

Europeans in Ghana



Let us learn about ...

The impact of European presence in Ghana

Answer these questions in groups.

- 1 Who were the first Europeans to arrive in the Gold Coast?
- 2 What items did the Europeans trade with the people of the Gold Coast in exchange for gold?
- 3 What things did the Europeans introduce when they arrived in the Gold Coast that you still see in Ghana today?
- 4 Do you think European presence in the Gold Coast has affected Ghanaians today positively or negatively? Give reasons to support your point of view.

Strand 3: Europeans in Ghana

Sub-strand 4: The impact of European presence

The history of European presence in the Gold Coast

You have learnt in History lessons from earlier years that Europeans including the Portuguese (1471), the Danes (1658), the Dutch (1554) and the British (1598), among others, came to the Gold Coast mainly to trade. They traded European goods with the people of the Gold Coast in exchange for gold, land and other items. You also learnt how these trading activities shifted from trading in goods and services to trading in people who worked as slaves on plantations in the New World (Americas).

In this lesson, you will learn more about the activities the European **settlers** introduced during their **settlement** in the Gold Coast and the positive and negative **impact** these activities have on the people of Ghana today.

A change in Ghanaian history started with the **establishment** of direct sea trade with Europe following the arrival of Portuguese sailors in the Gold Coast in 1471. Europe's main interest in the country was as a source of gold. Gold was a **commodity** that was readily available on the coast, and was exchanged for European **exports**, such as cloth, beads, metals, alcohol, guns and gunpowder. This led to Ghana being known as the 'Gold Coast'.

KEY WORDS

settlers
 settlements
 impact
 establishment
 commodity
 exports



|| The European traders considered the natural resources of the Gold Coast, such as gold, ivory and land, as valuable trade items.

Sub-strand 4: The impact of European presence

In exchange for gold, the European traders offered the people of the Gold Coast European goods, such as cloth, mirrors, guns and gunpowder, beads, metal knives and alcohol (such as rum and gin).



1.2 Cloth



1.3 Mirrors



1.4 Guns and gunpowder



1.5 Beads



1.6 Metal knives



1.7 Alcohol

The Portuguese traders built forts on the coast to protect and control important trade routes, and to stop other European traders from trading with the Gold Coast.



1.8 The Portuguese traders built Elmina Castle in 1482 as their first castle.

Strand 3: Europeans in Ghana

In the **17th Century**, the Portuguese traders lost control of their trade with the Gold Coast. This gave traders from The Netherlands (Dutch), England (British), Denmark (Danish) and Sweden (Swedish) the opportunity to trade in the Gold Coast. They discovered that the **trade relations** they had with the people of the Gold Coast helped them to export slaves. These slaves were in high demand as labour for the American plantations increased. By the middle of the **18th Century**, the castles and forts in the Gold Coast were controlled by Dutch, British or Danish **merchants**.

KEY WORDS

17th Century
 trade relations
 18th Century
 merchants

Some of the forts and castles the European traders built along the Gold Coast are Elmina Castle, Cape Coast Castle, Osu Castle (also known as Fort Christiansborg), Fort Prinzenstein at Keta, Fort James and Ussher Fort at James Town in Accra, and Fort William at Anomabo.



I.9 Fort Courmantyne was built by the British in 1638, then taken over by the Dutch in 1665 and renamed Fort Amsterdam.



I.10 Cape Coast Castle (also known as Carolusborg Fort) was built by the Swedish in 1653.



I.11 Osu Castle (also known as Fort Christiansborg) in Osu, Accra, was built by the Danish in 1659.



I.12 Fort James in James Town, Accra, was built by the British in 1871.

Sub-strand 4: The impact of European presence

DID YOU KNOW?

By 1850, about 40 forts and castles had been built along the Gold Coast, and were controlled by Dutch, British or Danish traders.

Activity 1.1



- 1 In groups, make a list of the forts and castles that were built by the Europeans in the Gold Coast. Talk about the following:
 - a The Europeans who built each fort or castle.
 - b The locations where the forts or castles were built.
 - c When (which year) they were built.
- 2 Make a poster about the forts and castles of the Gold Coast to display in your classroom. Choose two forts and two castles from your group's list.
 - a Find pictures of each fort and castle you have chosen, or draw your own pictures.
 - b Write the information you talked about in 1 under each picture.

TIP

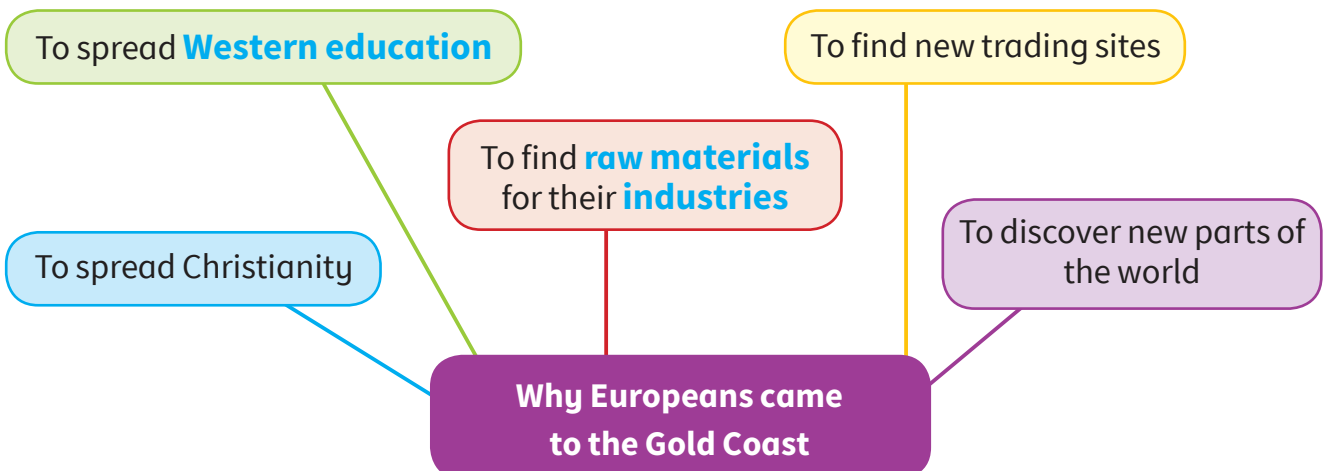
Remember to use large writing that is easy for others to read when you make a poster.

Reasons why the Europeans came to the Gold Coast

The mind map below shows the main reasons why the Europeans came to the Gold Coast.

KEY WORDS

Western education
 raw materials
 industries



Strand 3: Europeans in Ghana

Exploration and discovery

Reasons for which the Europeans came to the Gold Coast were to explore new opportunities in other parts of the world. They set out on sailing **expeditions** to new places and eventually found their way to Africa. In 1481, Don Diego d'Azambuja, a Portuguese **explorer** who wanted to discover new areas of trade, led one of these expeditions to the Gold Coast. His ship arrived at Elmina in 1482. The Portuguese traders were met by Nana Kwamena Ansah, the King of Edina. Edina later became known as Elmina when the Elmina Castle was built in 1482.

Spread of Christianity

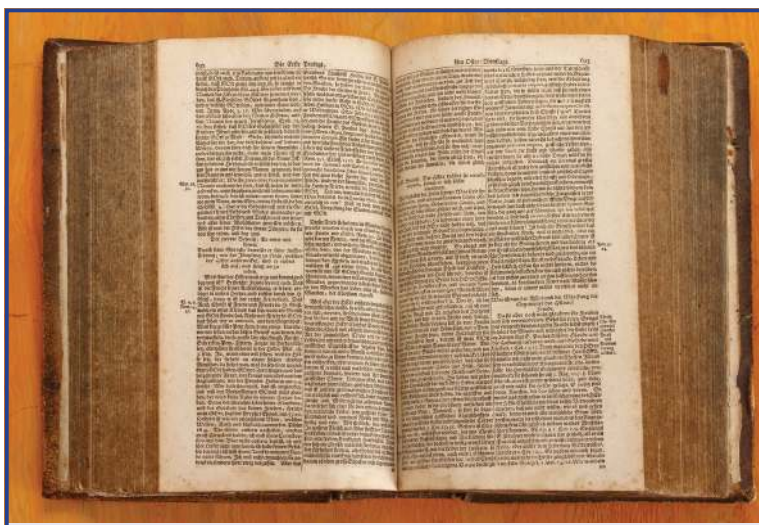
Many of the Africans the European explorers met during their travels practised traditional religion, such as worshipping lesser gods, which includes offering **libation** to the gods. The Europeans felt that the people who practised traditional African religions were **barbaric** and **uncivilised**. They saw the Africans' way of life as **inferior** to that of the Europeans. Many Christian **missionaries** were sent from Europe to Africa, including the Gold Coast, to convert African people to the Christian way of life. Today, Christianity is the biggest religion practised in Ghana.

KEY WORDS

expeditions
 explorer
 libation
 barbaric
 uncivilised
 inferior
 missionaries



I.13 A Portuguese sailing ship on an expedition to Africa



I.14 A German Bible dating back to 1768

Expansion of trading sites

The Europeans came to the Gold Coast to trade with the people who lived there. When the Portuguese reached the Gold Coast in 1471, they found so much gold in the riverbeds and streams that they called the Gold Coast 'El Mina', meaning 'The mine'. Two well-known Portuguese captains at this time who traded with the Asante people were Pedro de Escobar and João de Santarém.

KEY WORDS

natural resources
 bauxite
 Trans-Atlantic
 slave trade



I.15 Portuguese captain Pedro de Escobar, 15th Century.



I.16 Portuguese captian João de Santarém, 15th Century.



I.17 Nana Kwamena Ansah, the king of Edina, met the Portuguese captains on their arrival on the coast of Ghana.

There were many **natural resources** that European traders wanted from the people of the Gold Coast, such as gold, **bauxite**, ivory, salt, palm oil, cocoa and kola nuts. In return, the European traders exchanged items, such as guns, gunpowder, iron, copper, beads and cloth.

As trade sites expanded, so did the demand for slaves. By the 17th Century, most European traders were trading in slaves (known as the **Trans-Atlantic slave trade**). The men, women and children of the Gold Coast were captured and sold to work as slaves in the forts and castles along the coast and in other countries, such as on the plantations in the New World (Americas).



I.18 A wall mural showing slaves at Assin Manso Slave Site

Strand 3: Europeans in Ghana

DID YOU KNOW?

Most forts along the Gold Coast had a kitchen garden that was looked after by about 10 slaves. In the 17th Century, it took over 100 slaves to look after the garden at the Cape Coast Castle.

KEY WORDS

informal education
 formal education
 integrate
 literate

Introduction of formal education

The form of education used by the people of the Gold Coast before the arrival of the Europeans was **informal education** based on culture, traditions and customs. Knowledge and skills were passed from one generation to the next through family, leaders and elders in the community.

When the European traders arrived and settled permanently in the Gold Coast, they introduced **formal education**. They felt that this was the best way to **integrate** the people of the Gold Coast into their society and to develop a **literate** workforce that could read, write and live a Christian way of life. They established schools and colleges in the Gold Coast. Danish, German and British missionaries started writing down the Akan languages in religious books during the 17th and 18th centuries.



I.19 Oral customs and traditions form part of the informal education of the people of the Gold Coast.



I.20 The Wesleyan Methodist Church in Cape Coast was built in 1835.

The need for raw materials

One of the reasons that European traders went on trading expeditions around the world was to look for **raw materials**. The industries in Europe used these raw materials to produce goods, such as clothing, jewellery and machinery. The Gold Coast was a country rich in natural resources, and it could supply the traders with some of the raw materials needed in Europe. These included timber, gold, **manganese** and bauxite.

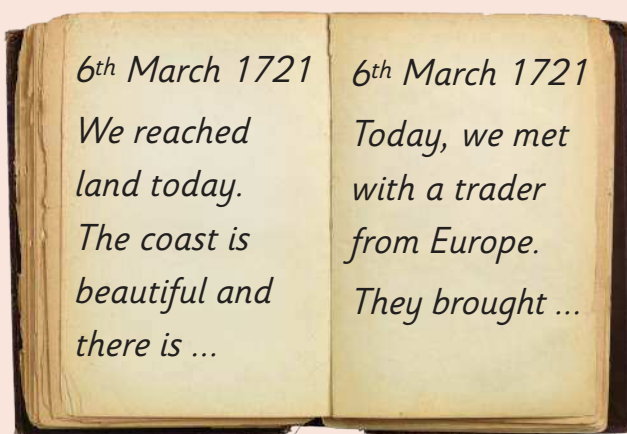
KEY WORDS

raw materials
 manganese
 infrastructure
 agriculture

Activity 1.2

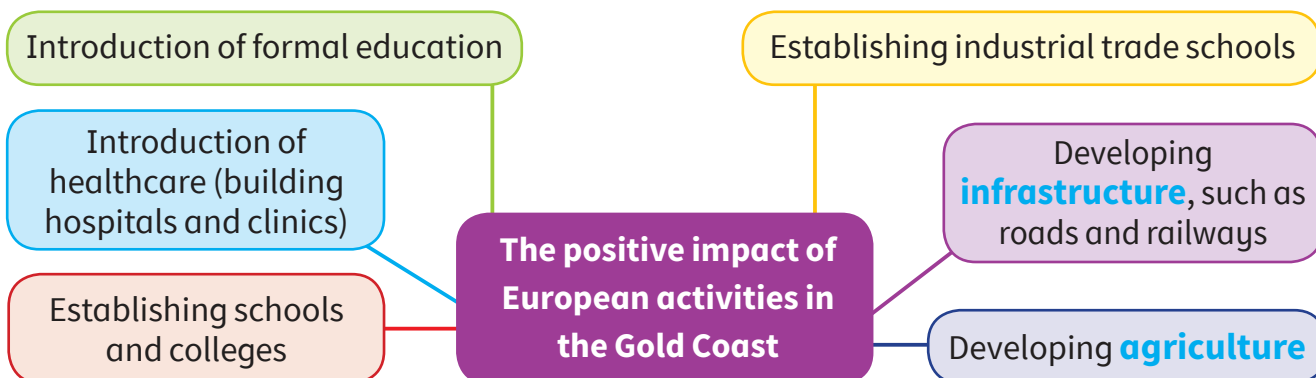


- 1 Imagine you are an European trader on an expedition to Africa to develop trade relations. Write a diary entry about the first time you traded in the Gold Coast. Describe the things you saw and did.
- 2 Imagine you were one of the Gold Coast people who traded with the European traders for the first time, write a diary entry to describe the things you saw and did.
- 3 Share your diary entry with a partner.



The positive impact of European presence

The presence of the Europeans changed the lives of the people of the Gold Coast in many ways. Some of the impacts of the European presence were positive.



Strand 3: Europeans in Ghana

The introduction and effects of formal education

The European missionaries who came to the Gold Coast educated the people of the Gold Coast in the Christian religion, as well as reading, writing and a variety of **trades**. The Europeans, therefore, established many schools and **vocational** and **technical** training centres throughout the Gold Coast.

KEY WORDS

trades
 vocational
 technical
 denominations

- The Wesleyan missionaries (Methodists) built the first Wesleyan school at the Cape Coast Castle in 1835.
- The Basel missionaries built the Presbyterian College of Education at Akropong in 1838, where they trained teachers. These missionaries also published an elementary grammar book and a dictionary in the local Akan language.

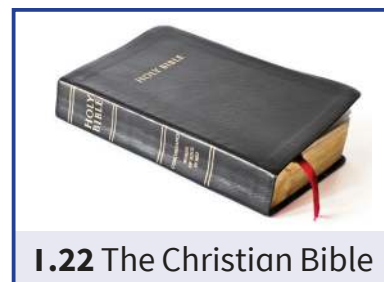


1.21 Presbyterian College of Education, Eastern Region (established in 1848)

The missionaries also helped to develop local alphabets and translate the Holy Bible into the local Ga, Akan, Fante and Ewe languages.

The European missionaries in the Gold Coast introduced different religions. In present-day Ghana, Christianity is the religion with the largest following. There are many Christian **denominations** that Ghanaians practise, for example:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------------|
| • Catholic | • Lutheran |
| • Methodist | • Seventh Day Adventist |
| • Anglican | • Pentecostal |
| • Presbyterian | • Baptist |



1.22 The Christian Bible

DID YOU KNOW?

Jacobus Capitein, a Ghanaian, translated Bible scriptures into the Mfantse language (Fante) in 1744. The Bible was also translated by Johannes Zimmermann into Ga in 1866 and into Twi by J.G. Christaller in 1871.