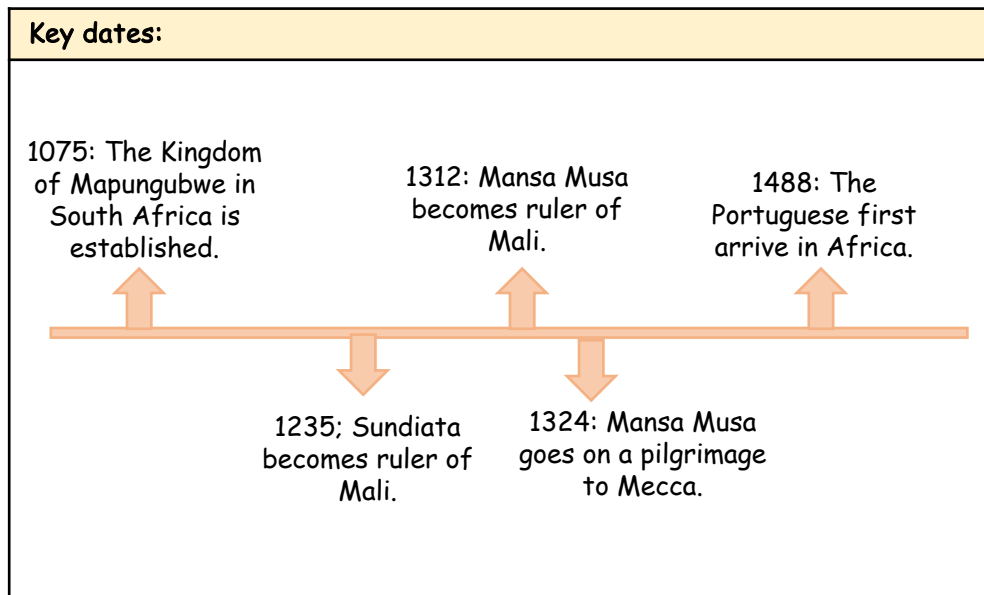


Was there really a 'golden age' in medieval Africa?

How can we find out about medieval Africa?	
The excavation at Mapungubwe:	In 1932, archaeologists working in modern-day South Africa came across graves and many other items (including a golden rhinoceros) from the Kingdom of Mapungubwe. It was clear that the ancient society was hierarchical.
The Sundiata Epic:	A story (written in the form of a poem) that has been passed down via griots in West Africa. It tells the story of the founding of the Mali Empire.
The Timbuktu Manuscripts:	Thanks to the work of Abdel Kader Haidara, these ancient manuscripts dating back up to a thousand years were rescued in 2012. They tell us about advances made in science, medicine, astronomy and other areas in medieval Africa.
Arabic travellers:	The most famous Arabic traveller during this period was Ibn Battuta, who wrote in huge detail about his travels to medieval Africa. However, we need to be careful when using these sources, because they were written by 'outsiders' (rather than by Africans themselves).



Key terms:	
Archaeology	Studying the past by excavating ancient sites and then analysing the artefacts found.
Currency	The system of money used in a particular country or region.
Cowrie shells	These are the shells from large sea snails, found in the Maldiv Islands. They were used as a form of currency in parts of Africa.
Caravan	A group of people travelling together on a long journey (usually across a desert).
Griot	A storyteller from West Africa who helps to pass down histories and traditions from generation to generation.
Islam	A religion whose followers view Muhammad as the Prophet of Allah. Islam spread through large parts of Africa in the medieval period.
Pilgrimage	A journey or trip, usually taking the person to an important religious destination (like Mecca).
Mecca	Islam's holy city, and the birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad.
Manuscript	A book or other type of document. Many ancient manuscripts have been found dating back to the medieval period in Africa.
Civil war	A conflict between people who live in the same country or region.
Hierarchical	Arranged by order of rank: usually from rich to poor, or most important to least important.
Missionaries	People sent on a religious mission, usually aiming to promote or spread Christianity in a foreign country.
Trading post	A building set up to allow for trade to take place, usually in a remote place.