THE SILK ROAD: A Simulation

While Europe was dealing with the loss of culture and knowledge due to increased invasions and the fall of the Roman Empire, Asia entered into a period of innovation and prosperity. The ideas and technology that came out of the continent were due largely to cultural diffusion by means of the primary trade routes, collectively known as the Silk Road. The intent of this simulation is not for you to memorize an endless stream of dates and names, but to examine the impact of trade and understand the context of a period of unrivaled discovery.

Logistics

You will be placed in one of four groups, representing one of four major stops in the Silk Road: China (Tang/Song Dynasty), India (the Gupta Empire), the Abbasid Empire, or Constantinople (the Byzantine Empire). It is your team’s responsibility to divide work in a fair and logical manner. I suggest electing a team captain that will help divide the work, lead discussions of strategy, and keep all members on task. Delegate wisely and do your fair share—part of your grade figures into this!

Requirements: Each group must produce the following:

All of the following will earn you money... the better it is done, the more money you earn for trading!!

- **An historic travel poster representing your capital:** This will be done on large paper and should show its geographic setting, famous landmarks and daily life. It should reflect an understanding of the culture of this place, and its location, and entice travelers to visit. **REMEMBER:** your poster represents the OLD way of life in your capital along the Silk Road—not modern life there!!

- **An original, entertaining presentation to the class regarding the political, religious, artistic, and technological culture of your location:** This will NOT be a PowerPoint, lecture or video—it will be performed **LIVE** in front of the class. There are many forms this presentation can take such as: an infomercial, a talk show, a Discovery Channel documentary, a “day in the life” skit, etc. What is unique and interesting about your culture that would make someone want to come there to trade or live? It should set up what is happening religiously, politically (general stuff about the government and legal system, not specific rulers) artistically (visual art, literature, poetry, architecture), and technology. It should be an original, entertaining and easy-to-understand presentation.
• **Four trade objects PER PERSON:** Each group member should create at minimum, four objects to trade (on standard copy size sheets) with the other locations. The purpose of the simulation is to diffuse your and other’s culture and make money, so choose objects that would be desirable and useful to others, and that reflect the important scientific, mathematic, and cultural developments of your culture. Each item must have a picture/drawing of your object along with a good description of your object *TYPED/PRINTED on the FRONT* (what it is and why it’s important) and clearly stating WHERE it is from. Also make sure all trade objects have YOUR NAME, GROUP, and HOUR clearly *TYPED/PRINTED* on the back of them. *An Important Note:* Don’t overlook IDEAS—oftentimes they are more valuable than “stuff.”

**Sources:** In order to become more familiar with your textbook and realize its value, I expect you to find most of the information there. Important items that are in your book but are not listed on your poster or used as trade items will adversely affect your group. AFTER you have down the basics from your book, you may want to supplement your information with: 1) the hand-selected books on the library cart that pertain to your culture, and/or 2) some light—not heavy—internet research to help you better understand the technology and art work. Blog websites will be helpful.

**Activities and Schedule**
- **Tuesday & Wednesday 10/9, 10/10:** Teacher PowerPoint overview lecture on the Silk Road.
- **Thursday 10/11:** Project is explained in class and groups are formed.
- **Friday 10/12:** Groups will bring books to class and begin to find information on their Silk Road stop. This information will be put on the “Silk Road Note Sheet” which makes up ¼ of your sheet and will be graded on Monday.
- **Monday 10/15 & Tuesday 10/16:** Group work time in the library. Use this time to create your poster, write your skits, and discuss trade objects. Anything not finished in the work time is homework. Make sure all work is divided equally (making trade items will most likely have to be homework). You will also need to complete—as homework—the other portions of the note sheet (after careful reading), by next Monday 10/22. Don’t blow this off as it will be graded later and it will help you a lot during the assessment answers. *NOTE:* during this class time I will be going to individual students during class and checking the ¼ portion of your note sheet.
- **Wednesday 10/17:** Oral presentations and unveiling of the travel poster. You are strongly encouraged to take brief notes on these presentations, and to start thinking of which locations you will travel to. **All trade objects are due!!**
- **After class,** I will be inspecting each location’s products, and awarding local currency for your efforts *(the better the presentations, posters, and trade objects the more money you earn)*. This currency and your trade objects are necessary to participate in the trade day. Each trade object will carry a point value that is unknown to all simulation participants, but will be figured in later. It is up to you to determine what objects are of most cultural, scientific, and historical value and to
barter for them using your currency, your objects, or a combination. To prepare for this, it would be best to read up on the other cultures before you trade with them.

- **Thursday 10/18:** Silk Road Activity Map or other activity. Completed in class with partner.
- **Friday 10/19:** Trade Day! Half of your group may travel at any time; the rest must stay home and staff your bazaar (take turns). You will travel in pairs but you only record your own trades, not your partner’s trades.

**IMPORTANT NOTE on Trade Day:** To travel, you must pay fees to the MIDDLE MAN (ME!) to fund your caravan travel on the Silk Road. However, if you can prove to me that you possess the technology that would enable you to **expertly navigate a ship**, you may take your chances at rolling the “Sea Die.” Important to Note as you plan your journey: Ships did not sail around the bottom of Africa at this time!

**When traders arrive, you may choose to divulge information of your culture with them or not. It is up to the individual teams how they will trade. Bartering is encouraged—but remember the wise Latin phrase, Caveat Emptor: **BUYER BEWARE.**

At the end, extra credit is awarded on your assessment to the team with the most combined currency and trade object points.

**Teacher Assessment: Overall Rubric (this is a copy of how you will be graded—read it carefully!)

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<th>Thorough, on time, well prepared: 5 pts</th>
<th>Above average effort, on time: 4 pts</th>
<th>Avg. –below avg. work, lacks detail OR late: 3 pts.</th>
<th>Poorly prepared, unfinished OR over 1 day late: 2 pts</th>
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