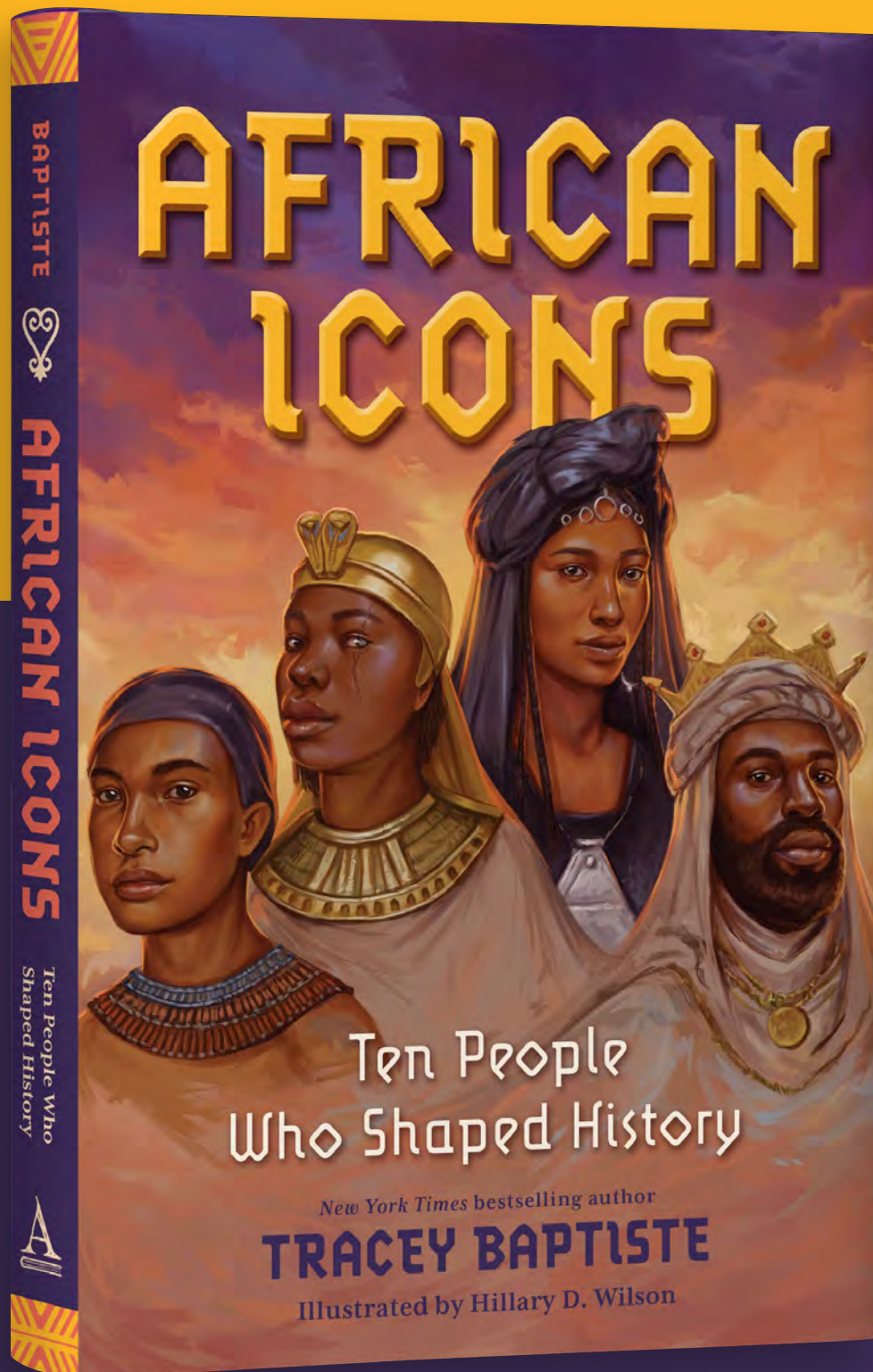
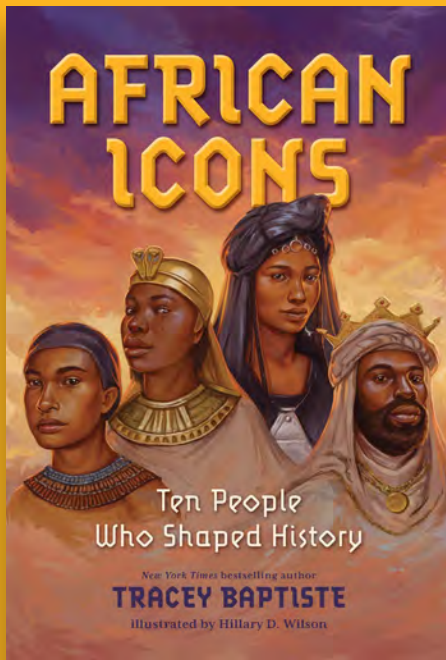


EDUCATOR GUIDE





About the Book

IN *AFRICAN ICONS*, Tracey Baptiste draws a line from 3032 BCE to present day, painting a detailed account of the lives of ten individuals and the impact they had on history. The figures profiled are Menes, builder of dynasties; Merneith, a forgotten queen; Imhotep, vizier and physician declared a god; storyteller and sage Aesop; General Hannibal Barca; playwright Terence; Amanirenas, a warrior, diplomat, and queen; Tin Hinan, who founded a city in the desert; Mansa Musa, the richest person of all time; and Queen Idia, who elevated the role of queen mother. With illustrations by Hillary D. Wilson, *African Icons* is a text educators and families will want to reach for as they convey how expansive and compelling Black History truly is.

In addition to ten historical profiles, the detailed Source Notes at the end of the book make *African Icons* an ideal starting place for more extensive research. This guide is designed for grades 3–7 and provides questions and activities to strengthen students’ knowledge of the text.

About the Author

TRACEY BAPTISTE is the *New York Times* bestselling author of numerous middle-grade novels, including *Minecraft: The Crash*, *The Jumbies* series, and *African Icons*, and has made a splash with her picture books *Looking for a Jumbie* and *Because Claudette*. You can visit her online at www.traceybaptiste.com.



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 Ages 8-12

Praise for AFRICAN ICONS

- ★ “Baptiste sheds light on the rich and complex pre-enslavement history of the African continent... A spellbinding collection... An impeccably researched revelation that fills a too wide gap in collections; it’s unfair how long it’s taken for these histories to be made public to young readers.”—*School Library Journal*, starred review
- ★ “What Baptiste accomplishes in only 139 pages of narrative is near miraculous... Black readers of any age will see themselves reflected in the amazing lives chronicled, many of whom may be new to readers. Non-Black readers will get a window into the marvelous history of a continent oft overlooked and relegated to a single narrative... The result is empowering, necessary, and required reading for all. Game changing.”—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review
- ★ “Concise and well researched, this robust, historically accurate timeline of the ‘great [African] continent and its people’ will serve as an invaluable resource for years to come.”—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review



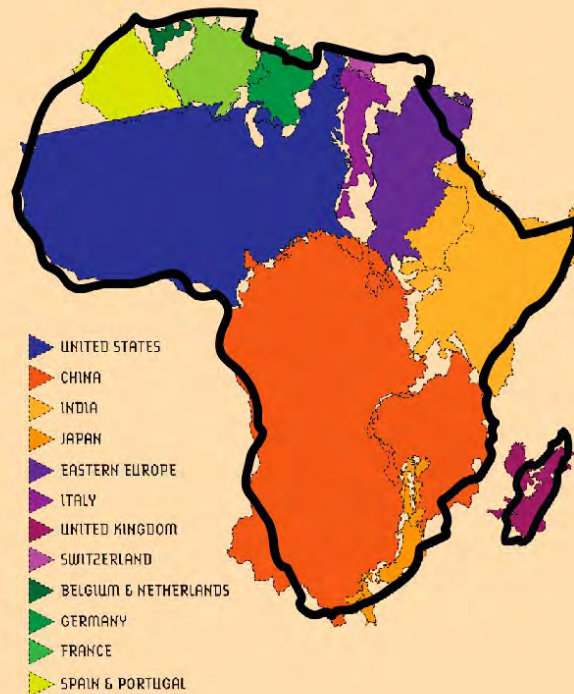
Before Reading

Because students will encounter new information as well as find new ways to consider what they *think* they know, invite them to brainstorm everything they think they know about the continent of Africa and important figures in Africa's history. If appropriate, allow students to apply an adapted version of the KWL (Know, Want to Know, Want to Learn) chart as a scaffold for brainstorming.

<u>WHAT I THINK I KNOW</u> About Africa & Important Individuals from African History	<u>WHAT I WANT TO KNOW</u> About Africa Before Reading	<u>WHAT I WANT TO LEARN</u> More About After Reading

The True Size of Africa

Distorted drawings of world maps have instilled the common misconception that Africa is smaller than it really is. To better understand Africa's true size, invite students to name states or countries that might fit into Africa or match its dimensions.



After students have completed this task, open the book to the map on page xi. Have students reflect on the accuracy of their predictions. Then, ask them the following questions:

How did I acquire my knowledge of Africa's size?

What is the effect of having misconceptions about the size of Africa?

To help students understand this effect, ask them:

What would happen if you looked at yourself in a distorting mirror, or a funhouse mirror, every morning?

How would that change your view of yourself? How would that change your view of others?

Making Connections

It is vital to help students contextualize the new information they will encounter as they read. Two tools for facilitating this work are **timelines** and **identity charts**.

Timelines will allow students to situate each person and event in the larger arc of time. Craft a timeline that connects the lifetime of each individual profiled in the book to one another and/or major historical events.

Identity charts will allow students to analyze how those factors influenced the actions and characters of these individuals. When used together, the charts can allow students to explore how one individual's life impacted another's and the contributions those individuals made to society.

Students will likely be familiar with the concept of a timeline; however, they may be less familiar with an identity chart. For more on identity charts, visit *Facing History and Ourselves* (<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/identity-charts>).

Discussion Questions

1. In Baptiste's introduction she notes that six thousand years ago, African people "started moving across the continent... Along the way, they developed new communities and complex forms of government, some of which were matrilineal, some patrilineal" (xii). Explain the difference between patrilineal and matrilineal societies. In which kind of society did Merneith live? Describe Merneith's childhood inside the palace (18-19). How did she end up ruling Egypt? In spite of Merneith's accomplishments, why was her name erased from Egypt's list of rulers until the discovery of her tomb? How does the type of leader a society has affect the way history is documented and shared? Does this knowledge change the way you think about history?
2. Explain the role of a vizier in the time of Imhotep (34). What do you think would be the modern-day equivalent of a vizier? What makes a vizier a particularly powerful political figure?
3. Baptiste writes, "Imhotep lived two thousand years before the birth of Hippocrates, the Greek man who has been called the father of medicine. However, it's clear that if Hippocrates is the father of medicine, Imhotep is medicine's grandfather" (39). Describe Imhotep's contributions to medicine.
4. How did the availability of natural resources such as gold, iron, copper, and salt influence the government and geopolitics of one or more of the following rulers: Menes, Hannibal Barca, Amanirenas, Tin Hinan, and Mansa Musa? (See pages 40-42, 92-98.) What natural resources provide African nations opportunities for trade and development today?
5. Explain why Hannibal Barca "hated Rome" (62). Describe the military strategies that he used to resist Roman rule. Why does Baptiste say, "It was diplomacy and strategy that ultimately gave Hannibal the upper hand, not military might" (64)?
6. You may already be familiar with some of the fables credited to Aesop. What did you learn about Aesop after reading his profile? Read one of Aesop's fables that you are not familiar with (a collection can be found at the Library of Congress, at <http://read.gov/aesop/001.html>), then paraphrase the fable and create an illustration to accompany your paraphrased version of the fable.
7. Explain what was different about the playwright Terence's style of writing (71). Why were some fellow writers critical of his innovative style? How did Terence's innovations impact theater (72)?
8. Have students complete connected identity charts for Amanirenas and Tin Hinan to help answer the following questions: How did the life and conquests of Amanirenas set the stage for Tin Hinan? What strategies and tactics did Tin Hinan likely use based on Amanirenas?



Discussion Questions Cont.

- 9.** As queen, Amanirenas “negotiated the Romans’ retreat out of Kush, got Augustus to rescind his order to tax the Kushites, had the Romans help to rebuild the buildings and temples they had destroyed, and agreed that the Kushites would have free passage to Egyptian temples since some of their people believed in many of the same gods” (80). Nobody knows how she accomplished all of this because much of the Kushite history is written in a language that modern people have not yet been able to decipher. Imagine that you are able to decode this language and history. What do you think it would say?
- 10.** Why did people desire a trade route through the Sahara? How do you think Tin Hinan’s physical challenges might have helped prepare her for the challenge of establishing a settlement in the desert? Why do you think that “centuries later, historians thought she was . . . an incredible legend” rather than a historical figure (90)? What discovery convinced them that she had been a real person?
- 11.** Mansa Musa was a highly successful ruler: during his reign his country expanded its territory and grew its wealth, and citizens experienced peace and prosperity. What qualities helped him achieve these successes? According to Baptiste, “At his wealthiest, Mansa Musa was worth about four hundred billion dollars by today’s standards, making him the richest person in world history” (109). Create a chart comparing his wealth to the wealth of well-known individuals and corporations (ex. Jeffrey Bezos, Apple, Elon Musk, Koch Industries).
- 12.** Read pages 111-113 and consider the significance of texts like the Catalan Atlas (you can view details of it at the Library of Congress <https://www.loc.gov/item/2010587630/>). What types of knowledge were likely lost when ancient libraries were destroyed? Timbuktu developed from a rest stop into a cultured city with libraries that housed texts on every imaginable subject. Why were these texts treasured and considered to be so valuable? What grew as a result of Timbuktu’s libraries? What ultimately happened to the literary texts in Timbuktu, and why is their fate significant?
- 13.** Working alone or with a group, create a physical or computer-animated model of one of the following:
- Menes’s palace (11) or burial site (15)
 - Merneith’s palace (18) or tomb (23)
 - Imhotep’s step pyramid (36)
 - Hannibal’s military strategy at Cannae (65)
 - Mansa Musa’s court (105)
 - Tin Hinan’s tomb (90-91)





Discussion Questions Cont.

14. On pages 132-133, Baptiste describes the symbolism and significance of the carving of Queen Idia. Later, she notes that “the Kingdom of Benin collapsed in the late nineteenth century, and Idia’s portraits were looted by the British” (134). You can read more about the Benin Bronzes at the British Museum and Nigeria’s request to have them returned (<https://tinyurl.com/2p82spt9>) and about the Smithsonian Institution’s decision to return artifacts (<https://tinyurl.com/v9urade9>). Discuss how museums might respond to requests to return contested art like the carving of Queen Idia.



15. You have encountered a great deal of information about Africa, its people, and its history. As you continue to reflect, identify one other place or group that you have not learned about in school. As we have seen through the lives of these ten people, history is best preserved when shared orally and in writing. Take some time to research and share your findings with your peers.

Notes

The African Icons



Menes
1st Dynasty of Egypt



Mereneith
1st Dynasty of Egypt



Imhotep
c. 2700-2601 BCE



Aesop
620-560 BCE



Hannibal Barca
247-189 BCE



Terence
185-159 BCE



Amanirenas
40-10 BCE



Tin Hinan
4th Century



Mansa Musa
1307-1337



Queen Idia
1484-1540

These ruling dates are approximate.

Sources: *When Women Ruled the World*, *Britannica*, *Encyclopedia.com*, *African Research Consult*

