

CHAPTER  
**27**

Section 1

PRIMARY SOURCE **British Contract with an African King**

*In 1888 Cecil Rhodes sent three agents of his South Africa Company—Charles Rudd, Rochfort Maguire, and Francis Thompson—to see the king of the Ndebele people. The mining company agents persuaded the African king Lo Bengula to sign a contract granting the British mining rights. Later, Lo Bengula said that he had been tricked into signing the agreement, and he wrote a letter of protest to Queen Victoria of Great Britain. What were the terms of this contract?*

Now all men by these presents, that whereas Charles Dunell Rudd, of Kimberley; Rochfort Maguire, of London; and Francis Robert Thompson, of Kimberley, hereinafter called the grantees, have covenanted and agreed, and do hereby covenant and agree, to pay to me, my heirs and successors, the sum of one hundred pounds sterling, British currency, on the first day of every lunar month; and, further, to deliver at my royal kraal one thousand Martini-Henry breech-loading rifles, together with one hundred thousand rounds of suitable ball cartridge, five hundred of the said rifles and fifty thousand of the said cartridges to be ordered from England forthwith and delivered with reasonable dispatch, and the remainder of the said rifles and cartridges to be delivered as soon as the said grantees shall have commenced to work mining machinery within my territory; and further, to deliver on the Zambesi River a steamboat with guns suitable for defensive purposes upon the said river, or in lieu of the said steamboat, should I so elect to pay to me the sum of five hundred pounds sterling, British currency. On the execution of these presents, I, Lo Bengula, King of Matabeleland, Mashonaland, and other adjoining territories, in exercise of my council of indunas, do hereby grant and assign unto the said grantees, their heirs, representatives, and assigns, jointly and severally, the complete and exclusive charge over all metals and minerals situated and contained in my kingdoms, principalities, and dominions, together with full power to do all things that they may deem necessary to win and procure the same, and to hold, collect, and enjoy the profits and revenues, if any, derivable

from the said metals and minerals, subject to the aforesaid payment; and whereas I have been much molested [of] late by diverse persons seeking and desiring to obtain grants and concessions of land and mining rights in my territories, I do hereby authorise the said grantees, their heirs, representatives, and assigns, to take all necessary and lawful steps to exclude from my kingdom, principalities, and dominions all persons seeking land, metals, minerals, or mining rights therein, and I do hereby undertake to render them all such needful assistance as they may from time to time require for the exclusion of such persons, and to grant no concessions of land or mining rights from and after this date without their consent and concurrence; provided that, if at any time the said monthly payment of one hundred pounds shall cease [the agreement's end dates from] the last-made payment.

*from Sir Lewis Mitchell, The Life of the Right Honorable Cecil John Rhodes, Vol. I (London: 1910), 244–245.  
Reprinted in Peter N. Stearns, ed., Documents in World History, Vol. II (New York: Harper Collins, 1988), 102–103.*

## Discussion Questions

### Recognizing Facts and Details

1. What was the king to receive from the British mining company?
2. What did the king agree to give the British mining company?
3. **Drawing Conclusions** Why do you think the British mining company agents wanted to obtain mining rights through a contract rather than taking them by force?