

October 1332

*My Dearest Family,*

*Living in Timbuktu is a dream. Shops line the beautiful streets. Countless wells hold the sweetest water I have ever tasted. Milk, corn, cattle, and butter are all found in abundance. Everyone here is successful and contented. Everything flourishes. Please, make this dream complete by joining me in Timbuktu.*

*This city offers various jobs in the trading field. In fact, Timbuktu's economy is based on trade. Its convenient location on a bend of the Niger River makes it one of the greatest trading cities below the Sahara. Salt from the desert is brought to the city. Here it is taken by merchants, who sell it in distant lands. As you well know, salt is worth more than even gold. This trade makes Timbuktu's economy thrive.*

*Our exalted king, Mansa Musa, also contributes to Timbuktu's success. He has established Timbuktu as an important Islamic learning center. Mansa Musa bases his laws on the divine Quran. His recent pilgrimage to Mecca has helped Timbuktu's trade. When the Emperor went through Cairo, he impressed many merchants with the massive amount of gold he carried. While in Cairo, the Emperor gave away so much gold, that city's economy suffered! Since his trip, Timbuktu has become known for its riches throughout the Islamic world. I have even heard rumors that Mali has begun to appear on European maps. Under Mansa Musa's rule, efforts are being made to build a university and a massive library. Timbuktu is also becoming a center for Islamic learning. The city's future looks bright.*