kings now held the power. A once powerful kingdom was forgotten for centuries and was only rediscovered in 1932, by some explorers.

Some valuable artefacts were discovered by a Limpopo valley farmer and his son on New Year's Eve in 1932, on the top of a hill, in Mapungubwe. The find was reported to a professor at the University of Pretoria and archaeologists from the university have been working on the site ever since then.

## **Activity 4**

Mapungubwe is an important part of our country's history and as many people as possible should visit this site.

1. Watch this short video about [Mapungubwe National Park](#)
2. Now using A4 paper, design a tourist brochure of Mapungubwe National Park encouraging people to visit this important site.
3. Include what people will see when they visit as well as the historical importance of this site.
4. Make your brochure attractive by adding pictures and a map of the area.

### **Bibliography:**

1. Angier K; Carr D; Cockburn J; Wallace J. **Our World, Our Society Grade 6**
2. Ebrahim F; Jardine V; Haw S. **Viva Social Sciences Grade 6**